

(Gifts) the Gift of Help

by Dwight Pentecost

The gift of help is a spiritual gift that enables individuals to recognize and respond to the needs of others, often in a humble and unobtrusive manner.

Duration: 34:11

Scripture: Matthew 20:26, Acts 9:36-39, Romans 12:7, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 5:9-10, James 1:27

Topics: "Gifts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and meeting the needs of others. He shares a personal experience of visiting a pastor's home where he felt burdened and unacknowledged. The speaker highlights the gift of hospitality and how it can contribute to the unity and functioning of the body of Christ. He also mentions a student who showed kindness by checking on him and reminds listeners that every member of the body is important and necessary. The sermon draws from the analogy of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12 to emphasize the interconnectedness and interdependence of believers.

Transcript

Writing to the Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts, the Apostle listed gifts in order of their prominence that are important. He listed gifts such as Apostle, one who is instrumental in introducing the gospel to a new area, establishing a church. Then, the gift of prophet, one who received a revelation directly from God and then became an instrument to disseminate that revelation to man.

Then, the gift of evangelist that had to do with preaching the gospel to men who were lost so that they might believe to the salvation of their souls. Then, the gift of pastor-teacher, the one whom God gave to be a shepherd over the flock, who guided and guarded and nurtured and fed and disciplined the flock. These were significant, important gifts, and the church could not and would not exist without them.

There are many of God's children who, in all honesty before God, have to say, I don't have the gift of Apostle, nor the gift of prophet, nor the gift of evangelist, nor gift of pastor-teacher of what use them up. And, I want to consider tonight one of the gifts that is of equal importance with any of the gifts as far as the welfare of the body is concerned, which is often exercised, unheralded, unseen, unappreciated, the gift of help. The apostle in the passage which we read, 1 Corinthians 12 verses 18 to 25, wrote for the consolation of the vast majority of God's children to emphasize the fact that in the sight of God there are no unimportant and insignificant gifts.

And, he wrote for the consolation of those who may feel useless because they do not have what Paul calls one of the prominent or the most significant gifts, in order that they might see their true worth to the total body of Christ. In using the illustration of this human body, Paul says there are some members of the body that everybody would recognize are of utmost importance. Eye, ears, hands, feet, and each one of those important in themselves are necessary, and one part of the body cannot get along without the other part.

You may perhaps say, yes, I recognize and I agree with that, but you're talking about the important members of the body. But, in seeing my place in the total body of Christ, I couldn't consider myself an eye, or an ear, or a hand, or a foot of what use am I? Then, Paul carries the illustration on a little bit, and he says, let me talk a little bit about the body, and this matter of clothing or adornment. He says the purpose of adornment or clothing is to honor the seemingly unattractive parts of the body, and he said there are some parts of the body that we never clothe and never cover, because they are honorable in themselves.

While I have seen veiled women in the Middle East, I've never seen one walking the streets of doubt, because the faith does not need the adornment of a cover. It may need a little fixing, but not covering. And then, Paul says there are some parts of the body we cover sometimes, and if, God forbid, I were transplanted to live in northern climes again, when the snows descended and the frost came, I would get out gloves or mittens and earmuffs and a scarf, and I would still leave the face exposed, but I would cover everything else up.

There are some parts of the body we uncover occasional, but there are other parts of the body we never leave exposed, and we honor those unattractive parts of the body with an ornament or a cover. And so, what Paul says what we don't realize is that some parts of the body have sufficient honor in themselves, so they need no added honor, but there are other parts of the body that need to be honored, and so he says it is in this matter of spiritual gifts. There are some spiritual gifts that we would recognize as being of such importance it is not necessary to give honor or recognition to those parts, but there are other parts and other people who function in the body and contribute to the welfare of the body, but because their contribution seems insignificant, they need to be recognized or honored.

And Paul, in speaking as he does in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 28, says, God gave gifts of health. He is speaking of one part of the body that needs to be recognized and especially appreciated for its contribution to the welfare of the whole body. When Paul speaks of the gift of health in 1 Corinthians 12 28, he is using a word that means, literally, helpful or kindly deed.

To do a helpful thing, or to do a kindly deed for someone, Paul calls the ability to recognize a man's need and respond to that need a spiritual gift. What Paul sees is that there are some people that are so sensitive to the needs of other people that, when they recognize a need, they respond to it out of love and compassion for that person. But, there are others who are so insensitive to the needs of others, a need can stare them in the face and they'll never recognize it.

Why? It's not just a matter of coldness of heart, but it is a spiritual gift where one is so sensitive to people's needs and sensitive to the spirit's direction as to how that need could be met that they spontaneously meet that need. Paul speaks in Romans 12 and verse 7 of this same spiritual gift when he recognizes, as he does in verse 6, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Some will have the gift of prophecy, and if they do, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

Then he says in verse 7, or ministry, let us wait on our ministering. And here, in listing spiritual gifts in Romans 12, Paul speaks of this gift of ministry that calls for one to wait or be faithful to his ministering as a

gift of primary importance. The word translated ministry is a word that is translated into English several different ways, and let me read some passages where this word is used, and you will see the force of what Paul had in mind when he says, if our gift is the gift of ministry, let us wait on our ministering.

Will you turn with me, please, to Matthew chapter 20 and verse 26. Matthew 20, 26. I must read verse 25 for the context.

You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them. They have a great exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you. Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.

Let him be your minister. And here, the word minister, the same word translated ministry in Romans 12, 7, means a servant, to be a servant, and so we could read it this way. Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant.

Turn next, if you will, to 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 2. 1 Thessalonians 3, 2. I sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and comfort you concerning your faith. And Timothy is called a minister of God, and he is called a fellow laborer. And the word here used of Timothy, the same word as in Romans 12, 7, means a helper, a helper.

And Timothy, who had served with Paul, was a minister with Paul, or a helper, and so this idea, or this adds the thought to the word that we minister to someone else as their servant with a view to helping them. And then turn, please, to 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 8, where we read, likewise must the deacons be great, and he proceeds to give qualifications for deacons. And it may surprise you to know that the Greek word translated deacon in this passage is exactly the same word translated ministry in Romans 12, 7. A deacon is a servant or a helper, or one who puts himself at the disposal of someone else to be of help to them.

You know that in Acts chapter 6, we have a record of the institution of the office of deacons. The apostles in the early church were responsible to supervise the total ministry of the church, and they were responsible not only to meet the spiritual needs, but the physical and material needs as well. And as the church grew, it became impossible for the apostles to tend to all the needs of all the congregations, and so it was decided that rather than leave the ministry of the word to serve tables, the apostles should set apart some men who were called servants, or called helpers, or called ministers, or called deacons.

And these deacons were to assist the apostles or the elders in doing the work that was the responsibility of the elders to see that it was done, and they selected six men and set them apart to be servants, or to be ministers, or to be helpers, or to exercise the gift of help. These deacons were responsible to care for the poor, to care for the sick, to care for widows, to care for orphans, and they served the church, and were servants of the church. And while they were called deacons, and we attach honor to that name, let us not forget that the word deacon meant one who helps, or one who serves.

And while there were six men at this time set apart to be deacons, the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12 28 recognizes that multitudes in the assembly who are not set apart to a board of deacons are nonetheless gifted of God to be helpers in the assembly, to minister, or to serve the assembly, to be of help to the whole body. It is this that the apostle has in mind, then, when he talks about the gift of help. Those who are sensitive to the needs of the congregation, who give themselves as servants to serve so that there may be soundness in the whole body.

While it is right and fitting that we should have a board of deacons who oversee this part of the work, please do not lose sight of the fact, beloved of God, that this is one of the unrecognized and unrewarded gifts, but is of utmost importance for the members of the body need help. Now, may I read several different passages of scripture where we see some exercising this gift of help, and I'm turning first of all into Acts chapter 9. I'll read the record there of the woman, Tobiatha of Joppa, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. And Dorcas means a gazelle, a deer, and she must have been given this name because of her grace and gracefulness and the charm of her person.

But Dorcas is not remembered because she was the most beautiful woman in Joppa, although she must have been to have gotten a name like this. What Dorcas is remembered for is that she was a woman full of good works and alms deeds, which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died, whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

For as much as litter was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter rose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him, weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

And then, as you know, Peter said, Tobiatha, arise, and she opened her eyes and sat up. When Dorcas died, who was there? The widows. Why? Because this one, this beautiful lady, had invested her time not in herself, but in those who needed her help.

And when she did not have to tend them on a sick bed, she spent her time at home making garments so that she would be prepared to meet the needs of the needy. Dorcas was exercising the gift of health, and she was concerning herself with those in physical and material and emotional need, and she became their servant, their helper, their deacon, exercising the gift of health. I turn to the book of Romans, and in chapter 16, as Paul, from a distance, writes to the little groups of believers in Rome, his first commendation is of Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchre.

She is literally a deacon. She is a minister. Now, I do not believe she had been put on the board of deacons.

I do not believe she was occupying the pulpit, but nonetheless she was a deacon, she was a minister, she was a helper, she was a servant. She was exercising the gift of health. That he receive her in the Lord has become a saint, and that she assists her in whatsoever business she hath need of, for she hath been a helper of many, and of myself also.

What stood out in the life of this godly woman? She exercised the gift of health, and where there was a need, she went into ministry. She was not in a place of prominence such as an apostle, an evangelist, or pastor teaching, but the welfare of the church of Rome depended on the exercise of this spiritual gift, and there was soundness in the body of Rome because this one, unrecognized, exercised her gift to the Lord. And when Paul writes to the book of Romans, he is giving adornment, or recognition, to an unrecognized gift to the church.

When James writes in chapter 1 and verse 28, he describes pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father this way, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Who would be the ones to visit the fatherless and the widows? Those to whom God had given the gift of health. Or, I turn again into 1 Timothy, in chapter 5, verses 9 and 10.

Let not a widow be taken into the number under three score years old, having been the wife of one man, and now he describes something of the character of these widows who are to be enrolled, well reported of for good works. Or, if in the light of our study tonight, I could put it this way. Have they exercised the gift of health? Don't look to them to give health to others now if they haven't demonstrated that they have the gift of health previously.

Are they well reported of for good works? If she have brought up children, if she have loved strangers, if she have washed the saint's feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. Or, if I could summarize, does she have the gift of health? Did she make herself a servant or a help when strangers pass through the city? Believers. Was she one who welcomed them into her home to give them a meal and a place to sleep? When the saints were weary, did she minister to them, wash their feet, put herself in a servant's place? When there were those who were afflicted, sorrowing, crushed by the weight of a load they could not bear, did she come to their help? That's the gift of health.

When Paul speaks here in 1st Timothy 5.10 about lodging strangers, he's referring to hospitality. And mine goes to 1st Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2, where he gives requirements for elders. And he says, a bishop or an elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober of good behavior, given to hospitality.

And the exercise of hospitality is related to the gift of health, because it's work to provide for an unexpected guest. It's work to provide for even an expected guest. The one who has the gift of health doesn't say, my house isn't tidy, and I don't say have things prepared, and I'm tired from the day's work.

Think of all the extra work it's going to mean for me. The one who has the gift of health and shows that through hospitality doesn't think of herself. She thinks of the need of the one to whom she's willing to become a servant.

I remember going to a certain place to minister on one occasion, and I got there in the late afternoon, and I met the pastor, and the pastor said to me, has anything been said to you about dinner? I said, no. He said, well, you'd better come to my house tonight. He said, just a minute.

He went into the next room and heard him telephone, and he informed his wife. By the silence, I suspected that I had created a problem in that home. The fellow was very cordial, and took me to his home, and his wife greeted me very graciously, and I heard pans rattling around the kitchen.

You know, you can hear pans rattle. You can hear pans rattle, and I knew the way that those pans were being set down on that stove, that I had been put as a burden in that home. Wife was rushing around getting things ready, and I began to smell smoke.

It got stronger and stronger, and I wondered if I ought to say anything. Finally, I heard an outburst in that kitchen. She had put a casserole in the oven, and had forgotten it, and it was burned black.

By the time we came to sit down at the dinner table, the tension was so fixed, it was embarrassing. I would have been so thankful if that pastor had said, we were expecting you. Let's go to a jack-in-the-box.

That dear saint, I dare say, did not have the gifts of hell, but there are those who are sensitive to need. My wife is in the hospital. One of the dear saints calls up and said, uh, who's doing the cooking past you while your wife's in the hospital? Oh, I can take care of these things.

I'll be over at 5 30 with supper all prepared. Now, when I have to, I can get something a little past for me. I don't enjoy it, but I can.

So, somebody recognized the need. An exercise of gifts of hell, and it contributed to this part of the body. Somebody else comes along and says, what are you going to do tomorrow? Well, I've got a moment along.

He says, I'll be over tomorrow afternoon. I'll cut it. A teenager is exercising the gifts of hell.

Not that he had to, but he knew it relieved me. I was touched just a few days ago. A student who attends seminary here dropped by my office.

He attends great. He's a pastor. He looked kind.

I just stopped by to see if there's something I can do to help. The gifts of hell. Conscious of the need.

Willing to be a servant. Willing to be a helper. To minister.

Not in a public ministry in the public. Minister to me, and I dare say there is more need, more need for people to be helpers than any other single gift, because a few could be pastor teachers and take care of that need of the box. But it takes many who are willing to be servants to minister unobtrusively, unheralded, unrecognized to other members of the box than any other one gift.

If you feel God has given you the gift of hell, don't despise it. Don't belittle it. Don't be ashamed of it.

Exercise it for every gift that is necessary and honorable in the sight of God. We pray our Father that thou wilt give to us those who have the gift of hell, who will exercise those gifts as one member of the body to another, so that there may be soundness in the whole. And I thank thee for those who have exercised such a gift to me, to my family, and to others of the family of God who may be without having been recognized publicly, yet have contributed so much in the furthering of the ministry of the word of God.

Give us such gifted people. Dismiss us now with the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace upon us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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