

(Rico's video) There are a lot of reasons to be a cop, some of them good reasons. Recent news reports question whether all cops should be in law enforcement. But that question could be asked of any profession. Some do what they do just to get a check just like some cops enter law enforcement just to wear a badge, carry a gun and drive fast without getting arrested. But the majority of cops choose law enforcement because they want to help people. For Rico police work is a calling. He loves what he does. He wanted to be in law enforcement even as a child. He finds satisfaction in teaching and serving others and he's good at it. Rico's work is not just a job - it is an integral part of his calling. He does what he does "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

How about you? Are you doing what God called you to do? **The call of God is a God-given sense of "fit" affirmed by others and confirmed by experience when our gifts, skills, experience and personality meet with opportunity.**

Do you feel a sense of fit? "I was made for this."

Do others affirm your work? "You are good at what you do."

Has your work been fruitful? "What is the secret of your success?"

Are you able to exercise your spiritual gifts through your work? Of course the answer assumes that you know what your gifts are.

To that end, we are exploring four foundational passages on spiritual gifts. Last week we looked at 1 Pe. 4, a passage that divides spiritual gifts into two categories – speaking and serving gifts. Then we turned to Ro. 12. Paul's admonition was to think - think about our unique contribution to God's work. Today we consider the other two passages – 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4. The message of both is that **when we exercise the gifts of the Spirit maintaining the unity of the Spirit God is glorified and the church is built up.**

Jesus stated His vision clearly when He said to His disciples, "I will build My church." The implication was, "I will build My church using you guys." Both 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4 provide the specifics of how Jesus will build His church – by maintaining unity of purpose while exercising diversity in giftedness. In fact, Paul says the Holy Spirit shows up (manifests Himself) wherever He finds unity expressed through diversity...vv. 4-7.

The mystery of the trinity is what makes Christianity unique among all other religions. One God in three persons operating in perfect unity is the pattern for the church (and for marriage). The oneness of God is expressed in Dt. 6:4. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one." This is called the "Shema and I have it engraved on my ring. "One" does not describe the NUMBER of God but the NATURE of God. Oneness is a prerequisite for effective ministry (see Ps. 133).

Diversity is also an attribute of God. There are other religions that believe in the oneness of God but they don't affirm the diversity within the trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have different functions. This is called "the economy of the godhead." Each member of the trinity has a different role with respect to creation and salvation. Still, Jesus says, "I and the Father are one," one in nature and purpose but different in function.

This is the pattern used in vv. 4-7 as Paul alternates between “varieties” and “same.” So when we exercise our spiritual gifts united in purpose we reflect the nature of God.

Spiritual gifts can be grouped into four categories:

Serving gifts: Mercy, giving, helps, service

Apostolic gifts: Apostleship, prophecy, tongues, interpretation, miracles, healing

Leadership gifts: Leadership, faith, discernment, wisdom, knowledge, evangelist

Teaching gifts: Teaching, shepherding, exhortation

If you want to explore your divine design by taking a spiritual gifts inventory, we have provided a link to Lifeway: <http://fellowshipdallas.org/media/downloads/>

Spiritual gifts are for giving away. I have never forgotten an elderly lady who befriended me when we were planting a church in California. She invited Jana and me to lunch in her tiny home. She had patiently and lovingly prepared a simple meal served from a table full of doilies and various nick-nacks. When everything was ready she stood and held up a little crystal bell and said, “A bell is not a bell until it is rung. A song is not a song until it is sung. And a gift is not a gift until you give it away.” A gift is not a gift unless you give it away. The Corinthians had a giving problem. They were self-absorbed and using their freedom in Christ to please themselves. They had forgotten that gifts were for serving others and building up the church not for making a name for themselves. Beginning in 1 Cor. 8, Paul’s addressed the responsible use of Christian freedom. In chapter 11 he warns that their selfish “wheels-off approach” to worship will have serious consequences. Here in chapter 12 he warns that a selfish spirit in which we forget about the contributions of others will lead to chaos and disunity in the church.

Some people’s gifts are undervalued...vv. 15-20. Other gifts are valued too highly...vv. 21-25. Paul’s solution to this problem results in one of the most beautiful chapters in all of scripture – 1 Cor. 13. We often hear these words at weddings but he wasn’t talking about marriage. He was talking about the use of spiritual gifts.

Turn to Ephesians 4 and we discover the emphasis on unity once again...vv. 1-7. Verse 3 emphasizes the unity of the Spirit. Verse 13 emphasizes the unity of the faith. We are called to “preserve” the unity of the Spirit while we are to “strive for” the unity of the faith. The unity of the Spirit is ours because we share a common Spirit but the unity of the faith takes effort as we seek a common understanding of God and His purposes.

God is so committed to the building up of the body of Christ that He provides gifted leaders to every church. This chapter is not so much about spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to individuals but gifted individuals that God gives to the church. 4:11 identifies five categories of gifted individuals that represent five critical functions of every church: Apostles went forth to expand the church by establishing new works. Prophets spoke for God giving direction to the church. Evangelists sought to win the lost to Christ. Pastors cared for the flock and teachers created a learning environment so the

members could grow in the truth. So if you want to evaluate the health of a church ask 5 questions that correspond to these five gifts:

1. When was the last time a new congregation was established? (Apostleship)
2. Does the preaching call the congregation to obedience? (Prophecy)
3. Are people being baptized in response to their new life in Christ? (Evangelism)
4. Are people being cared for? (Pastoring or shepherding)
5. Is there a healthy learning environment in the church? (Teaching)

Notice the benefits when these 5 functions are working properly in the church:

1. The body grows stronger...vv. 11-13. These men and women are given to the church to insure the full participation and proper working of each individual part. They are “to equip the saints for the work of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ.”
2. God’s people are not easily deceived...vv. 14. This is essential if we are to grow with respect to the unity of the faith. I once had a new Christian ask if I thought a person could be deceived and not know it. That’s pretty much the definition of deception! Children have to be taught not to take candy from strangers. I want to warn you that there is a lot of spiritual candy being offered up by strangers who want to capture the hearts (and the wallets) of those who are naïve and untaught.
3. God’s people speak the truth in love...v. 15 That is the way we grow up in Christ. One of the characteristics of a mature body is the ability to disagree and still love one another. One of the characteristics of an immature body is...anonymous letters. I call these “package bombs.” They unload on someone with no ability to rectify anything. I have a policy – if there’s no return address and no signature it goes in the trash.
4. The body causes the growth of the body...v. 16. The body of Christ grows in size and maturity in direct proportion to the proper working of each individual part.

A healthy growing body must maintain its connection with the Head. I have a friend who has been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Some of you know first-hand how debilitating that condition is. Your brain works fine but your body cannot obey your brain’s instructions. Somewhere between the brain and the body there is a disconnect. Christ is the Head of His body the church. There is nothing defective about Christ our Head. Let’s make sure the actions of the Body don’t betray the will and the desire of the Head. If we will strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit and actively pursue the purpose of God through the use of our gifts, the body of Christ will grow strong.

In last week’s Script I wrote about my close encounter with *50 Shades of Grey*. I felt angry and sad about all the people waiting to see a movie about the sadomasochistic exploitation of a young woman. Even sadder about all the women in line to see it. But I was reminded of how Jesus’ words in John 3:17.

We often quote John 3:16 but not 3:17: “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” Our job as the people of God, the Body of Christ is not to judge the world but to judge ourselves. Are we being the body of Christ? Are we being the salt and light Jesus called us to be? Are we doing what God called us to do, using our gifts to love our neighbor as ourselves? Are we exercising those gifts for the common good “so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ?”

My attitude toward a bad movie made me wonder if the church makes so little cultural impact today because we exert so much “sideways energy.” We can get so preoccupied with judging sinners that we ignore our calling. Jesus went on to say, “he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” There will be a final judgment when God will judge perfectly. In the meantime we would be wise to follow Paul’s admonition to the Ephesian church:

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Eph. 5:15-17. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the times – the days are evil. My guess is *50 Shades of Grey* won’t be the last movie to challenge our Christian values. But neither can we afford to be ignorant of our calling. Let’s stay connected to the Head and “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called.” (Eph. 4:1)