

The Gifted

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Superheros; most everyone is familiar with them and most of us have our favorite.

They are primarily normal and common people who, at one point, experienced a supernatural encounter which transformed their lives. It could be a science experiment gone wrong, a spider bite, contact with radioactive material, etc. Whatever the experience, it somehow enables them to have supernatural gifts. These superheros nearly always have a very clear code of ethics accompanied by a clear purpose for which they live. This purpose is usually defined by some sort of opposing villain which creates an atmosphere of an ongoing battle of good versus evil. Though the evil villain constantly and persistently develops new ways to be evil and to bring about destruction, the good superhero always overcomes triumphantly.

These superheros give us hope and assure us of our safety, knowing that they will always come to our defense and rescue whenever evil strikes.

This should all begin to sound a bit familiar to us this morning!

Although these superheros are the product of man's imagination, there are real evil villains out there and real superheros with real supernatural gifts. There are billions of real people out there who need saved and desperately await and long for the time when their superhero runs in to boldly and bravely save the day.

Those superheros are you, me, and every follower of Christ.

Each of us are ordinary, common people. However, we have all experienced a supernatural encounter with God which transformed our lives. Whenever we accept Christ's salvation, we are transformed into a new creation, we live by a new code of ethics, we are assigned a new and clear purpose for our lives, we receive an awareness of who our evil villain and his minions are, and of course, we are all given supernatural gifts. This morning, we're starting our new message series on spiritual gifts entitled 'The Gifted'. This morning, we're going to learn a few basics. First, we'll cover what spiritual gifts are and secondly, what their purpose is.

So first of all, what are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are different from our natural talents. The Greek word in scripture that we translate as spiritual gifts is the word charisma. This word defined means that these are gifts given by God's empowering grace and are not earned or even deserved. They are given by God and for God regardless of our natural abilities. On the other hand, natural talents are usually inherited or are received via learning and training and used for personal gain.

Since these gifts are given by the grace of God, that means that we cannot judge a person's relationship with Christ or their spiritual maturity by the spiritual gifts that they possess. Just because one person has

the gift of healing and can perform all sorts of miraculous healings does not mean that that they are necessarily a mature believer or that they are at a greater 'spiritual level' than others.

There can easily be a bit of confusion when it comes to spiritual gifts because there can be some overlap in natural talents and spiritual gifts. The gift to teach is an example of this. Some people may just naturally be good teachers, but that does not necessarily mean that this is their spiritual gift. They may be good teachers because they studied and worked hard to learn and train in how to be a good teacher. The big difference is in the origin of where the gift came from and for what purpose it is being used.

Spiritual gifts are supernaturally given by God and they are specifically to be used to build up other believers (His body), to make God known by manifesting His love, and to save the lost. Natural talents often are used to build ourselves up and used selfishly whereas spiritual gifts are used to build up others and are to be used selflessly.

Let's look at an example of a superhero, the Hulk. A person can train and discipline themselves to become unnaturally strong with unnatural stamina, to be able to fly into a fit of rage at any instant, and to have two clearly split personalities. However, the source of their ability doesn't define that person as being a superhero. The Hulk, however, received these abilities from a genetic mutation from his father's clean nuclear power experiments. The Hulk didn't work and strive to gain his abilities nor did he inherit them. That is also how it is with spiritual gifts. They are gifts given to us by God, Himself. We do not have to work and strive to gain them.

So that is what spiritual gifts are, they are supernatural abilities given to us by God.

There are many spiritual gifts, but the most common lists of spiritual gifts that we find in scripture are found in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and 1 Corinthians 12. We'll go over these in great detail later throughout this series. All of these spiritual gifts that God gives us are different, but they are all equally important and critically necessary for the church to be complete and mature, lacking nothing.

Of course, anything that God gives us, He gives us for a divine purpose.

What is God's purpose for spiritual gifts?

Well, all of the scriptures that cover what these spiritual gifts are also agree with why God has given them to us. The most detailed description of this is found in 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

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, 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.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

So we find here that these spiritual gifts are how we work together to become the body of Christ. Although we all have different spiritual gifts, we all have them for a common good. Although they all are unique and different from each other, they all work together to mature and complete the church. They are all equally important and critical to have. Although they are all unique and different from each other, they are all still given by God and intended to work together with each other in unity. 1 Corinthians 13-14 goes on to teach us that these spiritual gifts are also only to be used in love. 1 Corinthians 13 defines what the love that the gifts are to be used with should look and act like.

This was necessary to include in being informed about spiritual gifts because unfortunately, much conflict in church (also known as the body of Christ) arises because of our different gifts. Because we all have different gifts, we obviously will not all see things the same way and we will not all agree on how the work of

ministry should be done. That is why it was necessary that Christ also give us the spiritual gifts of ministry oversight found in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

So Christ gave gifts to some people like myself to equip the church to get the different spiritual gifts and parts of the body doing their own part to do the work of ministry (which simply means serving) and to work together in order to building itself up in love. When we begin to do this, we are matured and attain the fullness of Christ as the church becomes a more pure reflection of who Jesus really is to the world. It's when we do this, that the other purpose for the spiritual gifts is realized. The second purpose for the spiritual gifts is to physically manifest the love of God to reach and save the lost. People may not know God, may deny His existence, or may just believe the lie that He doesn't care for them. However, when us, the gifted, begin to step out in faith as we saw Jesus and the Biblical church doing, they are brought into a personal encounter with the one true God and can no longer deny Him nor the great love and care that He has toward them.

So this morning, we gained more insight on what spiritual gifts are and why God has given them to us.

However, we're only beginning to scratch the surface of spiritual gifts! We, the gifted, work together, each doing our own part, to be the physically manifested body of Christ to the world today. What an awesome privilege and opportunity! We get to be real life superheros in the world today victoriously overcoming the stealing, killing, and destroying works of the evil villain and his minions by doing good and building people up.

Next week, we'll learn how to receive spiritual gifts and how to use them. We'll then start learning how to determine what your spiritual gifts are and how each one specifically operates.

However, if you're here this morning and you've never experienced that personal, life transforming encounter with God that makes you the gifted superhero that you can be, I encourage you to please come to the altar team here and experience that encounter right now this morning!