

Spiritual Gifts (Part I)

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[0 : 00] So, for those of you who were here last night, you are aware that our topic this morning that we're going to be spending the rest of our time on is the spiritual gifts.

We're calling this retreat the Symphony of Grace, the idea being that the body of Christ is like this great symphony that we all have a part to play and that the vision of the church is that everybody, as we play our individual parts, that those parts harmonize into a kind of symphonic celebration of God's grace.

And so that's what we're going to be exploring. I gave some reasons last night for why I think that this is the right time to be talking about this topic in the life of our church.

For people who may think this is kind of random or unexpected thing for us to be talking about, it is. We have not talked about this in some time. But the reasons I gave last night were these, that if we want to be a light in the world as a church, if we want to grow together as a community, if we want to know our place in that community, the role that each of us is called to play, if we have any hope of remaining unified as a community, if we desire to discern God's calling and his will for us in our lives as we make life-shaping decisions.

And then lastly, if we want to know the needs in this community that we're here specifically to meet. For all of these reasons, we have to understand the spiritual gifts.

[1 : 38] And so that's what we're going to be talking about this morning. So this is session one, understanding spiritual gifts. So what I want to do in this first session is just to talk about spiritual gifts in general.

And I just want to start by making something clear. And that is that I, as a pastor, as somebody who has sort of been in a variety of churches and with a variety of beliefs about the Holy Spirit and the role of the Spirit in the life of believers, I'm here as someone who believes in all of the signs and wonders.

I'm somebody who believes in the ongoing presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of God's community. I wasn't always in a church like that, and I wasn't always in that place theologically, but I've come to that place over the years.

I believe that it all continues as it was in the early church through today. And there's basically one simple reason why I believe this, and that is that there's absolutely nowhere in Scripture where it says that it ceases.

And so therefore, I must conclude that it continues through this day. Experiences aside, and I want to hit some sort of terminology just to clarify things.

[2 : 59] There are some terms that get thrown around with the concept of the spiritual gifts. There's a term called cessationist, and that is the theological position that treats the supernatural gifts such as tongues and healing, saying that those are things that functioned only in the early church but not today.

There's also a term charismatic. Charismatics believe that the gifts are given to every generation and should be used in accordance with Scripture. Charismatic does not refer to a denomination, but to a whole variety of denominations that hold that theological view.

There's another word you may have heard, charismaniac. Now, charismaniac, that's the kind of caricatured view that a lot of people have of charismatics.

This idea that there's a – or it can actually be a reality where there's a disproportionately high emphasis placed on the gifts, where apostolic authority is given to words as people speak them, things like that.

That's not where we would be. And then there's lastly the term Pentecostal, and Pentecostal refers to essentially a grouping of denominations similar to charismatics, but most of them believe that speaking in tongues is the one true sign of baptism.

[4 : 21] So if any of you are from a Pentecostal background, you know that typically evidence of genuine conversion, evidence of baptism in the Spirit is speaking in tongues.

And unless you've done that, you've not been baptized. And so people will ask, well, when was your baptism? Oh, I was baptized with water on such and such a day. Well, when were you baptized in the Holy Spirit? Right.

So we, our stance would be essentially a charismatic position, which all that means is this, that we believe that the Holy Spirit continues to work and empower the gifts of his people as it was in the early church, that that continues through the present day.

And I got to kind of give you a disclaimer here. I'm a total novice when it comes to this stuff. I'm a total novice. I, I, I have been a Christian for 17 years and I've been a pastor for, I guess, roughly nine years.

And I'm only very, just very much beginning to come to understand the third person of the Trinity and the role that the Spirit plays in the life of Christians, particularly through spiritual gifts, because it's a profound mystery.

[5 : 32] And so I have my theology. I have what I've read. I have what I've studied. I've had what I've learned from mentors. And then I have experiences that really can't be put into any category.

And so I'm only beginning to understand these things. So I'm not an expert, but my role in our time here is essentially to do the best that I can do to offer solid, faithful, biblical teaching on this topic.

So that's kind of my job this morning is to do the best I can to teach what the Bible says and how the Bible guides us as we understand the spiritual gifts. But you have a role too.

And your role is throughout this time that we're together is to pray. And the reason that I'm asking you to do that, even while I'm up here talking, even while you're sitting there, when you're having conversations, when you're taking walks in the meadow, that you would use the time that you're here to pray.

And I would ask that you specifically pray for the Holy Spirit to empower our congregation. And the reason that I'm saying that is because at the end of the day, what we're actually talking about when we talk about this is the creator God of the universe coming himself in person to empower his people for the work that he's called them to do.

[6 : 53] And if you just get your mind around that, that's not something that happens through spreadsheets and systematic theological outlines. It happens through prayer because we're actually asking that a person would come and interact with us in this way.

So please pray throughout all of this. As we kind of move into this topic, as I said, I do believe that the gifts of the Spirit continue to the present day.

But I do think that there's an ongoing problem in the church that they're often very much misunderstood. I think people misunderstand and therefore they misuse the spiritual gifts.

In the opening of the passage that we read a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 12, Paul has this extended discussion of the spiritual gifts. And he says, Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

And I don't want to miss that because that word uninformed can either be translated ignorant or ignored.

[8 : 02] And I think both are distinct problems when it comes to spiritual gifts. Some people are ignorant. Other people simply ignore them altogether. And I don't want us to fall into either category.

It's also worth noting this, that the issue in Corinth was not that people did not believe in the spiritual world. That wasn't the problem.

It's that they had come out of a very pagan background. And Paul's concern is that they would have knowledge and understanding regarding how to differentiate the works of the Holy Spirit from all of the other spiritual forces in their lives.

And I'm somebody who believes that the spiritual world is a rich and vibrant world that we can only barely perceive. And so the question, I think, is not so much whether there is a spirit or nothing at all.

The question is discerning the work of the Holy Spirit as being distinct from other works of other spirits. But what I want to do here is just to talk about a couple of things.

[9 : 09] I think it's worth spending a whole session just making sure that we have a clear understanding of all of this. That we're not ignorant, nor are we ignoring these things. And so we're going to talk about the source of spiritual gifts and then the nature of spiritual gifts.

But before we do that, as I just invited you all to pray, it's only appropriate that we begin by praying together. Lord, we do recognize that we're talking about a profound mystery.

We're talking about the reality that you who are the God of all creation, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who spoke matter and energy into being, that, Lord, you would imbue us with your presence.

That's something that goes beyond anything that we can understand. And yet we know that because of that promise and because of your Holy Spirit, not only can we with confidence explore what it means to minister out of spiritual gifts, but we can also be equally confident that you speak to us through your word.

That same spirit illuminates your word. And so we pray, Lord, that you would illuminate your word to us this morning for our edification and for your glory. In your son's name. Amen.

[10 : 30] So the Apostle Luke wrote a book called the Book of Acts. And you may know that Acts is actually the second volume of Luke.

Luke. So Luke is essentially Luke's gospel part one. And Acts is Luke's gospel part two. And so it just picks up right where Luke's gospel leaves off.

And if you know anything about Luke, who was Luke writing to? Theophilus, right? And so Luke is writing this faithful account of Jesus in the early church to his friend Theophilus.

And he begins Acts chapter one by kind of referring to his first book, his gospel account. And he says this. In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. So he says, O Theophilus, in the first book, I began to tell you or I told you all that Jesus began to do and teach.

[11 : 48] Now what's the implication there? If the first book was about what Jesus began to do and teach, the second book is about what? What Jesus continues to do and teach.

The clear implication is that Acts is now going to tell us what Jesus continues to do and teach. The problem is also in Acts, in the opening chapter, we see what? Jesus is taken up into heaven, right?

As he promised would happen, what we call the ascension, right? And a lot of times we miss this as Protestant evangelicals, but Jesus was in bodily form.

And so when it says he was taken up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, there is some figurative language about being taken up and all of that. But the reality we need to hold on to is that Jesus was in bodily form.

And he ascended bodily to the throne of God. So how can Jesus ascend and be present at the right hand of the Father and at the same time continue to teach and to minister in the world?

[12 : 56] How's that possible? Through his church. Through his church. It says in John chapter 14, In other words, he says, And then in verse 16, And it's amazing, this promise is fulfilled in Acts.

If you read those early chapters of Acts, you see Christians who are preaching with power and teaching with power. And they're healing. And they're casting out demons.

And they're evangelizing. And they're showing mercy. And they have a kind of supernatural generosity where they're giving and sharing everything that they have with one another. They're planting churches and starting new believing communities.

And this is what? This is everything that you would expect if Jesus were there continuing in his ministry. It's everything that you would expect to see.

But what we see is that it is now happening through his people. And, you know, Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7 through 12, those verses say something pretty amazing.

[14 : 31] They say that Jesus actually distributed. It sort of portrays Jesus as this conqueror. You know, who's kind of plundered hell, right? And he's come out.

And these ancient kings would come out. And they would take the spoils of their conquest. And as they rode back into their home city, they would take the spoils of war. And they would throw them out to the cheering crowds as the crowds lined up on either side of the road.

Well, that image is in Ephesians 4. But the gifts, what Jesus is distributing is actually his own power. His own power for ministry.

He's taking his entire ministry and he's dividing it up and he's giving it to his people. And you've got to understand, this is the power to bring healing.

It's the power to bring reconciliation. It's the power to renew people emotionally and spiritually and psychologically. It's the power to restore societies, to redeem culture.

[15 : 34] All of this power, the power that will one day, as Tolkien says, make everything sad come untrue. It's that power distributed to his people.

So one way to think about the spiritual gifts is this. If somebody asks, well, how do I understand the spiritual gifts? One way to think about it is this. Spiritual gifts are the continued ministry of Jesus Christ through individual Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual gifts are the continued ministry of Jesus Christ through individual Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are the spiritual gifts from Jesus or are they from the Holy Spirit? Yes. So you can imagine. I mean, just think about this for a minute.

You know, there are times and some of you have maybe had the same experience. Where, you know, there'll be times when I'm like assembling Ikea furniture or I'm fixing something or I'm trying to figure out how to open a toy to change a battery or I'm cooking.

[16 : 48] You know, I'm doing something and the boys come up and they want to help and God bless them. And that's amazing. And I just want to have some interaction with them. But I know that they really can't do anything. So I will sort of give them a safe tool or I'll give them something and I'll let them pretend to help.

Okay, here you can put this ingredient in. And, you know, here you can stir or you can kind of put this battery in. And then they kind of go away and then I kind of fix it. You know, thanks for your help.

You know. And I think a lot of times we think that that's our relationship with Jesus. You know, that Jesus is sort of doing the real work and that we're sort of there.

And every now and then Jesus kind of hands us a situation that we really can't mess up and just kind of lets us tinker around. But then he kind of does it. And I think that that is undervaluing and underappreciating the role and the responsibility that we've been given.

That that's not what the Bible says. The Bible actually says that Jesus works through us. Now, sometimes he works in spite of us. Sometimes he fixes things that we mess up.

[17 : 53] Sometimes and in all the time it is his work and his power happening through us. But the role that we play is much more central than we think. That the church is in fact the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

This is, by the way, this is another retreat. But this is one of the main reasons that we believe in the power of church planting. Because when we start a church, when you see any church start and grow up in a place where there are no churches, you're actually seeing the, in many ways, embodied presence of Jesus Christ in that community.

That's why we want to see churches in every neighborhood. That's why we want to see healthy gospel-centered churches multiplying. But the Bible actually says that God works through his community.

We're the continued ministry. So imagine a white light, a pure white light being refracted through a prism and all these different hues and colors. That's a great way to think about the spiritual gifts.

So the source of the spiritual gifts is God, right? It's Jesus' ministry. And the Father and the Son send us the Spirit. And the Spirit is who empowers us to continue the ministry of Jesus.

[19 : 08] So that's, that's the nature of spiritual, or that's the source of spiritual gifts. Now I want to push a little further, excuse me, and I want to talk about the nature of spiritual gifts. I want to read a little more in 1 Corinthians 12, 4 through 7.

Paul says, So what a cool definition, right?

A spiritual gift is what? It is a manifestation of the Spirit. A manifestation of the Spirit that comes to us freely. It's a gift. We don't earn it. We don't buy it.

We can't get it somewhere. It's freely given to us for one purpose, to serve the common good in a way that glorifies God. Right? So a spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Spirit that comes to us freely to serve the common good.

So I want to break that down. The first thing that Paul says is that spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Spirit. So I want you to think about that. They're not products of our ability.

[20 : 24] That's important to say. You guys are phenomenally gifted people. You're intelligent. You're well-educated. You have tremendous resources at your disposal. You have incredible gifts in terms of your natural talents.

But this is a not, when we talk about spiritual gifts, these are not things that are products of our own innate ability. There are specific ways in which the Holy Spirit of God manifests Himself and His power through our lives.

And that makes them very distinct. So I want to give you a couple of things that spiritual gifts are not. Okay? Spiritual gifts are not, for instance, talents. They're not talents.

All people are made in God's image. And so all people, by virtue of being made in God's image, have innate talents and abilities. And most of these talents we inherit from our parents.

Right? They're genetic. We inherit them. But only Christians who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, only Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit are endowed with spiritual gifts.

[21 : 27] So they're not inherited. They're bestowed. They're gifts that are freely given. So only if you've been baptized, only if you've come to faith in Christ, only then do you have access to spiritual gifts.

So someone may be a very talented cook, but that does not mean that they have the spiritual gift of hospitality. You see the difference? Somebody may be very intellectually gifted, but that does not mean that they have the spiritual gift of knowledge or discernment.

Somebody may be a very talented public speaker, but they may not be gifted as a preacher of the gospel. Now, why is it important to point this out? It's because the church very, very, very often loses sight of this.

And we take people who are very talented, and we endow them with spiritual authority, when they may not necessarily have the appropriate spiritual gifts.

Right? I think we very often confuse the two. There are church elder boards and vestries and parish councils full of talented, well-resourced, successful people who nevertheless have the absolute wrong spiritual gifts when it comes to that role.

[22 : 51] Right? Or the opposite may be true. Sometimes we think that there is a talent, and we confuse that with a spiritual gift, but the opposite can also be true.

Someone may not have a talent, and yet they have a spiritual gift that enables them to do things that you would never think that a person like that would be able to do. You know, one of the best examples of this is when you compare Charles Spurgeon to D.L. Moody.

Right? You don't know who these are. That's fine. Get it, right? Spurgeon and Moody? Oh, it's so funny. Charles Spurgeon is someone, they're both preaching around the same time, a century or two ago, and they both were, well, Charles Spurgeon was somebody they called the Prince of Preachers.

He was a master, master public speaker. He spoke with beautiful, incredible eloquence, and people would just rave at the kind of beauty of his speaking, and he was a very, very, very effective preacher, one of the greatest preachers of his day.

And then you have D.L. Moody, who has maybe a fourth-grade level education, horrible grammar, horrible diction, right? Always constantly using poor grammar, constantly kind of tripping over himself, and yet God used him to bring tremendous revival as a preacher of the gospel.

[24 : 11] Both incredibly effective preachers, one, a naturally gifted public speaker. They said he could have been a politician extraordinaire, one who never even made it out of grammar school, and yet God used them both in powerful ways.

Why? Because it doesn't actually have to do necessarily with your innate talent or your education. It has to do with the power of God at work through you, right? So spiritual gifts are not talents.

Another point to make, spiritual gifts are not the same as church offices. Okay, so there are three offices given to us in Scripture to sort of govern the church.

What are they? Bishops, priests, and deacons. Right, so bishops, priests, and deacons. That's what we as Anglicans believe are the three offices given in Scripture.

So any Christian can have any gift. We don't think that there's any limitation. Any Christian can have any gift. And all that depends on is what God has assigned to them.

[25 : 12] But the difference is only those Christians who are called, qualified, and ordained serve in the offices of church leadership. So what does that mean? That there are many people with pastoral gifts, many people with leadership gifts, many people with preaching gifts, many people with teaching gifts, many people with all of the classic gifts that you would imagine would be in a pastoral office.

And yet those people are not necessarily called to be pastors. And what we need to understand is that's a really, really, really good thing. Right? Most people with those gifts who come to me and they say, I'm thinking about being a pastor.

The first thing I will say is you should probably think about something else. And the reason is because what we need is we need pastors and prophets and preachers and teachers and shepherds and leaders way out beyond the walls of the church.

Right? Every vocational sphere, every field, we need people with these spiritual gifts in those fields. So please don't confuse a gift and an office.

Right? Just because you have the gifts doesn't necessarily mean that you're called to the office. We do need pastors. We need a few good pastors. But we're the people in the background.

[26 : 23] We're the ones who are kind of patching you up and sending you back out. If you want to be on the front lines, figure out if there's a way that you can use your gifts there. So gifts are not talents.

Gifts are not church offices. The third thing I'll say is this. Spiritual gifts are not the same as Christian responsibilities. Also worth pointing out, right?

So all Christians have certain responsibilities, right? All Christians are called to show mercy. But some of you in this room have the gift of mercy. And we'll talk about what that means.

All Christians are called to evangelism. Did you know that? You know, it's interesting. We do these kind of open prayers during the, during, you know, every now and then we'll do an open prayers of the people and we pray for the government and the people will pray.

And we pray for people who are hurting. We pray for unemployment and people will pray aloud. And we pray for all those who don't yet know the Lord that they will believe the gospel. Crickets. And then we sort of move on.

[27 : 31] Now, I don't know why that is. But I do think that evangelism is particularly challenging for us in this day and age. I think a lot of us struggle to know how to think about that. Maybe that will be next year's retreat topic.

But I want to remind you here and now that all Christians have the responsibility to share the gospel in the ways that we're able to do that. But some of you have the gift of evangelism. We'll talk about that more in a little while.

Also, we're all called to give sacrificially to the church. And yet some of us are endowed with the gift of generosity and giving. So if you say, I would give, but it's not my spiritual gift, that's not going to fly at Advent.

So spiritual gifts are not the same as Christian responsibilities. Lastly, spiritual gifts are not the same as spiritual fruit. And that's very, very, very important.

Spiritual fruit is about who we are. Spiritual gifts are about what we do. But what we do ultimately depends on and flows out of who we are.

[28 : 34] Galatians 5.22, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. So the fruit of the Spirit is about what?

It's about Christian character. It's about Christian maturity. And all Christians are called to cultivate all of the fruit of the Spirit. We are all called to have all of the fruit present in our lives.

Those are qualities that we should strive for. But by contrast, no one but Jesus has all the spiritual gifts. Right? We all have two, three, four gifts, but nobody has all of them.

But by contrast, we're all called to have all the fruit. Again, a lot of people make this mistake. A lot of churches, a lot of small groups, a lot of Christian non-profit groups. They confuse spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit.

And they take people who have tremendous gifts and they put them in positions of power and influence and leadership. But spiritually, they're infants. Very little in the way of spiritual fruit.

[29 : 37] But we're impressed with people who are good speakers. And we're impressed with people who can draw a crowd. We're impressed with people who are dynamic. We're impressed with people who have charisma, who can cast a vision, who can raise money and bring in the support.

We're impressed with those kinds of people, so we put them forward. And yet, there's very little spiritual fruit in their lives. So gifts are useless without fruit.

Right? Our character and maturity must be priorities. So these are some things that spiritual gifts are not. As we said before, spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Spirit.

So think about them as channels or conduits. You know, it may be kind of a weird image to think about a channel kind of going right through your body. Right? But imagine that you have these channels or these conduits that go right through you and God pours the power of His Spirit through those channels and out into the lives of other people.

So they're manifestations of the Spirit. And then he goes on to say that they're manifestations of the Spirit that come to us freely as gifts. And the fact that they are gifts means a couple of things.

[30 : 49] It means, one, that we don't get to choose them. Two, that we must use them. Okay? We don't get to choose them, but we've got to use them.

Right? So in terms of choosing them, I think that that's an important point because I think our tendency is to think in terms of comparisons. Right? We want to compare ourselves to other people in terms of how they look, in terms of what they do for a living, in terms of how successful they are, in terms of what their life is like.

Right? Facebook makes this entirely possible in ways that we can only barely imagine, even 10 years ago. Right? The comparisons that we can make are endless. And this, I think, among Christians can happen in the realm of spiritual gifts.

Right? Certain gifts, and this was happening in Corinth, become elevated in importance. I'll make a confession to you. For years, I wanted to be a musician.

I really wanted to be a musician. And, you know, even as a teenager, I kind of had these dreams and tried to start, you know, we started this, you know, jankety little coffee shop band. And I, you know, I thought we were going places.

[31 : 53] And I, and I, and even, you know, in college and then going on into grad school. And I was even a worship leader for a number of years. I was kind of a volunteer worship leader at a church up in Boston.

Before that, I led worship as a youth minister. And, and I was doing all this and thinking, man, this is what I, I love to do this. This is so great. And then God, in his great wisdom, introduced me to some real musicians.

And then he introduced me to some real worship leaders. Men and women who had tremendous spiritual gifting for such a thing. Right? People like Dan. Right? And I met these people.

You know, people like my wife. You know, I met these people and I, and I, and, and, and, you know, every Sunday we, we in both services get to see the men and women in our church who are called and gifted for this role.

You know, but I began to meet these people and I look at myself and meet these people and look at myself and realize, I don't think I'm the same as them. I don't, I don't think, they have something that I don't have. Right? And I began to realize I think that they have the gift and I don't.

[32 : 58] I'm not called to be a musician. I'm not called to be a worship leader. Right? So what do you do with that? I mean, that could either crush you or it could open you up. It could actually liberate you.

Okay, so this is one thing I know I'm not called to do. Now what am I called to do? Right? Sometimes in focusing so much on the things that we wish we could be doing, the calling that we wish we had, the gifts that we wish we had, we're totally blind to the gifts and the calling that we do have.

Right? So it's important to remember we don't get to choose. Ours is to discern and to understand but not to choose. Right? A little bit later in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says, if the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?

If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose. So the application is this.

Don't compare yourself to other people. Don't give in to envy over other gifts thinking, well, I wish I could do that. Trust that God knows what he's doing.

[34 : 06] Right? In verse 18, as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose. So the fact that they're gifts means we don't get to choose them.

The fact that they're gifts, on the other hand, means that we do need to use them. We do need to use the gifts that we have. Last year, in 2015, a lot of people received gift cards.

And many of these gift cards, for whatever reason, went unused. Think about it right now and think, do you have any gift cards that you've been given that are either in your wallet or in your bag or somewhere at home or maybe in your car or you're not quite sure where they are?

Anybody have these experiences? Some of you I know have had these experiences. Did you know that last year, how much money do you think is tied up in unused gift cards?

\$13 billion. Guess lower. Guess lower. Well, last year, it was \$1 billion. \$1 billion.

[35 : 18] In years past, it's been as high as \$7 billion. Tied up in unused. And this wreaks havoc on companies, right? Because they have to account for that revenue, right? And I don't understand how it all works, but they hate it, right?

It does damage to their books, right? So all of that money just sitting there unused. And the point is, the same is true of the church, right?

The same thing is true of the church, right? We've been given gifts by the Holy Spirit and gifts are meant to be used. But how many of those gifts, how much of that power for ministry is just sitting on the shelf?

You know, gathering dust, lost in a purse somewhere, you know, between the seats, the front seats of your car. I mean, how many of those gifts are just dead weight?

Right? Because a gift card is just plastic until it's spent. It's just a useless little piece of plastic until it's converted into something of value. How many of our gifts are simply useless pieces of plastic that have yet to be converted into anything that has an impact on the economy of the kingdom?

[36 : 27] So gifts are meant to be used. They must be used. So gifts are manifestations of the Spirit and they are gifts. That means they need to be used, but they can't, we can't choose what gifts were given.

And then lastly, the last point I want to make is this, that Paul says the purpose of these gifts is to serve the common good. It's to serve the common good.

In other words, we're given specific gifts that are necessary for the health and the growth of the whole community. And what does the common good mean? It means that we are to both build up the existing community, so look around you, the men and women in this room, that you have gifts that are meant to build them up in one way or another.

And by adding new members through conversion. Right? At the end of the day, there's a lot that the church can do to impact the city for the common good.

Right? A lot that we should be doing in terms of mercy and justice and all of the things that we talk about. But we can't forget that the greatest good is that people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 42] Right? So it's no coincidence that in virtually every place where Paul discusses spiritual gifts, he does so in the image of the church as a human body. Every time he talks about it.

So you want to understand what it means to serve the common good. Think about the image of a human body. You know, your body is made up of trillions of cells. Some of you who are doctors and medical professionals, you could do better than I could at explaining this.

But your body is made up of trillions of individual cells and each of these cells has a specific role to play in the overall health and growth of your body.

Right? And there are many different kinds of cells and yet there's a common link between all of the cells in your body. They all share what?

The same DNA. Right? They all share the same DNA. Different cells, different functions, different appearances, all that, but they all share the same DNA. So the DNA is what joins your cells in perfect cooperation with every other cell and the DNA is what instructs each cell how to function specifically as a part of the whole.

[38 : 55] So being a Christian means that we're like cells who share the same DNA of Jesus Christ. Right? Jesus is the one who unifies us. Jesus is the one who coordinates the effort.

Jesus is the one who instructs each of us how we are to serve the role we are to play. And there's a book called *In the Lightness of God* written by a guy named Dr. Paul Brand and he makes a really striking analogy using this image because he says that there's a kind of cell that is sometimes found in the human body that is a healthy cell.

It's a functional cell. It's a thriving cell. And by all appearances a cell like this you can't distinguish it from other cells in the body.

Even white blood cells can't distinguish this cell from any other cell in the body. It's indistinguishable. There's only one difference. These cells instead of seeking the common good they seek their own good.

They seek their own good at the expense of the larger body. So what is the name for these cells? Cancer.

[40 : 09] Right? That's the thing that makes a cancer cell a cancer cell. It doesn't seek the common good. It doesn't play the role that is meant to benefit and grow the body. It seeks and prioritizes its own good and its own survival.

It's called cancer. And as Dr. Brand says the disloyalty found in these cells results in some of the most traumatic damage a body can sustain. Right?

So when Paul says that we're part of the body he's saying more than you're in the club. Right? He's saying more than okay now you can be a member of this social club.

Right? Because a member of a club you know I joined a fraternity in college and I was active for a couple of years and then I got disillusioned with the whole thing and the whole system and I went inactive.

Right? And once I was inactive they just went right on without me. Right? They didn't need me they just steamrolled right on ahead. And that was great. Right? No pressure on me. It's not the same in the body of Christ.

[41 : 14] It's not the same. You can't just go inactive. Right? But inactivity is a loss. It does damage. There's a felt harm that is done when we simply decide to go inactive.

You know 1 Corinthians 12 26 Paul says if one part of the body suffers all suffer together if one is honored all rejoice together. you know I think one of the greatest fallacies in our church today and I'm not necessarily pointing at anybody in this room but one of the great fallacies is to think that church is a place that I can go and I can enjoy some music and I can make some friends and maybe find somebody to date and maybe hear some decent speaking that will encourage me for the week and then I go home.

And that's what church is. And we fail to recognize that a church is a dynamic living spirit filled organism defined by interdependence and that every person there whether they know it or not has a role to play like a cell has a role to play in a human body.

So that consumerist mindset is I think something that is a catalyst for an enormous amount of cancer that exists within the church. Right?

Because the reality is this could not be further from the truth. So I want to take I want to encourage you to take two things from this kind of first session here as we talk about understanding spiritual gifts and that is this.

[42 : 48] The first thing to take is this. You belong here. You may be here and you may not know a single soul and good on you for coming. What an amazing act of courage that is.

I would be terrified to do that. I would be terrified. In fact, I probably wouldn't have done it. But you're here and maybe you don't know a single person here. I want to tell you this.

You belong here. Because even if you're not quite sure why you're here and even if maybe other people aren't quite sure why you're here. Just kidding.

God knows why you're here. You're here for a reason. You're a cell in this body. You have a role to play. What is it? And the second thing is this.

We need you. Right? There are needs here that only you can meet and there are hands here that only you can hold. We need you. So I want to stop right there and what we're going to do is this.

[43 : 52] I'm going to invite Josh to come up and Josh is going to what we're going to do now is we're going to transition to our discussion groups. And what we've done is we've taken the liberty of assigning you to a discussion group and we've done this.

So there are people from our Brooklyn congregation here and we've assigned Brooklyn people to Brooklyn people and there are people from the Columbia Heights congregation and we've assigned Columbia Heights people to Columbia Heights people.

And Josh is going to tell you a little bit more about how that is organized. But here's the question I want you to think about. I want you to go away, meet up with your groups, I want you to be gone and then I want you to be back here by 1045.

So you have about 20 minutes for this first discussion. We'll have a little more time in the next breakout. But based on what you've heard here's the question. I just want you to share your own personal experience with the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.

I mean as honest as you're willing to be share your comfort level. You know have you been in churches where this was a major emphasis or not? Is this the first time you've ever heard this before? Right?

[45 : 01] What are your reactions? Based on what you've heard, how are you reacting? How are you feeling? What questions are coming to mind? I want you to go and I want you to share and then be back here at 1045. And Josh, why don't you come up and tell us how we're going to break out.

Thank you. Thank you.