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SERMON ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS  
The Power of Community  
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Antonio always wanted to make music. He loved music. It was in his being to want to create beautiful sounds that inspired people.

But because Antonio's voice was high and squeaky, he did not make the tryouts for the Cremona Boy's Choir.

Yet Antonio still wanted to make music.

His friends gave him a hard time because his only talent was *whittling*. When he took violin lessons, the neighbors persuaded his parents to make him stop. He was a horrible violin player no matter how long or hard he practiced. His playing infected the whole neighborhood with piercing squeaks and groans each afternoon when he got back from school and tried to practice.

Finally, when Antonio was a bit older he served as an apprentice to a violinmaker. His knack for whittling grew into a skill of carving and his hobby became his craft.

He worked patiently and faithfully. By the time he died, he had carved over **1,500 violins**, (**GET PICTURE OF STRAD. VIOLIN**) each one bearing a label that read, "Antonio Stradivarius."

As many of you know, these are the most sought-after violins in the world and sell for more than \$100,000 each. Antonio couldn't sing or play or preach or teach but his responsibility was to use his natural ability at whittling, and his violins are still making beautiful music today.

The key idea this morning is this:

**KEY IDEA: I know my spiritual gifts and I will use them to fulfill God's purposes.**

Now let's just say I was in a generous mood and I purchased some gifts for some of you. I actually purchased gift bags for all of you and they are coming around now in the offering plates. So everyone please take a bag out of the plate but don't open it yet.

What if I asked you next week, do you like the gift? Are you using it? And you said to me...I never opened it. How do you think that would make me feel?

I'd think...gee...she didn't even try to see what was in there. Wow. He didn't make the effort to discover what was in the wrapping. I guess my giving to them doesn't matter too much.

Now God has given gifts to each one of us...all of you have been given specific gifts from God. God is a gift giver. He has given us life and friends and beauty. He has given us Jesus and salvation and so much more...**God is a gift giver.**

And he has given everyone in this room a gift to use to serve him. That's the starting point. He has given them to us but...our responsibility is to open them up and see what they are.

If I were to ask you right now...what is the gift that God has given you that he wants you to use here at WVPC...what would you say?

I think for many of us – even if we acknowledge that God has given each of gifts - we still may not be sure what specific gifts he has given to us.....

We haven't taken the time to prayerfully consider what it is that God has put in us – we haven't opened our gifts...so to speak...we haven't discovered the gifts that are in us.

Did you know that often you will find that your gifting for God's kingdom that flows into what we term a "call" is where "**your greatest joy meets the worlds greatest need.**" Often when you discover what you are passionate about, you will find that you have gifts that match that passion.

Operating in your area of giftedness also means that you experience a sense of flow about it. Although there will be challenges, the truth is that if God has given you a gifting in a certain area, you will be able to rise to those challenges – whatever they may be – in a way that will not burn you out.

This is because, as one writer puts it, “**you have been shaped for service in this particular area of ministry**”.

If you are the wrong shape, for a certain kind of ministry, no matter how hard you try to put your shape into a different shaped hole/need, you won't fit. (picture of puzzle piece going into a puzzle) You only complete the picture or the puzzle that is the church, if you are shaped for that particular spot...Burn out comes when you are trying to fill a role that is not who you were shaped by God to be. That is not in your area of giftedness.

This is so important.

Antonio Stradivarius had a little bit of a time of trial and error, didn't he, before he figured out that he could make beautiful violins. He knew generally that he had a passion to make music...but how he was to do that was something he had to experiment with in order to find the right match or gifting that God had given him. He had to try a few things first...

Now I want you to open your gifts....Crash Zone kids put these together for you. All your bags contain a what?

A stone. These are some of the same stones that we used last Sunday when we made Nehemiah's wall. **Your challenge** for this week is to take your stone home with you and pray about your call and where you are spiritually gifted to respond to that call.

You may need to try a few things first before you know...it might take awhile...But keep at it...When you do know, write one word with a Sharpie marker on that stone that says what your gift is...What have you been given so that you can serve the body of Christ.

Daniel knew what his gifts were and where they came from.. His gifts were *given to him* by God. He had the gift of interpreting dreams. He received that gift after he prayed about it long and hard.

You have gifts too. Given to you by the Holy Spirit. But  
As with so many things in the Christian life, opening/discovering our spiritual gifts  
needs to be an intentional process...

*Now just to clarify...*

We haven't been given gifts from God for *self-improvement*.

No one is given the gift of *leadership* so that they can *make people do what they want*,  
and God does not give someone the gift of *exhortation* so that they can become a *rich*  
*TV preacher*.

God does not place within you the gift of *hospitality* so that you can become *Martha*  
*Stewart*, but so that you can welcome and care for people.

God does not give the gift of *helps* so that you can have *newspaper articles* or blogs  
written about how good you are, but so that you can *help people*.

*1 Peter 4*, we find these words:

**Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to *serve others*, as  
faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.**

However in giving these gifts away, we also do receive just simply in the joy of doing  
what we have been gifted to do.

**1 Corinthians 12:11 (NLT) — *It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all  
these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.***

Depending on who's counting, there are anywhere from 15-25 different spiritual  
gifts listed in the New Testament. Here is a

**Gift grouping:**

- 1. Service Gifts: Administration, pastoring, faith, giving, helps, serving,  
hospitality and mercy**
- 2. Speaking Gifts: Wisdom, prophecy, evangelism, exhortation, leadership  
and teaching**
- 3. Sign Gifts: Discernment, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation**

Let me illustrate these things. Suppose someone here spilled coffee this morning.  
This is how people with different gifts would respond. (show slides one at a time)

- **Service: "Let me help you clean it up."**
- **Mercy: "I'm so sorry that happened. Let me get you another cup."**
- **Giving: "Here, you can have my cup."**

- **Administration:** “Josh, would you get the mop? Carol, please help pick this up. Misty, could you get him another cup of coffee?”
- **Faith:** “Where God empties one cup, He always fills another.”
- **Teaching:** “If you pay attention, you won’t spill your coffee next time.”
- **Exhortation:** “Maybe you should let someone else hold your coffee for you.”
- **Wisdom:** “No use crying over spilled coffee.”
- **Miracles:** “Let’s ask God to put the coffee back in the cup.”
- **Healing:** “I’m praying against any physical or emotional trauma caused by this spilled coffee.”
- **Prophecy:** “If you keep doing that, you’re going to get burned.”

There. You all have a good idea of what your spiritual gifts are now, right? Not necessarily.

There is a spiritual gift assessment tool you can access online. **Go to this link...** <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/test/adult> it is also in your bulletin.

I would recommend you give it a try. The problem is that You don’t necessarily discover your gift by studying the Bible or taking assessments.

Those things help, but you primarily discover your gifts by trying things out...knowing your passion and figuring out how you have been gifted to fulfill that passion. Just like Antonio Stravinsky – he knew he wanted to make music but he was not gifted in playing the violin...rather he was gifted in making the violin...

So don’t determine your response to God’s call by looking at what you think you are talented in. Look at your God and respond, “Yes!” and He will equip you for the work.

**God doesn’t call the gifted. He gifts the called.**

So you can stop worrying about what you can do *for* God. Just ask God what he wants to do *in you* and *through you*. And be ready to respond.

And when you respond...to God's leading...that's like opening gifts you may not even know you had...or you had forgotten about. (YES LORD, YES LORD, YES YES LORD)

Many of you know I was never supposed to be able to speak. When I was very young I put the end of an electric cord in my mouth and the doctor at Boston children's hospital told my parents – her mouth will be deformed, she will probably never speak and if she does it will be with a severe impediment. Nothing ever happened to me like that...here I am speaking....to you right now...it's what I do...

But friends, despite this apparent miracle at the beginning of my life, even though nothing bad ever happened to me from that accident...I absolutely hated to speak in public. I was the shyest, most afraid kid in the classroom. Teachers were always saying to me "speak up". I would know the answer to a question, and be afraid to raise my hand to give it. I would shake when giving a class presentation or even answering a question. If someone came to the door I never wanted to answer it.

So when I was called to the ministry...I was petrified. For years getting up to speak at Menlo Park – preaching 5 times in a row – I was sick to my stomach every time.

However it was a call. I know this from the bottom of my heart. And I responded yes to that call. Even though it involved something I hated to do – speaking in public - that I wasn't good at.

Even now, speaking to you, before I get up here...it isn't easy. My hands get really cold before I talk. My MO is to be a behind the scenes person. I love doing things for others that no one recognizes. I have always hated the limelight. I am a writer, and I tend toward being introvert. Doing what I do is not what I would choose to do if it were up to me.

Now maybe you think, well she just contradicted herself when she said when you operate in your area of giftedness there is a flow...and it is where your greatest joy meets a great need.

I've got to tell you...that despite all of this human weakness that I have struggled with that I have shared with you...there is a flow and joy that comes out of preaching for me that is truly life giving. However, if I hadn't been willing to tread into waters that I felt were insurmountable because of my weaknesses...I never would be standing in front of you right now.

Seek God first...say YES to his call...and then recognize that God gifts the called...he doesn't call the gifted. So important to understand when we talk about spiritual gifts.

Everyone of you has a spiritual gift.

As we go into communion, I'd like to challenge you to say yes to whatever that prompting is. Some of you have been sensing God nudging out of your comfort zone...asking you to say yes to something that on your own, without the Holy Spirit you couldn't do...its only by stepping out that we open gifts perhaps we didn't even know we had...

Jesus knew when he went to the cross that in order to say YES Lord...he would have to be strengthened. And indeed the angels came to him in Gethsemane to strengthen him for the call of God on his life, which was to go to the cross for you and me...

All of us are called. All of us are gifted. I challenge you as we partake of communion together that you would say today YES LORD...to his prompting...and in so doing open the gifts of the Holy Spirit given just for you.

Let Us Pray/Communion