



## EQUIPPED & EMPOWERED

Pastor Doug McNett // July 27, 2025

Text: 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4

Big Idea: The Holy Spirit equips, empowers, and unifies believers for God's glory.

Well, good morning! I want to give a quick shout-out to my people joining us in our online community! I'm so glad you are a part of the Foothills Family and that you're with us in worship and studying God's Word from wherever and whenever you're at. Well, If I haven't been able to meet you, my name is Doug; I'm one of the Pastors here, and I would love to connect with you on the patio after we worship together. So, be sure to come and say hi.

This morning we're continuing our series discussing the Holy Spirit and we'll be starting by turning to 1 Corinthians 12, if you'd turn there with me. 1 Corinthians 12.

One of my pastoral roles in the Foothills family is that I oversee and lead our global missions ministry. I returned this last week after being on mission with some of our high school students in Croatia and then in Ireland ministering to Croatians with some adults from our body. It was an incredible experience with some great spiritual progress in the lives of the people we served. This morning after the 11am service we're going to be doing a presentation on the mission projects up in room 305. We would love for you to join us and hear what God has been doing in the lives of Croatians.

There were a couple clear and obvious truths that I saw as I led these two projects. We were never meant to live the Christian life on our own or in your own strength. As I spent time with a few Croatian Christians it was so clear and obvious how significant, necessary it is to be in community with other like-minded followers of Jesus. And in Croatia there is very little community. In fact, there is a church in a community of 15,000 people and the pastor of that church said that they typically have 5 people in

church. Of the 4 million people in Croatia, the most positive numbers say that there may be 9,000 Christians. Though, in the capital city of over 1 million they estimate there are less than 1,000 believers. Croatia is very hard soil. And I would consider it an unreached people who are closed off to the gospel. And so, the other thing that I saw, was not just the desperation of community, but it is that progress in reaching this people group is only possible by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Clever programs, fancy words, good music, just won't do it. There must be the working of the Spirit.

So, this morning as we unpack how the Holy Spirit gifts and empowers it's very fresh on my mind just how significant this conversation is.

There seems to be a tension among Christians who want to follow Jesus and want their lives to reflect Jesus, loving people well and wanting to be used by God, but often it seems that people feel they're ill-equipped, or don't have much to offer, especially when they compare themselves to what they see others doing.

And that brings us here—to this moment, and to this passage in 1 Corinthians 12. Because if it's true that the Christian life can't be lived in isolation, and if it's true that clever strategies aren't enough to move the gospel forward—then it must also be true that we desperately need the Spirit's presence and the Spirit's power.

And not just "in general," but personally—in you and through you. So this morning, I want to invite you into a journey—not one of striving or comparison—but of receiving, responding, and then walking with the Spirit who already knows exactly how He wants to work through your life.

Let's start by looking at 1 Corinthians 12, starting in verse 4. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given

through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.

Before we get too far in unpacking this text it's really important that pause on verse 7 for a moment and really understand what it's saying. If you would underline that first part, "to each is given." This means every believer. Every person who has submitted their lives to the Lordship of Jesus is included here. No one is left out. Paul doesn't say "to the mature" or "to the extroverted" or "to the leaders. He says to each. If you're a follower of Jesus, you are included in this. Period.

But it continues, to each is "given." What this emphasizes is that spiritual gifts are not earned or self-generated. They are gracious gifts given to us from the Holy Spirit. You can't manufacture your gifting, you can't pick one and decide that this is what yours will be and then create it in your life—instead it is a gift that has been given to you by God.

This is really important as it communicates so powerfully that just as God has designed you and knit you together in your mother's womb, as He has chosen you to be His, He has also given you specific and purposeful gift.

This is why verse 7 goes on to say, "7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." This phrase is crucial. A manifestation means something is visible or is made known—or something that is expressed outwardly.

So Paul is saying that spiritual gifts are visible, tangible expressions of the Holy Spirit's presence in a believer's life. When you use your spiritual gift, it's not just you doing something—it's the Spirit revealing Himself through you. It's not just that you have the Spirit, it's that the Spirit is showing up through you! Which is awesome! And there's a purpose, there's a why... "for the common good."

The Spirit doesn't gift you for your own personal experience, or platform, or validation. He gifts you for the benefit of the body—for the building up of the Church. That phrase "common good," in its original language refers to what is mutually beneficial, edifying, or helpful to the whole community.

So if you're using your gift in a way that isolates, divides, or spotlights yourself, then you're misusing it. Because the gifts are meant to serve, and to unify, and strengthen the body—not elevate the individual.

We could sum this all up by saying, "God gives every believer a way to make the invisible Spirit visible—so that others are built up and Jesus is glorified."

So, we can see that these gifts are given. They're not loaned out like library books. They're intentionally given and done so personally to you. And did you notice in this passage that it's repeated over and over that these are given, but also that there is an empowerment that takes place? In fact, just before verse 7 in verse 6 Paul explains, "it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."

And then again, down in verse 11, he says, "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit..." So, the gifts aren't just handouts. They come with empowerment. It's not like God gives you a spiritual gift and then

leaves you on your own to figure it out. Instead, the same Spirit who gives the gift also supplies the power to use it.

That means you don't need to rely on your natural ability or even your confidence level. You don't have to wait until you feel "qualified" or have been a Christian for so many years or have reached a certain level in you walk with Jesus. No, no, you just need to be available and dependent—because the Spirit will meet you in your obedience.

I think this is where a lot of believers get stuck. We sense a desire to serve... we feel a nudge from the Spirit... but we pull back because we don't feel ready. Or, we think someone else is better or more qualified than we are.

Friends, the Holy Spirit isn't waiting for you to be impressive—He's waiting for you to be yielded to Him. What I mean by that is that the Holy Spirit is looking for believers who are willing to surrender control, open to His leading, and ready to obey—even when they feel weak, uncertain, or underqualified.

And when you step out—even with fear and trembling—you'll find that His empowerment is real. You'll find words coming that you didn't rehearse. You'll see fruit in places you didn't plan. You'll realize: "This is bigger than me." And that's the point. The gifts are not about your capacity—they are about His presence.

So it's clear that we've been "given" these gifts and that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to use them. But before we close we really need to understand the why. What's the point of all this? Why does the Spirit work this way?

Because if we don't understand why we've been gifted and empowered, we'll either ignore those gifts—or we'll misuse them. So let's talk about the purpose behind it all, which is for the glory of Jesus and the growth of His Church.

Ephesians 4:11-13 says, <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

That's the purpose right there—to build up the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts aren't about personal validation or emotional highs, or to feel super spiritual. They're about strengthening the Church. They're given so that we would mature in our faith, grow in unity as a family, and to deepen in our knowledge of Jesus. The Spirit gives gifts to equip us to serve one another so the whole body grows stronger.

And so what that means is that your gift isn't just for you—it's for us. When you don't use your gift, we're all missing something. The body is less healthy. The Church is less complete. You might think, "I'm not that important," or "someone else can do it better," but the truth is: if the Spirit has gifted you, He intends to use you. Your presence matters. Your obedience matters. And your spiritual contribution makes a difference in the lives of others. Which means when you're not using your gift, we're all lacking.

Check out what Peter says in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Peter writes, <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

There it is again: we each have received a gift. That's a settled fact. But notice what he says there, the command is simple—use it. And how? To serve one another. Not to show off. Not to get attention. Not to build a platform. But to be faithful stewards of the grace God has entrusted to us. And notice the ultimate purpose: "that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

So here's the point: when you use your gift, the Church is strengthened, people are blessed, and Jesus is glorified. That's the bullseye. That's the win. Not impressing others, not building a ministry name, not so you can feel good about what you've accomplished or how spiritual you feel, but faithfully offering what the Spirit has given so that Jesus is made much of and His people are built up in love. That's it.

So, if you've been holding back, waiting to feel "ready" or "good enough," let this be your nudge. You don't have to be in full-time ministry to do ministry. You don't have to be on stage to be used by God. Some of the most powerful, Spirit-filled ministry happens behind the scenes. It happens when someone quietly prays. When someone checks in on a hurting friend. When someone shows up early to serve or gives generously without recognition.

Those moments matter. Because when you use your Spirit-empowered gift in love, you are joining the Spirit in building up the body of Christ and bringing glory to Jesus. And that's what it's all about.

Now, you may have some questions. "What exactly *are* the spiritual gifts?" "How do I know what mine are?" "Do I have one or many?" "Is this just a talent I'm good at—or something deeper?"

Those are *great* questions—and we don't have time to unpack all of them fully today, but let me leave you with a few simple thoughts that I hope will bring clarity and peace.

First—what are spiritual gifts? In scripture in places like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4 we see some lists of these gifts, but honestly they're not exactly exhaustive. Meaning, they aren't complete lists. The Spirit may work in unique ways in different people and in different seasons.

So, how do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Well, There are several ways. I will always encourage you to do three things right away. First, pray and ask God to make it clear how he has empowered you. Then intentionally watch. Be introspective, look at how he has wired you and examine what you do. You may be using your gift at certain moments and not even realize it. And then I encourage people to serve. Anywhere. You will find out really quick if you have been given a gift for that context. It will be clear to those around you and to yourself if you are forcing or manufacturing something or if the Spirit is empowering you. You may begin to notice "I feel joy doing this. I see fruit when I do this. People are encouraged when I serve in this way." And over time, with prayer, reflection, and feedback from others, you begin to discern how the Spirit is working through you. There are even spiritual gift tests you can take online, some far more in-depth than others, but they help you process by asking questions about you and they provide some gifts that may have been given to you. At the least, those are some good places to start serving and see how it goes.

Here's the deal: you don't need to figure it all out today. But you do need to take a step. Don't let the pursuit of clarity become a reason for inaction.



Maybe your first step is praying, “Holy Spirit, show me how You’ve gifted me.” Maybe it’s having a conversation with a discipler or pastor. Maybe it’s just signing up to serve and watching how God meets you in that place. We have tools to help you. We have opportunities to plug in. But at the end of the day, the most important thing is this:

Be available. Be faithful. Be yielded.

Because the Spirit is ready to work in you—and through you—for the glory of Jesus and the good of His Church.

Let’s pray.