

# The Gifted: How

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Last week, we started a new message series entitled 'The Gifted'. We learned how all followers of Christ are like superheroes. We all have experienced a supernatural encounter with God that transformed our lives. We're all on a mission to seek and save the lost using the spiritual gifts that God has given each of us. Although very different from each other, we all work together in unity for the common good.

This morning, we're going to learn how to use the spiritual gifts that God has given us. Don't worry, if you do not yet know what your spiritual gift is, we're going to get to that soon.

All superheroes follow a clear code of ethics that define their choices. They know that the supernatural gifts that they possess can be used for either good or evil and so having this code of ethics is critical to ensure that they use these gifts in a way that benefits the common good of mankind.

As a follower of Christ, we also have this clear code of ethics to ensure that the spiritual gifts that God gives us get used to build up others for the common good and not to destroy others or the body of Christ.

Although scripture details out the specifics of how to do this, it can all be summed up here:

## **Romans 13:8**

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Now, the type of love that we are commanded to love others with is commonly misinterpreted and misunderstood. What our culture defines as love today is nothing like the agape love that we're referring to here. For this reason, God has also detailed out what this type of love is to look like and how it is to behave here:

## **1 Corinthians 13**

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have 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. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully,

even as I am fully known.<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

## **1 Corinthians 14**

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

No matter what our spiritual gifts are, they are all to be used following the way of this type of love. No matter how powerful the spiritual gifts are that we possess and no matter how well we use them and no matter how much we give as a result, if we are not doing them with this type of love as our motivation, then it will all amount to nothing.

The only way that we can use the spiritual gifts with this love is by maintaining a healthy relationship with God ourselves. This love is not something that we are capable of possessing or creating on our own, but we can only possess it as it flows from God, into us, and through us. It's sort of like Iron Man and his arc reactor, it is what empowers the spiritual gifts.

We learned last week how the spiritual gifts are charisma – undeserved and unearned gifts from God and, for this reason, how we cannot judge someone's spiritual maturity by their gifts. However, on the flip side of this truth, that means that it is up to us to do our part to remain filled with and empowered by God's Holy Spirit and to allow Him to grow and mature us to use these gifts effectively.

As we do our part and pray continually, read and meditate on God's word, worship and honor God, and live by His Spirit's guidance, we will be matured and God's love will be able to flow in and through us unhindered. We'll be able to use the spiritual gifts as effectively as possible and will be able to practically manifest God's love to the lost people awaiting their superhero to come rushing in to save the day. Also, when we're as strong and as effective as we can be individually, we also work together with other believers to build up and mature the body of Christ.

Is it possible to receive a spiritual gift and then use it without a relationship with Christ?

Absolutely! In fact, Jesus warned us about this very thing.

## **Matthew 7:15-23**

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

So Jesus just stated that those who gave prophecy, drove out demons, and performed miracles in His name were doing evil. Why? It was because of their poor relationship, or the lack thereof, with Jesus. It was because even though they were doing good things, and even in Jesus' name, their motive for doing so was ultimately selfish. This is revealed by their response to Jesus. They said, but Lord, we did this and we did that and we did it all in your name. Who is doing the work and being glorified by their statement?

Themselves and not Jesus.

Many of these wolves in sheep's clothing do not even realize that they are exactly that; after all, they are doing good things and doing them in Jesus' name! What is the test for whether I am a sheep or a wolf?

When it comes to spiritual gifts, it's my opinion that this can be revealed by the words of our testimony. Do we use our gift and then praise God for what He did and testify to others what God did, or do we testify to others what I did? There is a very clear contrast in who we are boasting in and who is being glorified based on that one simple testimony.

Also think about this. These individuals move in miracles, signs, and wonders in the name of Jesus, but Jesus said that He did not know them. Again, this reminds us that we cannot judge someone's spiritual maturity, or even their salvation, based on their possession or use of spiritual gifts.

Romans 11:9 reminds us that the gifts and call of God are irrevocable. That means that once someone has received a spiritual gift from God, that God will not remove that gift. However, it is possible for us to begin to use these gifts by the power of our flesh instead of being empowered by the Holy Spirit. This occurs when we either walk away from Christ, or begin to neglect our relationship with Him. We can begin to use the gifts to build up ourselves instead of building up the body of Christ. We can use these gifts to tear down others instead of building them up.

Although uncommon, this change has taken place in the superhero world as well. Terra from the Teen Titans, Wolverine, and even Spiderman are a few characters who have dabbled into the dark side at one point or another. Less significant, Barnacle Boy once joined the evil team as well after being tired of being treated like a boy, but shortly after came to his senses and was reunited with Mermaid Man.

If we do not have a healthy relationship with Jesus, then we cannot use our spiritual gifts in love and they will be of absolutely no good to us in the end. We are all susceptible to make the transition from using our gifts empowered by the Holy Spirit to using our gifts empowered by our flesh or even have them be leveraged by the enemy. Therefore, we must be on our guard at all times not to fall into this trap similar to how these characters did.

One of the most practical ways that we can use our gifts with this agape love is with our words. This is also another practical way to test ourselves to see if we are using our gifts in love or not – by the words that we speak.

#### **Ephesians 4:29**

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

As we are reminded again by this scripture, agape love is selfless; it has everything to do with others and very little to do with ourselves. What comes from our mouths is supposed to build others up according to their needs and so that it may benefit those who listen. It is all others-focused.

This is why God has gifted us with the spiritual gifts. Not so that we can build ourselves up and boast in ourselves, but so that we can be empowered to manifest God's love to others and to build up the body of Christ.

However, this morning, I don't want to set the wrong tone. Although the spiritual gifts are all about God and others, there is a tremendous benefit for us to use our spiritual gifts. When we do, we will be built up

ourselves and receive the greatest sense of purpose and accomplishment. In the end, we will be richly rewarded and told 'Well done!' by Jesus, Himself.

It's not that we're anything; we're just simple and common people. It's all about God and what He is able and willing to do through my simple and common life. He is waiting on us to do EXTRAordinary things through our ordinary lives. We just have to trust God to do what He promised to do in His word and to step out in faith and trust that He is going to save, heal, and deliver the lost accompanied by signs, miracles, and wonders as we use our spiritual gifts.

This morning in closing, we're going to take this opportunity to have another powerful encounter with God; the giver of spiritual gifts. We're going to ask Him to change our hearts and to do a work in them so that we view others as He does and have the compassion towards others as He does. We're going to ask Him, with full expectation of receiving it, to fill us with His Holy Spirit which ensures that we are motivated and compelled by His agape love. Again we are reminded, we are 'The Gifted!'