

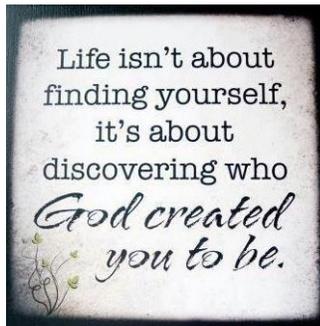


Introduction

In our winter sermon series, “Keeping in step with the Spirit” we now shift from the character transformation of the **fruit of the Spirit** to the vital role of the **gifts of the Spirit**. Understanding this topic can literally change everything – our own sense of value and purpose and everything about how we “do church!”

It all centers around who the Holy Spirit is. This is one godly man’s story: All during my growing-up years, I was picked on by kids at school. I was small. I was weak. I was skinny. And I was always getting pushed around.

After graduation from high school in 1943, I joined the Marines. I was hoping they could toughen me up and help me learn how to hold my own. I always had a secret desire to be a rough-and-tumble guy. In fact, I even had a nickname picked out for myself--Nails. I always wanted to be known as "Nails" Eims, as in "There's a guy tough as nails." But my nickname in the Marines was Chick.

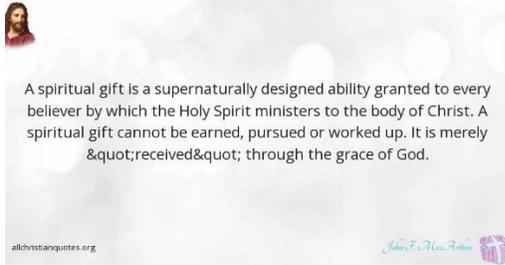


To hold my own in the tough outfit I was in, I made friends with the biggest, strongest, roughest guy in the battalion. Nobody picked on me because they knew they would have to answer to my unofficial bodyguard, the one who was always ready to come alongside and help. And nobody wanted to tangle with him.

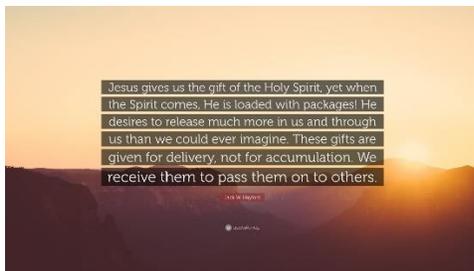
That is exactly what God has provided for the protection and ministry of His children. The apostle John referred to the Holy Spirit as the comforter, or helper. The word translated comforter and helper from the Greek is the word *paraclete*, which means the one who comes alongside to help. LeRoy Eims, 5/6/11

This is all true, but notice that “the Spirit comes alongside to provide for the ministry of God’s children.” That deals with the Spirit’s GIFTS to every Christian believer. It changes everything! **Let us pray.**

An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts



Paul tells the Ephesian Christians “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. BUT to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” (Eph.4:4-7) To each one. The word for spiritual gifts is “charis” which means charismatic. It is the same understanding of grace we find in the definition of salvation in Eph.2:8-9 “By grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves. It is a gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast.” This lays the first building block of understanding about spiritual gifts – **they are spiritual endowments given to us by God to enable us to do far more than we can do in our own strength and determination. They are gifts from God.**



Therefore, spiritual gifts are not our natural talents and strengths of personality or background. These are certainly important. As Bruce Wilson said in his dissertation for his doctorate at Asbury Seminary, “As the Creator of every person on earth, God gifts everyone with an aptitude to develop specific skills. These can be aptitude in math or spatial design, or manual work in a variety of areas or reading or writing or handling money or leadership or skilled work with one’s hands or designing and selling houses ...The list goes on and on. These skills complement the spiritual gifts God gives his followers... . Wilson saysm “The unique combination of each individual’s skills and gifts constitutes his or her best contribution to the global church and the common good.” (Bruce Wilson, Chapter one, p. 17)

The Christian church has not dynamically changed its members or surrounding communities or nations because we have focused on working in our natural skills and interests, not with the supernatural abilities that result in God’s transforming, miracle-producing change at every level of life. This has also resulted in power struggles and splits within Christian churches and institutions because people operating in their own abilities are prone to protect their ego turf, or beliefs or traditions and disparage others who do not fall into their “camp.” So much tragedy worldwide historically in missions and local churches has resulted.

5. When we don't use the gifts, God has sovereignly given us, we are hindering God's work for the entire church.

In future weeks I will explain what the gifts are as listed in Scripture, how to discover your own spiritual gifts given you from God, and what implications this has for our own church's witness in our community and globally.



So stay tuned. The conclusion of this preaching series will come at Easter as we then examine the amazing implications of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension!