

November 4, 2018
Sermon Series: Serving In A Selfie World
“Serve Me”
I Corinthians 12:1-11

We are currently in a series called “Unselfie – Serving in a Selfie World.” Each message is a response from the Lord to a person who says to Him like Isaiah did, “Here I am, send me.”

3 weeks ago, we were challenged from Jesus as He said, *Abide in Me. – for apart from me you can do nothing.*

2 weeks ago, we walked through I Cor 13 – the great love chapter. Where God challenged us saying, *Love Like Me.* There, the Bible emphasized the motive of our ministry. That we must ensure that love is the driving force behind anything we do in ministry.

Last week, the message was *Identify with Me* as we emphasized what it means to identify with Jesus by faith, and identify with Him through baptism.

Today, God’s response to someone saying “Here I am, send me” is simple: To that person, God says, **Serve Me.** If you’re like most people, the thought of serving God – of being the hands and feet of Jesus Himself – that probably prompts feelings of inadequacy. And inferiority. We might have said to the Lord, “Here I am, send me.” But to actually step forward and do that? It’s like stepping out of the boat onto the water. It is a huge step of faith to obey the words of the Lord, saying Serve Me.

How can God use anything I have to offer? What do I have that God needs or can use? There’s nothing special about me that God needs. I remember the words of Isaiah... “I’m a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.” Many people feel like an old, outdated garage sale. We put ourselves out there. People come by, act casually interested and then turn and walk away thinking, “there’s nothing here that I want.” Is this what the Lord does when we step into His presence? Does He look around us and say to Himself, “there’s nobody here that I want. There’s nobody here that I can use.” ?

He doesn't say that:

- Because we are His redeemed, forgiven people
- Because we are His *Spiritually Gifted* people
 - And since we are redeemed and spiritually gifted, we are equipped to Serve Him.

I Corinthians 12:1-11

I. A Spiritual Gift is a Spiritual Empowerment for All Believers

This gifting and empowerment is a personal, individual blessing bestowed upon each believer by God Himself.

The very existence of Spiritual Gifts indicates that we are not intended by God to be independent and isolated from the church – the body of Christ.

These gifts are functional and they are intended by God to help us *get busy in serving Him* through His Body, the Church.

Spiritual Gifts are designed and assigned by God. In fact, the Bible indicates that we don't even have a choice in how we are gifted or when we are gifted. **I Cor 12:11** The Greek word is "charisma" where we get the term, Charismatic. It is a grace-given gift from God Himself.

All believers are given a spiritual gift(s). **I Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

God, through His word, admonishes us to use the gifts He has given.

Have you ever received a Christmas or bday gift from someone that they were proud of but you didn't really want? It's pretty bad when 6 months later that person asks you about it and you've never used it – or you've regifted it or pitched it. Hopefully you've never accidentally re-gifted it to the person who originally gave it. 😊 That's only funny at a white elephant gift exchange.

Would we ever do this to God? Take what He gives us to serve Him and stuff it away in our lives like we didn't have it at all? We will be held accountable for how we have served the Lord.

I Corinthians 12:4

II. **Spiritual Gifts Are Given in Great Variety**

- a. Diversity and variety are the spice of life and should be the spice of the church.
- b. This is the main point of verses 4-12
 - This list is not intended to be comprehensive.
 - In fact, no spiritual gift list in the Bible is comprehensive.
 - I actually believe there may be spiritual gifts that exist that Scripture doesn't even mention.
 - And a number of the gifts mentioned don't even operate anymore, or not often at best.
 - Most of the spiritual gifts mentioned in these verses are miraculous gifts. (you can't even do these without a manifestation of God's miraculous power).
 - But even within these, there is great variety shown.
 - That means that ministries should not all look alike. There should be great value placed upon varieties of ministries in the scope of serving together.
 - The Holy Spirit of God is the driving force behind them all vs 4

It's amazing to me that God can empower someone like me to serve Him. Something special happens every time I stand up to preach His word. Knowing how I'm wired, knowing my introverted tendencies, knowing my once absolute dreaded fear of public speaking – that God can take a guy like that and use Him to preach His word multiple times every week? God can take someone who hated school and just couldn't wait to get it over with and changed him into someone who loves to study and prepare to preach. I was once a bumbling mess when it came to giving a speech in school. I'd be sick about it for days leading up to it. For God to call me to preach His word? It amazes me. When I preach God's word and I hear what is being spoken, I listen with amazement because that's not me. I can literally feel the Lord take over. I can't do this on my own. He has empowered me in spite of my own incompetence and weakness.

The same is true with however He has empowered and called you. Our ministries don't and shouldn't all look the same. They should reflect the great diversity in how God has gifted His people to serve Him.

I'm always so appreciative of those spiritually gifted to work with young children. Or teens. I love those ages, but I'm not wired to work with them in the same way as I am adults. I believe that effectively caring for and ministering to children is a spiritual gift from God. Some people are amazing in that type of ministry. Here at FBC, children and teens are the future and are a high priority in our ministry. There is no area of greater need here than for new people to step up and serve God/His church than with children and teens. Particularly babies/toddlers and teens. Fill out a connection card and put kids ministry if you're ready to say "Here I am."

I Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

III. Spiritual Gifts Should Create Unity and Edification

- a. Unfortunately, spiritual gifts can often create disunity and a platform for exalting self. This is the very reason why Paul wrote this part of I Corinthians was because of the disunity and disruption the misuse of spiritual gifts was creating.
- b. Unity does not equal uniformity.
 - i. It does promote the acceptance that others might be wired by God differently and can serve God in a different way than you.
 - ii. (love does not insist on its own way 13:5)

We have people in our church who minister to college students. And others who reach out into jails and prisons. And others who reach out to bikers. And others who minister in nursing homes. Others who help people with addictions. And others who minister to teenagers. And others who minister to those dealing with the pain of death or divorce.

While we are not all personally called to all of those varied contexts, we should have unity and edification when we come together. Because all of these ministries are of great value as long as they are accomplishing our mission of connect, grow, serve.

Reminder: your spiritual gift is not given by God to edify self, but to edify (build up) the church. While you should enjoy serving, you don't serve because of the

feel-good warm fuzzies that it brings. This was the problem at Corinth – they were using their gifts to build up self, gain popularity and control. It became a self-driven competitive environment. Instead of benefitting from and being blessed by the gifts of others, many were using their gifts to benefit themselves as individuals. We have been called to *Unselfie and serve in a selfie world*. Give and serve in a way that you don't need recognition or earthly reward. Do your part to bring unity and edification to the Lord's ministry.

IV. Discover and Develop Your Spiritual Gifts

- a. Take a spiritual gift inventory test – here's an online test (108 questions) gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/
- b. Ask others who know you how you might be gifted
- c. Try out different ministry contexts
- d. Remember, it is not you who gifts you. God might gift you in a way that you never realized until you find yourself in that particular context.

The development of your gift is really important, regardless of what it might be.

Before you can use it and develop it, you have to discover how you are gifted and purpose to be a good steward of it.

There are many ways to categorize them. This is the way that makes most sense to me:

- Miraculous/Sign Gifts – tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, healing
 - Speaking Gifts – teaching, preaching, evangelism, counseling
 - Action Gifts – gifts of helps, mercy, administration, giving, serving
- These are of huge importance because Actions Often Speak Louder than words

The main lists of gifts in the Bible are in:

I Corinthians 12; Romans 12; I Peter 4:7-11

There are no “sit and do nothing” gifts. There are no “I’m just here to learn” gifts. There are no “when is this over” gifts. And there are no “retirement” gifts.

I believe there may be seasons of life where some gifts are enacted and seasons of life when they may cease or shift to another.

I even believe God (in His sovereignty) may do some initial development in a person’s life before salvation and then use that skill in a gift-type fashion for the glory of the Lord.

How You are Gifted Determines How You are Called to Serve