

It's Not About You

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[0 : 00] Hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can always connect with us through our website, FCCGreensburg.com, or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in to this audio broadcast. I just pray that God will take His Word today, get me out of the way, and just speak to us to draw us closer to Him and form and shape and mold us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, there were two friends who were sitting down for a nice meal together. And as the waiter came to take their order, they each requested a fillet of sole. Now, too rich for my blood. I don't even know what that is.

But they knew what they were talking about. And so about 20 minutes later, the waiter comes with a platter that had two fish on it. One was pretty good size, but the other was much smaller.

And before any awkwardness could fill the air, who gets what, the one man reaches over to serve his friend. He grabbed the small piece and he placed it on the other man's plate.

[1 : 09] Well, looking at the small piece on his plate in disbelief, the man says, well, you certainly do have nerve. And the other man said, well, what seems to be the problem? He said, well, you gave me the small piece and you took the large one for yourself.

So he says to him, well, tell me what would you have done in that situation? The guy says, well, if I were serving, I would have given you the big piece. And that's when he smiled and said, well, I guess it worked out great for both of us, just the way we wanted.

So if I could give you one very encouraging, sarcastic moment phrase today, it would be this. It's not about you.

For you, it's about me. And for me, it's about you. See, some of you are about to probably turn off the radio there and just come after me until I said the second part of that phrase.

But the reality for you and me both, who were born with this very sinful, selfish nature, is that when we're left to our own flesh and our own desires, man, we can make it all about us.

[2 : 14] We know that. When the flesh flares up and we're not being led by the Holy Spirit, we can be some pretty selfish and demanding hoarders of our time, our money.

And today we'll talk about our gifts. So welcome back here to week nine. And I'll tell you, as we walk through different books of the Bible, some are more on the teaching and encouraging side because we need that.

Life is hard and we need the encouragement that God gives. But I'll tell you, 1 Corinthians that we've been in for nine weeks now, it's a little bit more in your face. It's a little more on the correction and the rebuke side of God's word.

And that's okay too. Because as a follower of Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit, my greatest desire should be to walk intimately with the Lord. And because of the grace that he has shown me, I should want to use my life to love and lead others to the ultimate hope found in Christ.

So for any visitors who are listening today, let me just give you a quick snapshot of this series in the book of 1 Corinthians. It's called The Power of Unity for Good Reason.

[3 : 22] This church that the Apostle Paul is writing to as he's been led by the Holy Spirit, it's an absolute train wreck. How many of you have ever been a part of a church where as you got deeper into the inner workings, you thought to yourself, you know, I'm pretty sure the church of Jesus Christ should not look like this.

Yeah, I'm pretty sure you're probably raising your hand and I am too. And Paul felt the same way about a church that he started several years earlier in the city of Corinth. A morally bankrupt community where evil was celebrated and good was scoffed at.

A city where their false religion was based around temple priestesses who acted as prostitutes. A town where fighting and drunkenness and even sexual immorality were par for the course. Even other believers blushed at the behavior of the Corinthians. And yet, I love how God can take us in our messes and our struggles. Even our wrong attitudes and our bad motives. And he can completely transform your heart and mind to beat for him. See, he is in the business of changing lives in every way. And while Paul led many of these Corinthians to Christ as they began their journey of walking with Jesus, it appears now after several years have gone by that many of them have taken a bit of a detour.

[4 : 48] They've strayed off the straight and the narrow. However, that you want to put it, basically they've backslidden. And the fruit of their disobedience is pride, overconfidence, unhealthy leadership and followership, sexual immorality, fighting, factions, drunkenness, looking down on others, and the list just keeps going.

And one more issue that they're dealing with here is the abuse of spiritual gifts that they've been given by the Lord. So turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And we're going to spend about three weeks on spiritual gifts because, if I'm honest, this is a pretty controversial topic even in the church today.

A subject that needs some clarity and even someone to grab us by the face and say, when it comes to your spiritual gifts, it's not about you.

It's about the church being edified and a lost world hearing about the hope they can have in Jesus. So let's start here. Grab your Bibles if you haven't already.

1 Corinthians chapter 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And here's what it says. Verse 1. Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

[6 : 06] In other words, there's some misinformation going on, just like there is today, about spiritual gifts. And Paul is trying to clear things up to bring order.

Okay? Verse 2. He says, So here's Paul taking a shot at the false things they used to worship, saying, listen, those things are mute.

They can't even talk. They can't even really help you in any way like the true God of the universe that you now claim to follow. Verse 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. So we can see that there's some crazy stuff happening in their worship services that is not in line with the Word of God.

They're claiming it's from the Holy Spirit. But Paul makes it clear that anything that doesn't match the apostles' teaching, the Word of God in context, is not from the Spirit. Such as verse 3, saying that Jesus is cursed.

[7 : 15] Instead, someone led by the Spirit is going to say Jesus is Lord. And apparently that kind of stuff is happening in their fellowship. And what we're seeing, Paul is coming into a fellowship of believers who've been giving these spiritual gifts.

But in their disobedience, they've taken something very precious from God, and they're using it very selfishly. They're letting a gift from God they did nothing to earn create factions where some are seen as more important gifts, others as less important.

And they're using these gifts for self-glorification. Now, can I tell you something really important? If Satan can't keep you from coming to Jesus, then he will do everything in his power to keep you from looking more like Jesus.

Let me say it again. If Satan can't keep you from coming to Jesus, he will do everything in his power to keep you from actually walking in holiness, looking more like Jesus.

He will try to derail you from this big, fancy theological word, sanctification. All that means is looking more like Jesus every day as we pursue holiness, to live God's way.

[8 : 24] And one of the greatest lessons we can learn that echoes through the Scripture in many ways is that this show is not about you. And it's not about me. It's all about Jesus.

And when it's about him, he will use our spiritual gifts to affect others for the kingdom of God. And there's amazing freedom. There's amazing joy when we take our eyes off of ourselves and we start loving God and loving people.

And when you get a body of believers, whether it's a church of 50 out in the country, a church of 500 here in town, a church of 5,000 in the big city, or sometimes you can even switch those around.

Regardless of the size of your body of believers, when the local church gets this and has no desire to make church or spiritual gifts about us, wow.

Look out, man, because that's when the church, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, experienced the power of God in their midst, drawing a lost world to Christ.

[9 : 27] And I love John 3.30, where John the Baptist, his disciples are trying to make his popularity a contest between him and Jesus. Where John had prepared the way for Jesus, all of a sudden Jesus is now going into his ministry and people are being drawn away from John the Baptist to Jesus.

And his disciples don't like that. And they're like, well, what are we going to do about this? And John the Baptist, I love his heart. He basically says, no way, man. Don't try to do this.

Don't compare me even to the Messiah. I'm just a messenger telling others about him. I can't even tie that man's sandals. I'm not even worthy. And he says these words, Jesus must become greater and I must become less.

Imagine if that sentence guided your life, the difference it makes. Jesus must become greater. I must become less. So if you're a note taker, here's how you can get to our outline.

If you got your phone, you can always download the YouVersion, Y-O-U version Bible app. Go to the menu. Go to events. Click on First Christian Church of Greensburg.

[10 : 36] And you can see our outline for this message that way. But here's what I want you to see today. I'm going to give you a big, long sentence today. And we're going to do it one chunk at a time. So first, we may have different gifts.

We may have different gifts. The New Testament contains a few different lists of spiritual gifts that have some differences. And so I'm not sure that the authors, that the Holy Spirit was trying to make a rigid list, but simply showing general categories of gifting where the Lord can give these to build His church up and to reach a lost world.

And here's the thing about spiritual gifts. They're not your natural talents, skills, and abilities, although God gives us those as well. In the words of John MacArthur, spiritual gifts are supernaturally given by the Holy Spirit only and always to believers in Jesus Christ without exception.

Spiritual gifts are special capacities bestowed on believers to equip them to minister supernaturally to others, especially to each other.

So look at the next verse with me, 1 Corinthians 12, verse 4. And here's what Paul says. There are different kinds, or another word that can be translated as, is varieties.

[11 : 55] There are different varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. So here's the awesome part. The Holy Spirit understands the needs of the big C church according to God's plan for her, but also the specific needs for the little C church, the local body of believers I belong to, like FCC, maybe like another church where you go.

But he knows what gifts are needed in each church. And your gifts are just as important as mine and vice versa. There's no rank. There's no reason to boast.

The word for gift used here in this verse is the word where we get charisma. And it means gift of grace or free gift. It's making a strong point that this is from the Spirit that lives inside of every single born-again believer in Jesus.

It is a gift that is given upon salvation. So let's keep expanding this sentence. So while we may have different gifts, he also says we may have different gifts, different ways of using them.

Different ways of using them. So in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 5, he says there are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. You could also translate that as there are variety of ministries.

[13 : 17] So let me give you an example of this. God, in his perfect sense of humor, has given me the gift of preaching and teaching. Something I never felt like I was gifted in as a kid growing up, not even as a believer.

And something I never thought I could do before Christ. But here we are. And specifically, even in my early 20s, I never felt called to spend the bulk of my time preaching to children or youth.

I've done lessons, and I always want to be willing to walk through whatever teaching door that God opens. And I love the heart of children when you teach them. But I've always felt more effective and more drawn to teach adults, even at a young age.

But my wife, who also has the gift of teaching, is the opposite of me. She wants nothing to do with teaching adults. She has an incredible gift, though, to teach children.

She was a third-grade teacher in Rush County at Arlington Elementary early on in our marriage. And now she stays home, and she educates our children. And she is absolutely fantastic at it. [14:22] I mean, she's the kind of teacher who, I think if she would have kept it up, she could have been like Indiana Teacher of the Year. She's that good. And I'll never forget one time when we were ministering in Tennessee.

She was the main teacher for the Children's Vacation Bible School. There were several stations, like snacks and games and crafts, and then there was one for teaching. And so each different age group had to go through her session at some point that lasted roughly 45 minutes.

And I'll never forget Edwin Gowen, who had been a teacher for several years and then as a principal had led talented teachers for decades.

And Edwin at this point was probably around 70 years old. He was retired. He was a big, tall, southern gentleman if I've ever met one. He had a contagious, bold, and lovable personality. And as an elder in the church, he came to VBS to see how everything was going. And he just so happened to step into Bethany's classroom to hear a lesson.

[15:28] And when he came out, I can still picture this, he found me. And Edwin had these big eyes. I mean, just when he wanted to make a point and he pointed that finger boldly at me.

And he said, your wife needs to be teaching. She's incredible. And I said, well, I'm a fan too. And she's hot too. So I like that about her. But here's the point.

One of our gifts is the same. And yet God uses them in different ways with a different audience. It doesn't have to be in this little man-made box that we often do.

He takes our unique personalities, our passions, our backgrounds, and simply the way he wired us. And he uses the gifts that he gives in unique ways that fit his perfect calling he has over each of us. So we may have different gifts, different ways of using them. And then third, different impact. A different impact. And this is where pride has to be surrendered and obedient faithfulness to his call has to drive us.

[16:37] So look at verse 6 with me. Back in 1 Corinthians 12. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in every one, it is the same God at work.

So what does that phrase, different kinds of working, mean? Well, we use the New International Version here. But there's a lot of great translations. So I looked at probably the most literal translation of Scripture, at least in print, the New American Standard Bible.

And it says, varieties of effects. So at salvation, the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to you and me. And the Lord uses our God-given uniqueness to share those gifts.

That's what we've already talked about. But then we turn over the results to him. And God is in control of the impact that our spiritual gifts make in edifying the church and winning the lost.

And you know what? That's really good news. I'm really thankful that I'm not in charge of the results. I'm just called, just like you. I'm called to be faithful and to be obedient as I use my gifts for God's glory.

[17:47] I think about a man who passed away back in 1901 that no one really talked about his impact until probably the last few decades when another story became popular.

But he was a Sunday school teacher in Chicago. And usually Sunday school teachers are not household names. And one day this young man came in who could care less about being there. He promised his uncle he would come because he gave him a job at a shoe store.

And so this guy would sleep through class. And we're talking 16, 18, 20 years old. Would sleep through class. Showed very little interest in the things of God. But still, Kimball prayed for him.

Kimball, I'm sorry. Kimball prayed for him. And one day, as he was praying, he felt the Lord say, go tell that young man about Jesus and the salvation I want to bring into his life.

Well, as you can imagine, when God tells you to walk up and have an awkward conversation with someone, he felt very nervous about this. But he was obedient. He walked into that shoe store where that young man was working in the back of the store, found him, and he just laid out the gospel story and then the call to salvation.

[18:58] And then in the awkwardness when he was done, no one really said anything. So he walks back out of the store thinking, man, that kid's never going to come back to church. Well, that young man, right there, in the silence of the shoe store, surrendered his life to Jesus.

God got a hold of him. And to a lot of people's surprise, because of his minimal education, he went on to be the greatest evangelist of his generation. His name was D.L. Moody.

You know, a couple generations later, an evangelist named Mordecai Ham had surely heard of D.L. Moody and probably desired to preach to such large crowds like Moody did.

However, that never happened. His crowds were much smaller. He traveled around doing tent revivals. And one day, a tall, skinny young man from North Carolina, kind of a hardworking farm boy, came to the revival.

And the Lord used Mordecai's words to convict his heart. He surrendered his life to Jesus right there, and he went on to preach in the largest stadiums to millions and millions of people around the world.

[20 : 10] His name was Billy Graham. Listen, God's will is perfect. And whatever spiritual gifts he gives, and however he chooses to use you, whether you're a little-known Edward Kimball, a little-better-known Mordecai Ham, or a household name like Billy Graham, we leave the impact up to him because we're not called to make a certain impact.

We're called to be faithful and let God take care of the results. Because what did Paul say back in chapter 3 of this same book? 1 Corinthians 3, 6, and 7. I planted the seed, Paul says, talking about the seed of the gospel in this Corinthian church.

Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but listen to this, but only God who makes things grow.

So we stay faithful. We stay obedient. We pursue his heart, and we let him decide the impact, based on his perfect will, the impact our lives will make.

And here's something really cool from this passage that's easy to overlook. Look back at 1 Corinthians 12, and let's just reread verses 4 through 6 all together.

[21 : 23] And I want to point this out to you. And since you don't have a screen in front of you like the church will have on Sunday morning, I'm going to kind of show you what I have highlighted in red here. So here's what it says.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit, so talking about the Holy Spirit, distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord, talking about Jesus.

And then verse 6, there are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone, it is the same God, talking about God the Father, at work. So while Paul is dealing with spiritual gifts, unity is essential in them for us to be the church we're called to be.

And we see the perfect example here that a lot of people overlook, but Paul is showing us the perfect example in the Trinity, the Godhead, three in one, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, working in perfect unity for God's glory.

And that leads us to the last part of this godly sentence, okay? Here it is. We may have different gifts, ways of using them, and impact. But every spiritual gift is vital to be the church.

[22 : 38] And when the church of Jesus Christ walks in unity with each of us using our gifts, God delights in changing the world through us broken vessels that he calls the church.

And here's how Paul put it in verse 7. He says, The verb that's translated as common good literally means to bring us together.

Okay? So we have to realize that our gifts are not a competition. I get so tired. This wears me out. I get so tired of people ranking preachers.

And we're blessed here to have three, four, five different people who preach well, whether they're on staff or whether they're lay people. But I get tired of hearing people say, I follow Pastor Mitch.

Or I follow Pastor Steve. Or I follow the real preacher, Pastor Ray. Just playing. But listen, we have a crazy shortage of preachers in this country. Let's not compare them.

[23 : 41] Let's work together to tell more people about Jesus. So I started off early in this message saying it's not about you. Because when it comes to spiritual gifts for you, it's about me.

It's about your gifts helping me to grow. And for me, it's about you and me helping you to keep your eyes on God. So Max Lucado put it this way.

He said, Some convert the lost. Some encourage the saved. And some keep the movement going. He says, All are needed. So exhibit God with your uniqueness.

When you magnify your maker with your strengths. When your contribution enriches God's reputation. He says, Your days grow suddenly sweet.

Now I want to step outside the church for a second. Then I'll bring us back home. When I turned 15, I got a job at Topps Home Center here in Greensburg. And I worked in the plumbing and the electrical department.

[24 : 40] Under one of the nicest guys that you would ever meet. Named Harold Vogt. Harold passed away just a couple weeks ago. And I had the privilege to share for three or four minutes about our relationship working together.

And even his mentorship over my life. But when I got hired, This was BC, by the way, for me. Before Christ. And I'll tell you, I was lost and I was rough.

And yet, While I'm sure I could have added a lot of stress to Harold's plate, And probably did, Harold was so very good to me. When I got hired on at Topps, I made \$5.15 an hour.

But listen, I moved up the ladder. And after eight years through high school and college, You'll be impressed. I made \$7.50. So Harold, Knowing that I was child labor, Basically, Was always looking for ways to bless me with his generosity.

One day, He came up to me and asked if I would be willing, During the summer months, To work at his house on Wednesdays. So Harold got both of us that day off during the summer. And we'd normally work about a six hour work day.

[25 : 44] That's all he wanted to do. I would paint his house. I think I painted it three different colors. I helped him spread mulch and landscaping rock. I helped him build a waterfall decoration in his landscaping.

I did my best and whatever was needed. And usually somewhere around three o'clock, He'd say, Okay, I think we've done enough for the day. And he would hand me a hundred dollar bill. And I would say, Harold, I only bring home about \$40.

For eight hours at Topps. You're paying me way too much. You're taking me out to lunch and paying for that too. And Harold would just ignore me. And he'd always make me take it.

Even when Bethany and I got our first home, Our first ministry was in Rushville and Rush County.

And we needed some supplies to fix up our house. We would go back to Topps to get it.

And he'd walk us. He'd help us get our stuff. And then he would walk us up to the front of the store, Holding our supplies in his hands. And then next, He would nod at the cashier.

[26 : 44] He would hand us whatever we were buying. And he would say, Okay, You can go ahead and head to your car. And I'd say, Well, Harold, We've got to pay for this. And he'd say, It's taken care of.

It was really good seeing you, Old buddy, Old pal, Old Ray. And then he'd slap me on the back. And he'd tell me to go to my car. And then he would go back in. And he would pay for it. Well, At least I really hope he did.

See, No, Harold did. He was a man of integrity. But Harold became like a grandfather to me. And actually, In this very sanctuary That we have here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, 16 years ago, He walked down the aisle as an honored guest in our wedding.

Even when I did my first summer internship here at FCC, Even before that, With Pastor Danny back in 2005, He came to support me in one of my very first sermons I ever preached at the church.

And as I said at his celebration of life, He sure did love this punk kid who needed it so desperately.

And the best news is that Harold knew Jesus And attended a sister church of ours, Batesville Christian Church, Where God is doing some wonderful things.

[27 : 54] But as I just back up and think about the encouragement that he showed me, The generosity he lived out before me, I can't help but to think about the church and everything it takes, But more importantly, Every one it takes to be a healthy church.

When we are walking in the power of unity, Using our gifts for the glory of God, That's when the church of Jesus Christ will make an eternal impact. So, it really is true, As much as that statement can sting, It's not about you, And it's not about me.

It's all about the Lord, And using the gifts that God has given us To magnify his name. He wants to use you.

Pray with me. Father, thank you for your words that you spoke to us today. As we embark on this journey for the next three weeks Of talking through spiritual gifts, And it's going to get a lot more controversial than this.

But Father, I just thank you for your wisdom, And I just pray that you will guide us As we jump into your word, And dig deep, And seek to live according to your truth.

[29 : 04] But Father, have your way. Have your way in our hearts, And draw us closer to you. Thank you for your word. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen, and amen.

Hey, let me give you this invitation. Maybe you're listening to this, You got some questions about faith. So do I. So have I. And so, you can reach out to us. We'd love to walk alongside you, Just like others have done for us.

So you can reach out in a couple ways. Our phone number here at First Christian Church of Greensburg. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor. Our phone number is 812-663-8488.

You can ask for Ray or Pastor Steve. Either one of us would love to help you. And then also, you can email me or Steve at Ray at FCCGreensburg.com Or Steve at FCCGreensburg.com Hey, God bless you.

And I pray that you have a great week serving Jesus And loving him with all your heart. Take care.