

Edify and Transform

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can always check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or at our FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But thank you so much for tuning in to this audio broadcast. And I just pray that God will move through His Word, through the Holy Spirit's power in your life and mine as we dig into God's Word today.

Now, there was a little boy named Phoenix who came running into the kitchen yelling, Mama, Mama, I know what spiritual gift God has given me. See, apparently in his Christian school, they were talking about gifts that the Lord gives to them and even the reasons why.

And yet, I think he missed some of the conversation because when his mama said, Well, tell me, Phoenix, what gift has God given you? He smiled real big and he said, Well, I can blow up a whoopee cushion with my nose.

And some of you may have that same gift. I don't know. But not too long after that, he changed his tune a little bit when he was asked to speak for a school event. His Nana called to congratulate him on this.

[1 : 11] And he said, Well, Nana, I now think my spiritual gift is preaching. Maybe I'll preach the Word of God someday. Now, that's probably more like it. But hey, welcome back to the 10th week of our series called The Power of Unity.

We're walking through 1 Corinthians, which is basically a case study on how not to do church. So hopefully, we here at FCC are learning from Paul's encouraging and piercing words what a healthy, unified, God-honoring church should look like.

But listen, today, we're going to talk about a topic that may not be as controversial in our culture as, say, chapter 6 on sexual immorality was. But this one for sure has been a controversy among believers for 2,000 years now.

We're going to expand on what we talked about last week. And we're going to talk about a list of spiritual gifts that Paul shares here in the earlier part of chapter 12. But here's the thing.

I'm convinced that what we're talking about today, the differences Christians hold on this topic, that that is not a salvation issue. There's a famous statement in the Christian church movement that says, In matters of essentials, unity.

[2 : 25] That means in matters of where God makes it so clear in His Word, those core doctrines, we will not budge and we will unify on those things.

In matters of opinion, it says liberty. So there's always going to be some non-salvation issues that Bible-believing Christians see a little differently, maybe look at it from a different angle, and we're going to show freedom there.

But in all things, love. So we're going to take last week's discussion on spiritual gifts and the reality that my gifts are not about me, but they're all about the glory of God.

And we're going to talk about two words today. Edify and transform. Edify and transform. Edify the saved, or you could say help other believers grow to maturity.

And second, transform a lost world as they're led to the foot of the cross to discover hope in Jesus' name. See, gifts are not about us.

[3 : 27] It's all about glorifying God and His will being done in this world. Because there's an amazing freedom when we take the attention off ourselves and we worship the one deserving of our praise.

So here's the deal. The Corinthian church that Paul is writing to is a mess. Their attitudes are awful. And in outside of the ungodly fruit some of their lives are bearing, there's also fighting and factions

and division among them.

And one of the issues is spiritual gifts and how they're using them to put some people up on pedestals and give them some special title or rank and others are being looked down upon. They're even abusing them in worship, which is causing distractions and chaos. When we know, according to 1 Corinthians 14, that our God is a God of order and peace.

So grab your Bibles for me and start to turn to 1 Corinthians 12, 7. And as you are, let me share a phrase I heard a great Bible teacher named Skip Heidzig say.

[4 : 28] He said, The Holy Spirit comes for us to save us, comes into us to sanctify us, and comes upon us to supercharge us.

So I think we get the salvation part and the sanctification part, where he calls us to himself and then to holiness in our lives. But what does he mean when he says to supercharge us?

This is where the spiritual gifts come into play, because they are not your natural talents. They are supernatural gifts imparted by God's perfect will upon us as his children when we walk in his salvation.

So let's start here in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 7. Now to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good, or to bring us together.

So today we're going to talk specifically about nine different gifts that Paul mentions in this short passage, verses 8 through 10. But if you look at 1 Corinthians 12, and you look at verses 28 through 30, and then you go to Romans 12, 6 through 8, Ephesians 4, 11, you'll find other lists of spiritual gifts.

[5 : 40] And scholars usually agree that it's somewhere around 19 or 20 different spiritual gifts that are spoken about. And then you take last week's passage and you couple our gifts with our unique God-given personalities, the reality that the same gift can look different in each unique person.

For instance, my wife has the gift of teaching for children, where I feel a lot more comfortable teaching adults. And so you put all that together while also realizing that we may have several spiritual gifts operating at the same time, maybe in different seasons of life, maybe just in special circumstances.

And man, the possibilities, the combinations are endless because we serve a creative and awesome God of power. So what was the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Easy answer. To edify the church body and to transform the lost. Notice, it should never be about me. Okay? May the Lord please forgive us when we allow our flesh to flare up and we make it about me.

Because it's not about us. And this is why we see chaos in so many churches over this topic of spiritual gifts. But when we can keep our eyes focused on Jesus, being lifted up, His body growing to maturity, and the lost being brought to salvation in Christ, that's when we're going to see the Lord do awesome things among us.

[7 : 06] So I don't have any fancy points for this outline like I often do. I just want to walk through these gifts with you. And I'm going to probably do it way, way too quickly today.

So turn with me to 1 Corinthians 12, verse 8. First part of that verse says, To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom. So let's talk about the gift of wisdom.

Let me ask you this question. Who was the wisest man in the Bible? Solomon, right? God granted him that wisdom. And there's an Old Testament story in 1 Kings 3 where two women come to Solomon claiming that a baby was their own.

Two women saying this baby was their own. One of them had their baby pass away. The other claimed the living baby was theirs. They're fighting over this child. And one of them is clearly lying. So Solomon in his God-given wisdom says, Let's cut the baby in two and you both can have half of it. That doesn't sound like wisdom, does it?

[8 : 09] But watch what happens. One woman is fine with that, but the other isn't. And immediately she basically says, No way. No way. Don't hurt the baby.

She can raise the baby. And that's how Solomon realizes, Oh, that's the real mother that would give her child away to save her baby. The baby goes back to her. But you might ask, Shouldn't all of us who are believers have wisdom?

Yeah, of course. Wisdom is knowledge of God's word applied and lived out. But that gift of wisdom that the Spirit can supernaturally impart is different than just regular wisdom we all seek.

It's supernatural wisdom when God imparts it for the purpose to edify the body and draw the lost to Jesus. And I got to tell you, as a lead pastor trying to lead our church family, there are some very difficult circumstances that come across my desk.

So I pray. I ask the Lord for wisdom. I also lean hard on our staff and our elders for their wisdom. And there have been times where a situation that's not so black and white involving people who are often very messy and who can see things a little differently, where a situation like that is set before me.

[9 : 26] And I felt the Lord give me wisdom. At times in those situations where he worked it all out, Satan's plans to cause chaos were stopped, and God was glorified.

And I bet you can think of some godly people among you who just seem in difficult situations to have that godly wisdom. Now, let's talk about the second gift here, the gift of knowledge. Now, the second part of verse 8 says, to another, a message or a word of knowledge by means of the same Spirit. This gift is often seen in one of two ways by great Bible-believing scholars. And I'll let you decide which way you want to look at it. But first, some see this as the ability to dig deeper in God's Word, to understand the depths of Scripture in a fantastic way as to pass it on. These people often have really extensive biblical educations. And while I think that's very important to the body, I think it kind of falls under a different gift that we'll talk about in a few minutes.

[10 : 31] So from what I've studied, I fall into the second camp. And it's okay if you don't. But I think this is referring to knowledge supernaturally imparted from the Lord, like in Acts chapter 5 with Ananias and Sapphira.

This is where the early church was so committed to Christ that they were selling property and possessions. They were giving them to the church to help meet needs. And Ananias and Sapphira, a married couple, had sold property and decided to keep some of it.

And that was okay. It was theirs, right? They could do whatever they wanted with it. They didn't have to sell it in the first place. The problem came when they lied about it and said they were given all the money to the Lord.

And here's what Peter says in Acts 5.3. Later, his wife comes in separately, is given the same opportunity to tell the truth, and she lies also and both meet the same tragic end.

But the point here is that Peter shouldn't have had a clue of any of this. It's not like he had spies working for him. He wouldn't have known how much they got for the land, the private conversation between a husband and a wife.

[11 : 48] And yet the Holy Spirit, in this instance, gives him knowledge into this situation. Why? To edify and to transform. This was supernaturally imparted to him as a word of knowledge.

And I believe this gift is still given from the Lord to edify and transform. Now, third is the gift of faith. Now, in the first part of 1 Corinthians 12.9, it says this, To another, faith by the same Spirit.

To be clear, Hebrews 11.6 is true for all of us who are followers of Jesus. It says, And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

So yes, it takes faith to follow Jesus. It takes faith to walk with him every day. So we're not talking about a saving type of faith. This is supernatural faith that can trust God in extreme situations when it seems impossible.

Recently, I read a biography about a guy named George Mueller. And I believe with all my heart, he had the gift of faith. He lived from 1805 to 1898.

[13 : 04] And in his early adulthood, he was led to Bristol, England. If I remember right, he was from Germany originally. He was led to Bristol, England to start an orphanage.

But here's where the faith comes in. He never advertised his needs. He wouldn't even receive a paycheck. Yet, throughout his life, millions of dollars, in the 1800s, by the way, passed through his hands because of God's faithfulness and through his faith in the Lord.

Over the decades, that one orphanage grew to several. And even large buildings were built where I believe he was known, if I think I heard this right one time, over 10,000 orphans he helped to raise during his life.

One day in his later years, as hundreds of kids were in his orphanage, there were large, large buildings built just for that. The workers came to him and they said, Listen, we don't have any food. And it's breakfast time. So, he gathered all the kids at the tables. They prayed together. They thanked God for their food. The kids did not know that nothing was being prepared.

[14:08] But George Mueller had trusted the Lord all these years. This was a little bit later in his ministry. He had trusted God all these years. And he knew his God would be faithful again to take care of these children.

A couple minutes later, someone knocks at the door. It was a man who owned a bakery. And he said, You know, about 2 o'clock this morning, the Lord just woke me up from my sleep and made it very clear I needed to bake all this bread for the orphanage.

He had a wagon load full. He said, Can you guys use it? And George Mueller just smiled and said, Yeah, we could use it. As they were getting the bread passed out to all the different kids, another knock came to the door.

And it was a milk delivery man whose axle had broken on his wagon right by the orphanage. To get it fixed, they had to unload the full wagon and give it away before it would sour.

And so he said, Hey, can your orphanage use this milk? You can have it all. You would be doing me a great favor. And once again, George Mueller smiled and said, Sure. See, this man was an extraordinary example of having a gift of faith in situations that seemed impossible.

[15:22] And that's just one story of probably 20 I could tell you. But he knew that he served a God of the impossible. And that faith did two things in the lives of others.

Edify and transform. Let's look at a couple more gifts before we get into the ones that are often a little more debated. The gift of prophecy is next. Now, in verse 10, the second part of that, Paul refers to another gift when he says, To another, the gift of prophecy.

This word is often misunderstood. And people often just think of prophecy as these future events where you're telling something that no one else knows. But the Greek word here literally means to speak forth or to proclaim.

This is the gift of preaching, where the Spirit gives the gift and empowers someone to understand and to proclaim God's word effectively.

We even read in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1, it says, Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

[16:32] Understanding the truth of God's word, being able to explain it practically. Why is that gift kind of being lifted up here? It's because the word of God is powerful.

It changes lives. And there always seems to be a shortage of those with the gift of prophecy. Now, here's the fifth one, the gift of discernment. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 10, the third part of that verse says, To another, distinguishing between spirits.

This literally means to separate out for examination to determine what is genuine and what is counterfeit. That's the word that we use often in the church called spiritual discernment.

Discernment. 1 John 4, verse 1. Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And even in Acts 17, verse 11, we read about another great example. It says that the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness, and they examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

[17:44] See, when it comes to teaching, we compare everything to the word of God, because that is God breathed for us. But this gift is also needed in the church to discern whether others' actions and things that happen in the church are from God.

And God imparts this gift where some in the church have this incredible ability to step back, to listen to the Holy Spirit's discernment in certain situations.

Here's why. Because Satan is the great deceiver. He is the father of lies, and he loves to weasel his way in and disrupt these two things, edification and transformation.

Okay, I know I'm going through these pretty quick, and we've been a little more into teacher mode today than probably preacher mode. But now we come to the four on the list that can be very debated and very fiercely debated sometimes.

We're going to do this with the spirit of peace. As I was preparing this message, I called some believers I know who have great wisdom in God's word. I got some different perspectives on this. I listened to some great Bible teachers that I trust on this.

[18:54] And for those of you who studied God's word for years, you know that a lot of conservative Bible-believing Christians believe that some of these gifts were temporary, that they were basically imparted on the early church as Jesus the Messiah was this new concept, and the word of God was not yet complete where we have it in our hands like today.

And there are wonderful Bible-believing Christians who just don't feel that they are in operation now that we do have the word of God at our fingertips. They believe based on some scriptures that things like speaking in tongues and healings are no longer active spiritual gifts in the church imparted to believers, although God can still do whatever he sees fit.

While I respect this view, and I have dear friends who hold it, I've even leaned that way myself even more recently as I've wrestled with this, and maybe I'm just coming at it from a different angle, but I personally do feel that the gifts of the Spirit are still active.

But here's the key to it. Active within biblical parameters. And it may be true that we don't see miracles and healing and biblical definition of speaking in tongues as much as we once did.

But I never, ever want to limit what my God can do through broken vessels like you and me. So, let's group these last four into two categories. First, healing and miracles.

[20 : 23] Healing and miracles. Okay, so 1 Corinthians 12, 9, second part of that verse, into 10, to another gift, the gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another miraculous powers.

The picture many people have in their heads are those famous faith healers that you see on TV who always got the disgusting orange glow tan who do and say so many things that contradict the word of God.

And as stories have come out from behind the scenes of these healing crusades, things like manipulation, sensationalism, and corruption are usually close by.

It doesn't help their cause that they often beg for all this money, and then they use it to live lavish lifestyles and to travel on their private jets. And it's usually a picture of fame, fortune, and corruption. And I've often wondered if they have this gift, why aren't they visiting hospitals to heal the sick? It just doesn't add up. But I want to be careful not to run to the other extreme either.

[21 : 27] Because we still serve Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals spiritually, physically, and emotionally. And throughout the pages of Scripture, we see Jesus heal the blind, raise the dead, make the leper clean again.

We see Him give His disciples these abilities to do similar things. And He even says in John 14, 12 through 14, He says, Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in Me will do the works that I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Now, the key word, in My name, doesn't mean that God is a genie, that we get whatever we want.

It means that God will do whatever we ask according to His perfect will. So as we get this picture out of our heads of attention-seeking people, wanting this gift for their own selfish benefit, what if God brings someone into your path who's sick, and the Holy Spirit lays it on your heart to pray over them?

And then, stop me if you've never heard this before, but I know I have, on many, many occasions, they go back to the doctor, and that sickness, that cancer, whatever it was that showed up in the test, all of a sudden it's gone, and the scans are clean.

[22 : 47] I think about a member of our church who, when he was in his early 20s, was diagnosed with cancer. And if my memory serves me right, he was told that he maybe had a few months to live.

And it was rough on this young family. He suffered in ways I never have, went through chemo, dealt with all kinds of physical stuff with it. And one day, he ran into an elder at FCC, and they invited him here, and they prayed over him one evening.

He didn't even go to our church at that time, and wouldn't for years. And now, some 17, 18 years later, he's still cancer-free. See, whether we're talking about physical healing or some miracle that God performs, the whole purpose is for edification and transformation.

Now, for whatever reason, God decides not to heal every person. And even in biblical times, Paul and Peter and even Jesus, they didn't heal every single person who was sick around them.

And if we always walk in step with the Holy Spirit, I believe he delights in using us for his glory. And God, I believe, can still heal and still do miracles.

[23 : 54] And we've saved the most interesting one or two for last. The gift of tongues. The gift of tongues.

So Paul says to another, speaking in different gifts of tongues, and still to another, the interpretation of tongues. Because tongues is not gibberish. It means known language.

And I'll never forget a man in our church in Tennessee named Dave, who was a very dynamic personality and follower of Jesus. And one time, the topic of speaking in tongues came up. And he smiled real big. And he said, you know what? I can teach you how to speak in tongues. And he was, I knew he was messing around. So I looked at him and said, oh, yeah? And that's when Dave said, yeah, it's just this easy.

He said, you say these words, but you say them really fast. See my bow tie, tie my bow tie. And you just say it really fast over and over. See my bow tie, tie my bow tie.

[24 : 50] See my bow tie, tie my bow tie. I realize that in a church of this size, we have people who come from all different backgrounds. And I know there are a lot of people listening to me through this audio broadcast from all different backgrounds.

Some of you from very conservative or liturgical backgrounds, where speaking in tongues is just an absolute no-no, where we don't even talk about some spiritual gifts, that we just don't even deal with it, okay?

Others come from the other end, what we often call the charismatic end, where this was very every Sunday, right? In worship services. And things were always wild and exciting.

Or maybe you fall somewhere in the middle. Maybe this spiritual gift stuff is kind of new to you. So I want to be respectful to your background while also trying to stick to what Scripture teaches on this topic.

Because a lot of our misunderstandings, I believe, are from the abuses of this spiritual gift, just like what was happening in the Corinthian church. And Paul spends an entire chapter in this letter, chapter 14, dealing mainly with this gift being misused and done for selfish gain rather than to edify and transform.

[26 : 06] So let me correct a couple false teachings. There are people out there, Christians, that teach if you don't speak in tongues, then you are not saved.

They teach that all believers should speak in tongues. And apparently, that was floating around the Corinthian church too, because Paul corrects this in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 27 through 30.

If you read that passage, he's talking about the different gifts that people have, that we don't all have the same gifts. God uses them all together to edify the church, to transform the lost.

And he says, do all speak in tongues? And the answer is, obviously, it's a rhetorical question, but the answer is an emphatic no. And I can tell you personally that I have never spoken in tongues. I've had wonderful times of worship in the Lord, where God moved in my life in powerful ways, but I've never spoken in tongues. And I walk with Jesus every day, because the picture that we see here in the Corinthian church looks a lot like the chaos we still see in some churches today.

[27 : 12] Absolute madness in worship as people are doing crazy things in the spirit that doesn't match God's word. Did you know that the word for tongues does not mean gibberish that's being spoken?

A lot of times when people speak in tongues, they claim it's some special language between them and God, and we could debate that further, but it's gibberish that's really being spoken.

It's not a known language at all. But tongues, the word tongues, like I mentioned earlier, literally means, in this passage, known language. The word for tongues, known language.

Like Acts chapter two, when the Holy Spirit first came upon believers, and the church was launched into the world, a very special occasion, these believers spoke languages they didn't know at all, and they spoke them through the spirit to preach the gospel to others.

1 Corinthians 14.22 even puts it like this. So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. That it's speaking another language so someone can hear about Jesus.

[28 : 17] So I know I've probably caused maybe more questions today than I've maybe given answers, but let me give you this big picture. And I hope you will study this further, that maybe I've just kind of caused an appetite for this in you, and that you will go deeper on this, and I pray God will do awesome things through that.

But when it comes to spiritual gifts, they are given for two purposes, to edify the church, and to transform the lost. Don't get caught up in the chaos, okay?

When they are truly used the way that God intends, they edify the church, they help grow the church, they help strengthen believers, and they transform lost people that hear the gospel and come running to Jesus.

And when the church uses the gifts given by the Spirit, chaos is never a part of it. There's peace, and there's order, and there's power among God's people as they die to themselves, and they live for Christ.

Pray with me. Father, thank you so much for these words of life that you have spoken over us today. I know, Lord, that this is a difficult topic, and there's a lot of wonderful, saved, Bible-believing Christians who see some of this a little differently, and that's okay.

[29 : 40] We just want your wisdom. We want your truth to overwhelm us. And so, Father, I give this to you, and I just pray that you will help us to use the gifts that you give for your glory to edify and to transform a lost world.

So give us your discernment, give us your wisdom to understand your word more deeply, and to follow you more faithfully. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Hey, let me give you a quick invitation. If you have questions about your faith, if you would like to talk about giving your life to Jesus, you can reach out to us at First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana.

My name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor. You can reach out to us through our phone number, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. I hope you have a wonderful week. I love you.

[30 : 52] Let me give you a shout.