

Who Needs Spiritual Gifts?

by Bill Aumack

Good morning, everyone. How many of you liked to read the Guide when you were in Juniors? Anybody here? I'm the only one. Oh, a couple, my family. I loved reading the Guide. In fact, I read it... I think I started reading it before I was in Juniors. And I kept reading it after I was in Juniors. And you know, I still if I get my hands on one, I still read it. But this story comes from the Guide many years ago.

I'm hoping that we can get this mic adjusted. A little bit better. It's hard because it's inside my mask. Let's try it outside mask... Is that better? 1, 2... Maybe you won't hear me breathing so much.

So this story comes from the Guide. And it... some of the details are lost to the years. Because you know, I'm old now. But I remember the main parts. It seems like there was a young girl who wanted to have blue eyes. She had beautiful brown eyes. But one of her friends at school had blue eyes. And she decided she wanted blue eyes. So she was talking to her mom, she's mom, Jesus answers prayers, right? Yeah, Jesus can answer prayers. And Jesus can do anything right? Yeah, Jesus can do anything. Well, then Jesus could give me blue eyes. And mom doesn't want to squash the faith of her child. But you know, how often does this happen? You know, the little girl was not determined she decided that or not to be set aside. So she prays every night that Jesus will give her blue eyes. And every morning she gets up and runs to the mirror and checks. She still has brown eyes. And she was faithful. She prayed this prayer for years. Every night, Jesus Give me blue eyes. Every morning still has brown eyes. Well, eventually the dream faded. And she thought, well, maybe Jesus did want me to have blue eyes. When she was in college, she went on a mission trip with some friends. I don't remember where they went. I think it was India and I'm not 100% sure. But there the women wore veils, and headcovering. And all you can see is their eyes. Much like us today. And what she found out was with her brown eyes, she could move freely and go wherever she wanted to even into restricted areas, because she looked like one of the locals. And her friends that were with her from college, who had light colored eyes, couldn't do that. Because they were instantly recognizable as being a foreigner. After college, this young lady went back and worked in that mission field for many, many years was able to do a great work amongst the people because she had brown eyes. And she was able to move freely wherever the women went, she could go.

And sometimes we treat our spiritual gifts like that. We might have a spiritual gift or two or three. But we want one of those other ones. Right? We have a saying for this What is it? Grass is always greener where? On the other side of the fence. Of course if you're Erma Bombeck The grass is always greener over the septic tank, right? But we always want we can't have. When I worked on the farm, we used to have cows and had this big huge field. And they'd all be standing at the fence with their head through the fence eating the grass on the other side. They got acres of grass. But they stand there with their heads through the fence eating that grass.

We always want what we can have, right. And sometimes we treat our spiritual gifts like that. Open your Bibles with me, to 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Now if you recognize this, this is the chapter where we talk about spiritual gifts quite a bit. I want to look and see what Paul has to say to us about this this morning. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 4 to 11. PAGE 931, if you have the Pew Bible. Everybody there?

It says "4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

"

Okay, we've heard this passage before, probably. And if you look in Romans, I think it's chapter 13. There's another list of spiritual gifts, it's a little bit different than this. So I don't believe that this is the end all be all list of spiritual gifts. People might have spiritual gifts that are not on this list. Right? I believe I have a spiritual gift that's not on this list. I'm very efficient, I get more done than most people do. It's a gift. I can't explain to you why I do, I just do. Okay. And some people might have other gifts that are on here, that that are not on here that they have. That's okay. This isn't meant to be an exhaustive list. It talks about these gifts that we have. And we're familiar with this, you know, preaching, teaching, being an apostle, healing. These are all things that we think about when we think about the church and spiritual gifts.

Now in the next couple verses 12 to 28, we're not going to read that. But Paul talks about the body, and how we need all the parts of the body to function well, right. We need the hand, we need the foot, we need the ears, you know, the whole body needs to be present. And so he goes through that. But let's pick it up in verse 29, verses 29 to 31. It says, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do you have gifts of healing? Do all speak tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet, I will show you the most excellent way."

Now, if you're reading the NIV, you probably have a title there. Right? You have a little subtitle in your Bible. What's it say? Love is indispensable. 1 Corinthians 12 we think of as being the spiritual gifts chapter. And we're going to talk a lot about that this week. In our small groups. That's cool. 1 Corinthians 13 is what? The love chapter and in our modern mind, they are very separate. First Corinthians 12, spiritual gifts. First Corinthians 13 love. Pastor preaches on this, you know, whenever and then a couple months later, he preaches on this right? And they don't go together very much except they're supposed to. They're supposed to. How do I know they're supposed to? Well, because the author told me they did. "And yet I will show you the most excellent way." What's coming next is related to what he just talked about.

Now remember, Paul has no idea about First Corinthians 12. And first Corinthians 13. Right? If we wrote a book today, we might think about chapters. And what happens in different chapters or parts of the book. It's a textbook, you know, we got to cover this material, and then this and we build. If it's a story book, maybe we go through the story. But when Paul wrote this, he didn't have that. In fact, these weren't added until 1227 AD by Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury. And they didn't start showing up in Bibles until the 1300s. Before that, the Bible was divided by how much you could read in the temple, and get through the whole thing in three years. Like took all the scrolls the head, divided it evenly by 156. And that's how much you read. That's the only divisions they had. But all of a sudden, we've got chapters and books. And now in our modern minds, this chapter is about this. This chapter is about this. We don't ever let them come together. Today, we're gonna let them come together. Okay. So let's keep going into First Corinthians 13, verses 1-3. We're probably familiar with this, right? "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have what? love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

Now Paul's not talking about prophecy, and tongues and faith as random examples. He's talking about those because he just covered it in 1 Corinthians 12. And he says, look, we have all these spiritual gifts, and spiritual gifts are great. I'm not putting down spiritual gifts. We need spiritual gifts. Right? We need it. But there's something better than spiritual gifts. And something you need to put in addition to whatever spiritual gifts you have. What do you think what happened, if Peter and Paul, apostles, had been bonafide jerks? And everywhere they went, the people hated them. What would happen to the Christian message? Do you think it would have survived? No! It would have died in the first century and we wouldn't be here today. Right? Because in addition to be an apostle, which one might argue is the highest of those spiritual gifts, you have to have love. And we see this in their writings. They talk about the people. It's how I love so and so. So I think about you all the time. I pray for you. He is showing love. Right? What would happen if Jesus had been healing people and healing the blind and curing the lepers, but he was a jerk. And nobody wanted to talk to him because he was mean and grouchy. Would his message have gone anywhere? He had been like one of the 1000s of the Pharisees, we have no idea who they were. Right? Just another nameless face. So we need the love. Right? And we see that 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 13 are meant to go together.

We're gonna be talking more about a kind of togetherness. And our next series we're doing on Matthew, for August and September. We're going to be taking big parts and putting it together. What is this part of the books say? Not just what does this verse say? It's okay to look in detail at verses and stories. But sometimes you got to back up. Say what's the big message? We don't want to miss the forest because the trees are in the way. Right? So we're gonna be talking about that coming up.

But back to 1 Corinthians 13. Again, verses 4 to 12. Talk about love. Love is patient. Love is kind, we've heard this. Let's go to verse 13. 1 Corinthians 13:13. And it says, Now these three things remain. Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is what? Love. We know this. We memorize this, we've heard it so many times. Okay, the greatest of these is love. Got it! The next question is the greatest of what? Just these three things? Could there be a fourth thing that's greater than love? You guys are all looking at me like, what's he talking about? No, this is the greatest of all. Paul is just talking about the spiritual gifts, and all the good things that they do, and how God gives us these gifts. And he says more important than all these things is love. You got to have love with these things. Or it doesn't really matter. I mean, loves more important than miracles. Loves more important than being a teacher, or a preacher, or an apostle? Yes. Absolutely, yes. Love is more important.

All right, there's a story in the Bible that I like. We're going to hit real quick here with our few minutes remaining. And this story appears in all four gospels, we're going to look at Mark 6 will turn with me to Mark 6. We're going to be in Mark 6, and then we're gonna go to John 6. I love this story. You've heard me preach about the story before. Other people have preached about this story. And it's great. Because the story of the feeding of the 5000. Okay, one of my favorite stories, because every time I look at this story, I learned something new. So Mark chapter 6. Now, in keeping with our theme of looking at the big stuff, what happens right before this story, is Jesus sends the disciples out two by two, to go into the towns and tell people the message. Little mini missionary journeys. While they're doing that, Herod kills John the Baptist. Remember, the story puts his head on a platter for his daughter and his wife. Disgusting. Okay. And then Jesus comes back together. The disciples are coming back. I'm sure they've got stories to tell about their little miniature mission trips. Some good some bad I don't know. I'm sure John the Baptist's death weighs heavy on them. This is Jesus' cousin. Okay. This this is a very ... it's a time of sorrow almost. So they're coming back together. So let's pick it up. Mark chapter 6. Verse 30, says

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

How did the people get there before Jesus did? They ran. Can you imagine being in a boat going to solitary place and looking at the shoreline and people are running to where you're going? It's enough to make you want to turn around and go back the other way, right? Now, imagine that you're out working or you're in your house, and people are running by. You're like, what's going on? Jesus is headed over here. So what do you do? Take off and start running. Right? Do you have time to pack a lunch? Nope. You just take off and start going. Right? So continuing on verse 35.

35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

Now flip over with me to John chapter 6. We're gonna look at the version there. So you're in Mark, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, John, chapter 6. Same story. A few of the details are a little bit different. Because you know, people remember different things... the same thing differently. I don't know for those of you that are married, how many times have you told a story and your spouse goes no! You got it.... That didn't happen. You got that wrong. Linda and I have different memories about certain events in our lives, right? Different people will remember things differently. But these are just the minor details. Okay. John, chapter six.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Now most of us know this story. I love this story. I really do. It's one of my favorites. And there's there's a lot of things that I kind of wonder about this story, right? One is you might be thinking, what does this have to do with spiritual gifts? That's a great question. Remember, we're talking about love here. And this story does deal about love. But just before we go, there's a couple things I want you to notice how many loaves? 5 How many fish? 2 How many items of food? 7. Seven is a very unique number in the Bible. How many baskets are left over? 12. Twelve is another very unique number in the Bible. I don't know what that means. Or if it even means anything. But it is something to think about. Maybe next time we'll figure that out. I don't know what it means. But the food was not much right. It was a little lunch for a boy. It was a happy meal. Because when we think about a loaf we think about a loaf of bread. That's awesome. This would have been a roll or maybe a flatbread, a piece of tortilla. Okay. And two small fish that were probably smoked, so they wouldn't go bad. Almost like jerky. So you got fish jerky and a barley loaf? Well, we're living high on the hog now, right? It's not a gourmet meal.

I don't know why this little boy had a lunch. I imagine maybe he had to, when he saw the people running and found they're going to see Jesus. He had to run home and tell his mom, I'm gonna go see Jesus. Mom said, Okay, let me make you a meal. And she grabbed whatever was here and dumped it into a bag and handed it to him. And off he went. I don't know. That's what happened in my head. Okay.

Then I wonder about some other things. Did other people have food that refuse to share it? Maybe I don't know. Maybe other people had had food but had already eaten it. Now they want more. Hungry again. I don't know. But the most pressing question is, who brought 12 empty baskets and no food. That part always bugs me. Because they were in a remote place. So there weren't 12 empty baskets there just waiting for him. Who brought 12 empty baskets? I don't know. There's so much we can learn from this.

But I've got three things I want us to think about. Number one. Jesus shows great love for the crowd. When Jesus shows up in the crowd is there What does he begin to do? Preach and teach. Do you think he feels like that? No. He was going to a solitary place to get away and get some rest. He's tired. His cousin was just murdered. It's like, oh, let's go away. Can you imagine going on vacation and running into your boss? Right? I imagine the feeling was maybe something like that. What are you doing here? Go away. I'm trying to rest. But Jesus shows great love for the crowd.

Secondly, the little boy shows great love for Jesus. Because when the disciples came by says, anybody have any food for you know Jesus needs your food. I pretty sure this little boy thought he was going to give his lunch to Jesus because Jesus is hungry. Jesus has been teaching. Jesus has been healing. Jesus has been working hard, he's hungry. He needs some food. I won't eat so that Jesus can eat. Because there is no way that little boy thought, Well, Jesus is gonna feed everybody with my happy meal. There is no way that thought ever crossed his mind. No way. And so this little boy shows great love for Jesus.

And lastly, and the one we never talked about is, the mom showed great love for her son. To make sure he had a lunch. Out of all 5000 men and the women and the children that were there, one mom made sure her son had a lunch. And without her... we don't know her name. We don't know anything about her. But without her, one of the greatest stories in the Bible never happens. Because if she didn't love her son and give him a lunch, then her son couldn't love Jesus and give him a lunch. And then Jesus couldn't love the crowd and give them all lunch. Do you see what love does? Love amplifies. You can pass love to somebody else. You can give love to somebody else. If you're an apostle, you can't give that to anybody else. I can't say I'm an apostle and, Gustavo, I'm gonna make you an apostle. And now you're an apostle, I can't do that. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. But we can all love. And we can all amplify that love. And we can give that love to somebody else, so that they can give it to somebody else. But they can give it to somebody else, so that somebody can give it to everybody. You see where I'm going with this? Do you see why Paul says, the greatest of these is love. God is what? Love. God's not an apostle. God's not the healer, although he does heal. God's not the interpreter of tongues. I'm sure he can do that. God is love. And the greatest of these is love.

So the question is, how are you going to show love this week? You know, to those weirdos that vote differently than you. You know, that's a strange group, there's other guys. Or the co-worker, that's a pain in the neck, or the boss, that's a pain in the neck or the neighbor, that's a pain in the neck, or the family member, it's a pain in the neck. How are you going to show love and amplify love to them? Because that's what we're called to do. How are you going to be loving to the people who are not loving to you? That's the question. That's what God asks us to do the whole book, the Bible. That's what God asks us to do. How are you going to do that? We hear about Cancel Culture. People trying to get canceled by certain people, but we disagree with them. What if you were on the opposite end... the receiving end of that, and somebody was trying to cancel you? Could you love the people that were speaking out against you? It's hard. It's hard. Can you love the people who have done you a disservice? And don't seem to even want forgiveness. They're just happy to be a jerk and mean to you. It's hard. It's hard. It's not easy. But that's what we've been called to do. Because the greatest of these is love. And so the question is this week, how do you pass that on?

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, how are we going to pass on the love that you so richly showed us, Lord? That's the question before us. Lord, help us to give that question, serious debate and concern. deliberation, because it's an important question of how we should be more like you. Lord, please be with us this upcoming week. Help us to be loving. Help us to be kind, even when that's not what we want to do. Help us to use our spiritual gifts. Be with us in our small groups as we talk more about this

topic, Lord this week. We're so grateful for all you've done for us. Your blessings, your love and your mercy, Lord, help us not to hog that all to ourselves, but to freely give it away. Because Lord, You are love and there's plenty more love where that came from. Be with us now, in Jesus name, amen.