

What are Spiritual Gifts?

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning everyone. Oh that's enthusiastic. Good morning everyone. That's great to see you, it's great to be here and welcome to our new sermon series on God's gifts. We've already celebrated that amazing gift of Jesus who came, probably some of you have already packed your Christmas decorations away, but we're here to celebrate also that amazing gift that we were given at Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit and all the gifts that God brings for us and being open maybe in ourselves, being vulnerable is to receiving that all God has for us because often we remain a bit closed to this amazing gift that God gives us to say it's for you, it's for each and every one of us and sometimes we need to grasp that because we think it's all for somebody else and that it's not for us. We're going to explore that this morning but first I'm going to tell you a little story about a friend of mine called Steve. Steve is a plumber, I've known Steve for a little while, he was a neighbour for ages and I don't know about you, I love decorating and if I come round to your house I promise I will look down the back of your radiators to see whether you have decorated properly. I have struggled for years with decorating down the back of radiators, you know it's that thing isn't it, do you bleed the whole system, do you take it down, what do you do with it? Well there I am one day looking at what I'm going to do in my hallway when Steve knocks on my door and he says what you're doing and I said Steve I'm trying to get this roller down the back of a radiator. He said

God Clive goes back over to his house and as they do plumbers with a white van, not all plumbers have white vans but Steve has a white van, at the back of his white van he produces this. It's a bit of plastic with a bolt through it. All you do apparently is you attach it to your radiator, you took that down, you bleed it on the other side, you either lift it forward or lift it off, you do your decorating behind it and put it back on. Job done. Why hadn't anybody told me in all the houses that I have lived in about this gift? It is so easy. Which made me think in my early days as a Christian nobody had told me about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, about everything that the Holy Spirit had for me, to share with me, to give with me. This great gift that makes life so much easier and gives it so much more purpose, to bring unity, gifts for everybody to use in that right time and I want to encourage us this morning that we should earnestly seek the gifts because that's what we're told to do.

It is that easy just to be open and to get the job done. So we're going to look at those this morning and other people might not recognize them but we recognize them and others will then recognize them through us as to how we use them. I can't believe that for years and years I went on. It was a bit like church, you know, I went to church for years. I could process with the best, I knew liturgy but why had nobody told me about these gifts that were available to me which now are so freely available to use for each and every one of us? If only we would do that. So here are some of the gifts. First of all is wisdom and wise counsel. Wisdom and wise counsel. It's, it isn't just giving somebody your opinion.

You know, we're all ready to give somebody our opinion, aren't we at the moment? Or do you want to have, do you want a slice of my opinion? This is much different. This is from God. This is God's wise wisdom and counsel. A special gift that speaks into people's lives and decisions. We pray for them.

We think about what, what do you want for this person or what do you want for me? Maybe you're in a position at the moment where you're having to make a decision about a life change, career change, whatever that might be. Ask the Lord to bring you wisdom and wide counsel. And then there's word of knowledge and clear understanding. A word of knowledge is something in that moment where somebody gives you a word that suddenly you think, gosh, yes, I needed that. Mandy's amazing at it. She'll just like come out with a Bible verse in the right place for the right person at the right time. She's got an amazing gift of bringing a word of knowledge at that right time. And it helps people not only in teaching, but growing in faith. It builds us up. It helps us. It brings

clarity and is often associated with prophecy, with godly discernment. And then there is faith. Faith. I don't know about you,

[5 : 27] I've met people who have made faith for me so complicated. Why does it have to be make people so complicated? You know, faith, this gift of faith that we have to share and that is given to us produces results in a passionate belief that turns our whole life into seeking God in so many different ways. And yet focuses us afresh. You look at life differently when you have faith. Somebody said to me the other day, you know, my goodness, I'm finding it really complicated. I said, I'm not. My faith is quite simple. And I love that little thing over Christmas, those things you look and says, I believe.

And I think that's just where I am really. I believe. Ask for that gift of faith. Then there's healing. Paul is talking about healing. And in the early church, healing was a large part of what went on.

And yet so often we think, gosh, you know, we don't pray for healing. We don't ask for healing. We don't seek out healing. John Wimber, the great John Wimber once said, when we pray, some people get healed. When we don't pray, nobody gets healed. Let's just pray.

And maybe people are looking for healing around you in their relationships, maybe in their jobs, in their circumstances, as well as physical healing. You know, ask for that gift of healing.

Then comes miraculous acts and wonderful deeds. And I don't think we talk about these enough. You know, things that we have talked about that have happened and we say, my goodness, yes, that we didn't, we didn't see that coming. That was really unexpected. That was fantastic.

[7 : 18] And yet we don't share that. We don't tell each other that we've been asking for that and praying for that. Miraculous acts that we should be sharing. And I've heard of lives changed. I'm humbled by the stories that I hear. I'm humbled by the stories in my own life of where I have seen miraculous acts.

We need to share that more because they come from God and ask for them more. And indeed, it's a power that are given to change people's lives. And Matt Redmond sings a great song. It says, every blessing you pour out, I'll turn back to praise.

And we should be praising God and thanking him for these gifts that he wants to give us, if only we ask for them and share them with each other. Proclamation and prophecy. Proclamation and prophecy. We proclaim Jesus in all we do and say, not just what we say, but how we live our lives. Ask for that gift about how do I do that? When somebody at the Tesco's checkout says to you, oh, I saw you at church and you might have that.

Rather than just say, hmm, yeah, carry on. Talk about your faith. It's a great opportunity. Say to the Lord, give me the words, give me the words because I haven't got them. And the Lord will give you words to say. In the Old Testament, Paul says to the church in Corinth, as it came from proclamation and prophecy from ages gone by, he gives us this opportunity, as Paul says, power to proclaim with courage and boldness when we need it.

The next one is distinguishing between spirits. It's very important. You can't have God on one side and nothing on the other. There is always a tug of war because we haven't come to that great day yet when Jesus has come again. The great deceiver, the evil one, will try to deceive us and pull us away.

[9 : 28] Asking for this gift of distinguishing between spirits. We know what's right and wrong, but often there's a blur in the middle. And often we need to know that of distinguishing. I always say in a thing, if it doesn't feel right, I can get a whiff of sulfur around. I know when the devil is prowling around trying to get in the way of good things, trying to get in the way of life, living it to the full. And God will give us the gift to be able to distinguish between that. What is right? What is wrong?

Does this feel right? Where do I need to speak into that as well? And then there is the gift of tongues. This is a great stumbling block for many Christians because people, when we speak in tongues, we speak as a form of praise to God, but also speak in tongues so that people can understand.

In this building, we speak a language called Christianese. Christianese language that a lot of people outside these walls don't even understand and probably frankly switches them off. Maybe speaking in tongues for us is speaking in a language that people understand, where we can connect with people in the everyday. And God will help us to do that in lots of different ways. And then there is the interpretation of tongues.

Spring harvest, 15 years ago, they have a thing called the big top. And on their praising, away having a great time. And a row behind me is a lady who breaks out and sings in a language that I've

never heard before. And I thought, that sounds beautiful. That sounds absolutely wonderful. Two rows in front, there's a lady who screams, turns around and said, you have just called me by name and told me that God loves me in Lithuanian.

[11 : 30] The lady behind us from Birmingham, she's never spoken Lithuanian in her life. This lady in front shared afterwards that she needed to hear that because her friend had brought her to spring harvest and she had lost her faith in God about four years before. And that was restored that day. Interpretation of tongues is really important. We can interpret what people have to say and what they need to say in us and through us. And it is, these gifts are for each and every one of us. And the thing that gets in the way is we think we are not worthy. God gave us these gifts to use, each and every one of us in the right time. Not everybody will have these gifts at the same time.

Maybe you do, but there are different things there to build up the body of Christ for us together, to see God's gifts as a church that is vivid and alive. You know, not everybody knew about a bolt, a piece of plastic with a bolt through. I bet you're going to go home now and think, when I do more decorating, I'm going to go and get a piece of plastic with a bolt through it.

It's going to make life easier. Today, life will be easier as we receive everything that God has for us. What gifts are we as a body of Christ seeking? Are we open to them? Are we ready to open the box?

Are we ready to receive everything that God has for us? Because the reason is, it's for you. It's for you. It's for you. It's for all of us. And you see, when we open the gift of love, that's what he shares for us, to share with other people. Because it is that simple.

It is about releasing the gifts. And the gift of love that God gives for us is used through these gifts. I just want to say today, we have been given these gifts to show God's heart to a waiting world.

[13 : 35] And at the beginning of this year, as we enter into this series, let's use the gifts. Let's be ready to receive them. Let's open the box. Let's be vulnerable because we are worthy. We are worthy.

We are worthy. And don't let the evil one tell you otherwise. We are worthy. We are worthy.