

Every Christian is gifted by the Holy Spirit. Every day is a brand-new day for the Holy Spirit to use you to strengthen another person's faith in Christ. Every day is a brand-new day to put your spiritual gifts to use. God has strategically placed you at school, at work, wherever you spend your time. God has put you there to employ, to use, to practice, to put to work each and every spiritual gift that He has placed inside of you. God gives you these gifts not to hoard them but to give them away and in this God is greatly glorified. Being a disciple of Christ is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus letting out of yourself what God has placed inside. Each of you are uniquely gifted to be a Christian minister wherever God has placed you. Luther calls it the priesthood of all believers. In this sense every Christian is called by God to serve Him full time and that means putting to use the spiritual gifts for which God has personally anointed you. You have been hired by God and God has placed inside of you all that you need to get the job accomplished. God has poured into your heart treasures, gifts from above, and God expects you to put them into service every day. It is the main reason you get out of bed. Every day is a brand-new day to put your spiritual gifts to use and all for the glory of God.

“Recent surveys show that many people are profoundly dissatisfied with their jobs. How can we face every morning with keen anticipation and fresh outlook? Were we to awake each new morning with the assurance that the Lord had given us spiritual gifts through which He planned to make us a blessing to others that day, would this not make rising eager and exciting.” 1. **Knowing you are gifted by God you carry with you an expectation that God is going to use you and will set up the opportunity to be used.** (i.e. praying with police.)

Once we accept the fact that we are a gifted people, we discover more than ever why God has us here on this earth, to serve the Lord putting those Spirit-given gifts to work. 2. **You all have more gifts than you realize.** No matter how many spiritual gifts God has given you, everyone is responsible to God to utilize the gifts to the glory of God. Churches go stagnant

when people think the “real ministry” is only for the pastor. That is a lie that Satan likes to slither into the church.

There is an old story that goes like this. The stomach was accused by the rest of the body for doing absolutely nothing and taking in and consuming everything. So the hands, the feet and the teeth decided to go on strike and send nothing to the stomach. As a result, the entire body began to waste away. The stomach proved to be important to the rest of the body and all the parts began working together again producing a healthy body. When we all as a body of believers put our spiritual gifts to use for the glory of God, the entire body grows, the church becomes more useful to God and more alive than ever. To sit on our gifts is to watch a church slowly decline (Insights gained from Leslie B. Flynn, 19 Gifts of the Spirit, pgs. 6-7).

I want to stop and pray for God to get through to us what He wants us to hear. Dear Lord, please forgive us for not making fuller use of the gifts that you have given to us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. Please prompt us clearly when the door opens to be used of you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

When I was on internship learning how to properly use the spiritual gifts that God has placed inside, this experience came my way. I was taking a nap and it was Saturday, my day off. I woke up feeling a strong inner prompting to drive to the hospital. I rolled over and tried to go back to sleep. That inner nudge grew stronger. Finally, I got off the couch and drove to the hospital not knowing what I was going to find or why I was heading there. The inner prompting would not let me turn around. I parked the car and walked to the front entrance of the hospital. Sitting in a car at the front door were 4 ladies who were supposed to be at a women’s retreat. I walked up to them and asked them what they were doing there and why did they leave the retreat. “Pastor, don’t you know why we are here.” I said No, I don’t. I felt God nudging me to come and I don’t know why. “Janean Lowry’s son has been in a motorcycle accident, so we drove Janean here to the hospital. Instantly I walked to the ER and began doing the work that I

do as a pastor when there is an emergency. Afterwards the family asked me how I knew to come, and I told them I had the strongest inner feeling that I was to be there. Nothing more was said.

3. Whatever spiritual gifts God bestows upon you it is your responsibility to use them. One day you will stand before God and God will hold you accountable for putting your gifts to use or not. **4. Those who put their gifts to use faithfully will be more honored in heaven.**

In the 90's God gave to me a special opportunity to use one of my spiritual gifts of encouragement. For two years that opportunity was right in front of me and for two years I did not listen to that prompting. That particular person committed suicide leaving behind a young wife with three children. Ever since then I committed to the Lord to use the spiritual gifts God has given to me as best as I can and never hold back.

I cannot drive by a police car and not pull over and pray with the officer if he or she is not busy. Look at what happened to Jonah. God told him to put his spiritual gift of prophecy to use in Nineveh and he went in the opposite direction and ended up in the belly of whale. None of us live near whales, but God expects us to put our gifts to use and never hold back.

I was walking into a doctor's appointment. I had with me a bunch of papers and my insurance. As I was walking, I dropped everything and the wind started to blow it everywhere. A person saw my predicament and helped me pick everything up and nothing was lost. I thanked her and called her my angel for the day. She smiled at me and walked away.

One of the spiritual gifts is the spiritual gift of service. Those with the gift of service enjoy helping, enjoy working, doing acts of service kindly and without any hoopla and they do it out of love for Christ. If I were to tell you right now people in the church who have the gift of service they would turn red and be completely embarrassed. They do not want their work to be announced. The person who helped me had that particular gift. She did it without being asked

and it only took less than a minute. The gift of service is as important to the body of Christ and as important to God as the gift of evangelism. All the gifts are equally important. No one believer is more important than another to God.

Please hear my heart on this. You are all gifted. **5. St Mark will grow in every way as we all put our God-given gifts to work.** If only a few put their gifts to use all we do is wear those people out and the body suffers for it. It is absolutely thrilling to wake up every day and say to God, "Please use me as you see fit. "Please show me ways to put my gifts to use." I know what happens when we are faithful putting to use our gifts. I also know what it is like if I bury them and refuse to put them to use. Just ask Jonah.

Please take the spiritual gift test. Find out how God has gifted you. Discover who you are in Christ and how God can use you. In January we are offering a one-day workshop teaching us how to put our gifts to use that will pay dividends for all eternity. By putting your gifts to use for God, God is glorified, people's faith will grow, and you will be filled with joy, knowing that God has used you for His purposes.

Some concluding comments.

1. I do not expect any of you to employ your gifts the same way I do. It is effortless for me to stop and pray with a police or sheriff person. I dare not pass them up. It is effortless for me to talk about Jesus to any person in front or behind me. It is who I am in Christ. Spiritual gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit nudges you to put them to use. It is the Holy Spirit's power through you. You are not pushing a large rock up a steep hill. You are simply giving out what the Spirit has placed inside of you. Once you learn what your gifts are, how to put them to use is rather obvious. God puts opportunities right in front of you. We wonder why it took so long to see what has been in front of us all the time. God give to us eyes to see and ears to hear.

2. Time is not an issue. Most of the time when God presents an opportunity for you it is only a matter of minutes, not hours. You are at Walmart, and you see a person who was once active in church but has been missing in action for quite some time. The Holy Spirit nudges you to say hello and ask them how they are doing. After a 2-to-3-minute discussion you part ways and that person shows up in church the next Sunday because you put to use a spiritual gift that God has given to you. You really did not even think about it. You just did it. It was as natural as breathing. The truth is whenever you put your gifts to use something supernatural is occurring for God's Presence is in your midst. A work of God is taking place. You are God's instrument. This is how people's faith is strengthened. God touches other people's lives through you. The gifts are given for the benefit of all.

3. There are gifts that include speaking and there are gifts that are done completely in silence and alone. In other words, there are speaking gifts and there are service gifts. A story goes like this. An elderly lady died and no one knew at all why she had spent so much time at church. After the funeral there was discovered several jobs that were pertinent to the church's function that were not getting done. Parishioners grew angry. "Pastor how come this is not getting done?" The answer was simple, the lady that died had done it all and no one knew. She put her gifts to use quietly, faithfully, humbly, and expected nothing in return. She will be well honored in heaven.

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT2) ¹⁰God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others [service]? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.