

Scott A. Wood 9-16-2018
SERIES: MAKE A DIFFERENCE
PART 2: ENGAGE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Welcome back, family. CVCHURCH is a multicultural and intergenerational church. Why, because this is what the church of Jesus Christ looks like. This is what it will look like but even more intense in Heaven. Every culture, every race, every tongue, and every age group. Last week we started a brand new series which I believe is going to be one of the most, if not the most, important series I have done here at CVCHURCH over the last 26 years. Today I want to look at why it is so important that you understand your God-given shape, and how you are to engage your shape and your spiritual gifts. On your notes, S.H.A.P.E stands for your Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences.

Robert Kriegel, in his book, “The C Zone,” mentions that everyone always functions in one of three zones. One is the panic zone. This is where you feel that you’re out of your league because you’re doing work that you’re not gifted or shaped or prepared or educated or equipped to do. So you become stressed out because you feel you’re way in over your head. Have you ever been in the panic zone? Yes you have. You might be living in the panic zone right now.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Drone Zone. This is where everything you do is too easy. You have it mastered. You’re in a job that’s beneath your talent. You’ve got twelve cylinders and you’re only using two. It’s mindless work.

You're bored doing it, and it bums you out. "Everything is so predictable and easy." Many of us have lived life in the drone zone.

Between the panic zone and the drone zone is what he calls "The C Zone," which stands for challenge, confidence, commitment and control. This is where your gifts and your abilities perfectly match the task that you have to do. I like to refer to it as my J zone for joy zone. Why? Because when you're in your Joy zone, it feels so good. You say things to yourself like, "This is what I was made to do. This is me. I'm good at this. I enjoy this. God is blessing this." Loved ones, this is where God wants you to live. He wants you to live your life out of His joy zone and not the panic or the boredom zone but right in the middle.

Last week I said to you it is so important that you know what your God-given shape is, because God so loved the world that He gave us His Son, but He also gave you to all of us. You are a gift from God. He made you unique. There is no one in the world like you. Originals are always more valuable than copies. Even in twins there are differences that are distinct. God says, "I made you to be you, and I don't want you being anyone else."

There are five things that make you who you are. We call them your S.H.A.P.E. **S—Spiritual gifts—what are you gifted to do? H stands for your heart—what do you love to do? What are your passions and interests that God put inside of you, and how can you use them for His glory? Abilities—the natural abilities that you're good at.**

Personality—You have a distinct personality that is different from everyone else in the world. Experiences—which are unique to you. You have spiritual, emotional, relational, financial, vocational, intellectual, physical, and painful experiences. God uses all these things to shape you for the purpose He has for your life. I want to look a little closer into all of these issues. The moment you realize who Jesus is, and you surrender your life to Him by stepping over the line of faith, you say, “I don’t understand everything, but I’m all in. I choose to go Your way and to fulfill Your plan for my life and not my own plan. I want to follow Your purpose, not my own purpose. I commit to living my life the way You shaped me.” God gives you four gifts immediately.

I. Four gifts you receive when you confess Jesus as your Lord

A. The gift of forgiveness

The gift of forgiveness is the greatest gift God could ever give us. After all we have done to forsake Him, reject Him, rebel against Him, and act as if He didn’t even exist, when you ask Him to forgive you He does immediately because of what Jesus did on the cross for you. His forgiveness gives you freedom to be who He has created you to be. The weight of your own sin, guilt, shame and humiliation can be released when you receive His forgiveness and you learn to walk in His forgiveness in every area of your life. When you suffer because of what you have done to others, or the resentment, bitterness and anger you can carry because of what others

have done to you—it will ruin your life by creating depression, lack of energy and misery. The answer to all of this is receiving the gift of forgiveness He offers you through a relationship with Jesus. Romans 5:15-16b says, **“But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and His gift of forgiveness to man through this other man, Jesus Christ....^{16b}For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.”**

B. The gift of eternal life

This is the gift that keeps on giving and giving. It is the God quality of life. God’s plan before He ever created the human family. His plan was to create us in His image which means we are spiritual beings who have God’s nature, which means we will live for eternity. The question is who you will live with forever. Will you surrender your life to Jesus Christ and live with Him, or will you insist on your own way and reject His purposes for your life. Then living with satan in hell will be your eternal dwelling. Romans 6:23 is very clear, loved ones. **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”** You cannot work your way to heaven, and you cannot earn your way to heaven. You cannot buy your way to heaven. The only way you will ever experience God’s eternal life is by submitting your life to Jesus and receive His free gift of salvation and eternal life. Eternal life is a free gift that you

accept by faith. You simply say, “Jesus, I’m going to accept what You did for me on the cross, and I receive Your free gift of eternal life.”

C. The gift of the Holy Spirit

God says, “I’m not just going to be around you and with you, but I am going to have My Holy Spirit live on the inside of you, and He will be the animating life-giving power that will empower you to live your life for the Father’s glory and purpose. Romans 5:4-5 says, **“And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”** It is the Holy Spirit who grows the character of Jesus in us—what Galatians chapter 5:22-23a calls the fruit of the Spirit. **“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control.”** God says, “These are the nine qualities I put into your life when you let Me live My life through you. It is My Holy Spirit that gives you the strength to live the life I have planned for you.” Look at Romans 8:9, 15-16 that explains just how important the Holy Spirit is to the Christian. **“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all. ¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves.**

Instead, you received God’s Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, ‘Abba, Father.’

¹⁶For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children.” If you are not becoming more and more like Jesus there is a good chance that the Holy Spirit does not live in you. You can take care of that right now by repenting of your sin and disobedience and ask Jesus to come and take His rightful place in your life, and when you do this the Holy Spirit comes to live in you.

D. The gift of some supernatural special abilities

These special abilities are what the Bible calls spiritual gifts which makes them different from material gifts or physical gifts. They are gifts the Holy Spirit gives you to get done what He wants done for His Kingdom through His church. These spiritual gifts give you the special abilities to do the purpose He has planned for His church which He wants to flow them through you personally. Spiritual gifts are different from natural abilities even though they may appear at times to be the same. When you were born you were given certain abilities, and as you have grown and matured, you have most likely worked on some of your abilities to hone them and to become skillful at them.

When you were born again, when you confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you surrendered your life to Him, the Holy Spirit gives you spiritual abilities that allow you to serve Jesus Christ by serving His church and the world. Paul the apostle is a great example of a person with

natural abilities and one who learned to function and flow in his spiritual giftings. We are to use our natural abilities to build up God's body, the local church and our culture, but also to pray and seek God to build up His church and body through the spiritual gifts He gives us. A healthy local church will develop an environment where both our natural abilities and spiritual gifts are encouraged, develop and put into practice. We are not to favor one over the other. Paul uses all of advantages for the Kingdom whether it was his Roman citizenship, fluency in Greek, Aramaic, or Judean orthodoxy. On our 7th week I will come back to this subject and look at the two leading passages in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and Ephesians 4:11, to look at the sorts of spiritual gifts that Christians are not born with. But here are a few principles to help us better understand—in 1 Corinthians 12:3 Paul writes, **“So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.”** The spirit of the world, which is the anti-Christ, demeans degrades and dismisses who Jesus is. By contrasts Paul is arguing that anyone who is truly motivated and influenced by the Holy Spirit focuses on lifting up and strives to bring honor to Jesus Christ who is the Lord. When it comes to moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit Paul's overall criterion of genuineness is to glorify Jesus Christ and not to bring honor or focus on one's self. Chapter 12 focuses on the church as the body of Jesus Christ. Chapter 13 describes in detail the essential character of Jesus Christ. In Chapter 14 Paul take two particular gifts (speaking in tongues and prophecy) to demonstrate how any spiritual gift exercised with true Christ likeness will truly serve to build up

Christ's body, whether it is in Corinth back then or CVCHURCH now. John Stott writes, **“To be truly ‘spiritual’ drives a person neither to ecstasy nor to individualism nor to other-worldliness, but into the life of the local church as an expression of his or her personal commitment to Jesus as Lord and to His body here on earth. It is there that the implication of what it is to be ‘spiritual’ men and women of the Spirit, will be worked out.”** In vs. 7 Paul says a spiritual gift is given to each of us for the sole purpose of helping each other. Not bringing attention, glory or honor to ourselves but to the benefit and value of the other person in order to bring glory to Jesus as our Lord. In Vs. 11 Paul writes, **“It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.”** It is not up to you or I which gift we have; that is the choice of the Holy Spirit to decide which gift is needed for the moment and the ongoing life in the local church. As you discover your God-given spiritual gifts Paul is adamant that the gifts He has given to you are for the glory of Jesus your Lord and for the benefit of the body that you are a part of.

II. Four reasons you need to know your gifts

A. They shape your work

Last week I made the comment that in architecture form follows function. Tell me what you want to use the building for, and an architect can tell you how to build it. But in human beings, it's the exact opposite. Function follows form.

Once you discover and figure out how God has shaped you and how He's wired you in what He has given you in your God-given shape, your **Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences**. Then you will have a good picture of what God wants to do in and through you in the church, your family and in the world.

In John 9 Jesus heals a man who was born blind. People asked Jesus, "Was this man born blind because of the sins of his parents or his own sins?" Jesus answered, "**This happened so the power of God could be seen in Him.**" ⁴**We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the One who sent us.**" Jesus was saying, "I am not here to blame; I am here to do what God has shaped me to be and do. I am Lord. I am Jesus the Savior and healer." He healed the man. You are shaped by God and have been given specific abilities and spiritual gifts that are to shape who you are, how you think and how you respond to situations and people. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, "**There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.**" ⁵**There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord.** ⁶**God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.**" To get God's work accomplished in the world and in His church He has given all us different kinds of gifts, different forms of ministries and different ways that God's work and energy gets expressed in the world. The Spirit of God is not about theory, but He is God's empowering presence that is meant to be released in and through each of us. Paul argues that The Holy Spirit shapes our work because He produces varying

results which can be noticed. The Holy Spirit through us is meant to change lives, transform relationships, increase healthy local congregations, effective testimonies and release all of the God-given talents that are in each one of us. Your spiritual gifts shape the work God has given you to accomplish.

B. They show your worth

Your spiritual gifts and abilities demonstrate how valuable you are to God and to His purposes. The truth is that your value, self-esteem and self-worth come from who God has made you to be. Your self-worth comes from three things: 1) **The fact that God created you.** He thought up every one of the details of your life before you were born, 2) **Jesus gave His life for you.** That demonstrates how valuable you are, 3) **God's Holy Spirit lives in you,** and He has gifted you with certain spiritual gifts. This also demonstrates your worth and value. Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”**

C. They share your worship

What I mean by this is that when you use the gifts and abilities God has given to you by serving others it is an act of worship on your part to God. One of the things that brings a smile to God's face is when you function like the masterpiece He created you to be, and you're involved in the good things

He planned for you long ago. Jesus said in John 15:7-8, **“⁷But if you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted. ⁸When you produce much fruit, you are My true disciples. This brings great glory to My Father.”**

D. They shine your witness

Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, **“Let your light shine in front of people. Then they’ll see the good that you do and praise your Father in heaven.”** When you use your spiritual gifts and abilities that God has given you on the behalf of others, this not only brings a smile to God’s face, but it will bring a smile to you also. You living out your God-given shape is a witness to other people. God has called you to share your faith. The problem is often times we think or are taught that there is only one way to share your faith. I want to give you six examples from the Scripture. You will see your God-given shape in at least one of these and I trust it will free you to share your faith more with others.

1. Confrontational Acts 2:32-39

God pours out His Holy Spirit, and there is mass confusion among all of the Jews from around the world that were there when they heard them speaking the Good News about Jesus in their language that they know these people didn’t know. One explanation that people were saying was they were drunk. What a bunch of knuckleheads. Peter stands up and declares that God raised Jesus Christ their Messiah from the

dead and the disciples are all witnesses. He lays out that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Then in vs. 36-38 he says this, **“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”**³⁷ **Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’**³⁸ **‘Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”** That is confrontational, and over 3,000 men and women surrendered their lives to Jesus right there.

2. Intellectual *Acts 17:16-18, 30-34*

In Athens, Greece, in a city that was known for their Philosophical bent, the Scripture says he presented logic and evidence to prove to them that Christianity was true. Some of you are like this. You are drawn to the Apologetical approach. Where you use logic to demonstrate the truth that is in Jesus Christ.

3. Testimonial *John 9:8-11, 13-34*

Jesus heals a blind man and the religious leaders of the day just like today refused to believe the man who was healed or his parents. They asked the blind man a 2nd time after he already told them what Jesus did. They cursed him, which means they insulted him and kicked him out of the synagogue. He says to them, “This is so strange, He healed my eyes and yet you don’t know where He comes from.” He simply testifies what Jesus did. In this approach, it is not on

you to prove what Jesus has done for you. You simply state the truth of how He has saved, delivered, healed, rescued and how He loves you.

4. A party with a purpose *Luke 5:27-32*

Levi who was a tax collector invited other sinners like him to a banquet, and Jesus was the honored guest. The religious leaders showed up and questioned Jesus why He was hanging out with such scum. Jesus said, ³¹**“Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. ³²I have come to call, not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.”**

5. Invitational *John 4:39-42*

The leading immoral woman of the village was confronted by Jesus when she talked with Him. He exposed the truth of her situation, and she was so impacted, she went back to her village and convinced them all to come and see this man who told her everything she had ever done. Jesus stayed for two days so the people could hear His message. Here is what happened. Vs 42 **“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard Him ourselves. Now we know that He is indeed the Savior of the world.’”** You never know what an invitation to invite your friends or family to your small group, to many of the events we host here or to join us on Sunday morning or afternoon or on Friday at CR will do.

6. Acts of love and service *Acts 9:36*

In Joppa there was a woman named Dorcas. She was always doing things for others and helping the poor. She had made an incredible impact on her village. She then died unexpectedly, and Peter prayed for her and she came back to life. The Bible says the news spread throughout the whole town, and many believed in the Lord.

III. Four steps to using your gifts

A. You must discover your gifts

One of the ways you discover them is to start serving. Some of you don't know what your gifts are because you're not serving. It would be great if we could get it right the first time, but sometimes the way you discover your gifts is to start serving in a ministry, and you will quickly find out whether you have that gift or not. I have been amused when I hear someone say they sing or play an instrument really well, and then when people hear them, they don't share the same idea. Some people get so offended that they have left CVCHURCH claiming we don't love them, and we were unkind, but they were not as good as they thought they were. This church has helped me become more confident in my teaching gift because of all the comments I get week after week, but most of all, by the lives that have been changed by the way I teach the Scriptures. Get serving. The 2nd thing is to evaluate what you're good at, and then see if others confirm that you have a gift in that areas. Often time's people will

recognize your gifting before you do. The third thing you can do is experiment. You just get involved and try different ministries and use the different gifts you know you have or you think you might have. If you're not very good in one area, no problem. Find other areas that you have passion for. 1 Timothy 4:14 says, **“Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is in you.”**

B. You must dedicate them to God

Romans 6:13 says, **“Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.”** Some of you already know what you're good at. It's no surprise. You're just not using it for the Lord. You use your gifts more for your own self and enjoyment. As you identify and discover your spiritual gifts and abilities, you will need to dedicate, surrender, and commit them to Jesus Christ and to His Kingdom purposes. The reasons why you're not using them is it could be that you're too busy, or you're making excuses, or you have a fear of failure or you're just being selfish or lazy.

C. You must develop them

First you discover your gifts, then you dedicate them to God, and then you get to work about developing them. Gifts are like your muscles. The more you use them the stronger and bigger they become. And gifts that God gives you can and must be developed. Whether you have the gift of teaching,

mercy, leadership, or giving, those gifts can be developed, and your skills can be honed for God's glory and service. Here is what I have learned personally. When God gives you something, if you use it well, He will give you more. More talent, more money, more influence, more relationships, and more responsibility. God says, "I can trust you so I am going to give you more. 2 Timothy 1:6-7 says, **"Fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline."**

D. You must deploy them

The word deploy means you put them into service. You engage in ministry and serving others by activating them. We're not that far from camp Pendleton in Oceanside. Men and women are getting deployed all the time to the Middle East, and wherever else they are needed. Romans 12:6-7 says, **"In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to speak God's message, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly."**

One of the best ways to discover, dedicate, develop, and deploy your gifts is in a small group. A small group, when led well, is a safe place to become a testing ground. If you're not

in a small group and would like to be, you can sign up on your Friends Card and turn that in. We're in a unique place that a good portion of our small groups are full. We had 12 last Monday night, and if everyone we have invited comes, we will have around 16-18. If you have been through at least our LD 101 membership seminar and you have taken out membership, I would ask you to be open about facilitating a new small group. If you are a small group leader, who do you have in your small group that has grown to a place where you know they could lead a new small group? As you hear my voice, I believe God is speaking to some of you. Please feel free to write on your Friends Card, "I am willing to discuss facilitating a small group." Roberta Rea, who is absolutely incredible, and one of the nicest, kindest and humblest persons you will ever meet. She knows our small group ministry extremely well and when Kathe and I was with them recently she said to me, "Pastor, we really could use more new groups." Here is a chance for you to discover, dedicate, develop and deploy your gifts of facilitating a safe place for others to grow, mature and learn to develop a huge servant's heart. Let's pray.