

1 Corinthians – Spiritual gifts. 5pm cafe church. Bruce Stanley.

"I'm With You" – Avril Lavigne

I'm standing on a bridge , I'm waiting in the dark
I thought that you'd be here by now
There's nothing but the rain, No footsteps on the ground
I'm listening but there's no sound

Isn't anyone tryin to find me? Won't somebody come take me home
It's a damn cold night Trying to figure out this life
Won't you take me by the hand Take me somewhere new
I don't know who you are But I... I'm with you, I'm with you

I'm looking for a place, I'm searching for a face
Is anybody here I know, 'Cause nothing's going right
And everything's a mess, And no one likes to be alone

It's a depressing song, isn't it? But it's a depressing world.
In Australia alone, 20,000 people a year suffer from anorexia. Every year
50,000 marriages end in divorce. Every year over 100,000 new cases of cancer
are diagnosed. EVERY DAY there are around 6 suicides and over 230 abortions.
In Australia. Each day.

Life can be really depressing. It's easy for people to seriously ask: "Am I
needed?" "Am I wanted?" "Am I important?" Because in the world, we get
valued by what people see: We are rich or poor. Weak or strong. Fat or thin.
Smart or dumb. Black or white.

But God has a different view of life. And that's why he gives his church
"Spiritual gifts". And that's what we're talking about tonight.

Lots of people talk about spiritual gifts. There are what some people call
"supernatural" gifts like healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy. And there are
"natural" types of gifts, like hospitality, administration, helping others. And it's
easy to get carried away by asking "What gifts do I have?" What does each gift
mean? Which gifts do I want? Why do some people have more gifts than
others? Does everyone have a gift?

But we need to ask a really important question **first** – “WHY does God give his church spiritual gifts?” And the answer is “To make his church a place that is different to the world.

Let me suggest just two ways God makes his church different with gifts:

1. God’s people are part of one body. v12 says **“The body is a unit, though it is many parts.”**

God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to make us ONE. A church is a group of people who make up different parts of one body. In the world, anyone can just live for themselves. But in God’s church, we are part of each other. We actually depend on **each other**, and we depend on **God**.

III – It’s like when you make a cake (not me!). There’s flour and water and eggs and all that stuff. These ingredients don’t just mix together. They intertwine. They become part of one new thing. They depend on each other. And when they mix together, you can’t separate them. And that brings us to the second thing that makes God’s church different:

2. Every part is needed and different because of the way God gifts us.
Verse 17: **“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?”**

You can’t take the flour out of the cake. Because it’s intertwined and necessary. Every part of God’s church is important to the body. What God wants for us is to know that we are important in his plans. We’re invited to become part of his family, his body, called the church – and this is a place where every person is important. Every person is equal. Every person is wanted. Every person is necessary. God sees us equally and he wants us to see all people equally. That’s why he sent Jesus to die on the cross for **everyone**. So EVERYONE can have the opportunity to be saved. Because **everyone** is important to him.

God wants his church to be different to the rest of the world. A place where there is no black or white, thin or fat, smart or dumb, rich or poor. No church is perfect. There’s a saying: *“Our church isn’t full of hypocrites, there always room for one more!”* We’re all sinful. We all make mistakes. But we live with

the same focus. We don't focus on ourselves. It's not about "me". We focus on God and other people. At least, that's what we try to do.

So, instead of asking "What are my gifts?" which is a "me" question, we need to ask the question: "What needs are there? What do others need?" If someone's sick, we don't ask – "What gifts do I have that can help?" We ask "What do they need?" And we say to God "Whatever they need, help me to serve them." And at that moment, when we stop thinking about ourselves and give ourselves over to God to serve, **he will give us the gifts we need**. When we're prepared to serve, God gifts us to serve.

* Let me suggest this: **God doesn't give us gifts so we can serve. He gives us gifts AS we serve.**

God doesn't see us sitting on our backsides doing nothing and say: "Look, here's the gift of prophecy, or here's the gift of administration, and if you ever decide to get up and do something, please use it!" We can't sit back and say: "When God gives me a gift, or when I figure out what my gifts are, then I'll serve!"

No. God calls on us to look for the needs all around us. Inside **and** outside our church. And when we see a need, we're called to serve. And **when we do that**, God will provide what we need to serve.

Let's say someone is sick. And you know they need some meals. But you're a terrible cook. What do you do? Do you say: "Well, I can't help because I'm not a good cook!" What God wants us to say is "I'll do whatever I can to serve them. God could "zap" you with special cooking powers. He could do that. Or you could take classes to learn how to cook to serve them even better next time. Or God could provide you with someone who CAN cook. Whether you can cook or not doesn't matter. What matters is you being prepared to serve. And when you are, God will provide all the gifts you need to serve.

And God will make YOU the gift to that sick person. YOU are the gift when you serve. Those other things – like knowing how to cook – God will look after those details. It's not about sitting in a room trying to figure out what your gifts are. And it's certainly not about telling God what gifts you need! Or telling other people what gifts they need! Who are we to tell God how to gift

his church?! **Let God worry about what gifts each of us needs to serve.** What we need to do is just get up and serve.

Just like Jesus. The world needed a saviour. Someone to take the punishment for our sins. Jesus **knew** we couldn't save ourselves. So he did. He came and died on the cross. He saw the need and he served – even to the point of death.

Don't **worry** about spiritual gifts. They are wonderful things. And God gives lots of them to his church. But let God worry about what gifts we need. We just need to stand up and serve. When you do that, YOU are the gift.

This Bible passage **only** talks about gifts because God wants us to know WHY we have them. Why do we have them? To make his church different to the world. We exist to serve God and serve people. Not serve our self. It's not about "me".

I'm looking for a place, I'm searching for a face
Is anybody here I know, 'Cause nothing's going right
And everything's a mess, And no one likes to be alone.

It's easy to feel worthless and hopeless, unwanted and un-needed. But God's plan tells us that every one of us is important. Every one of us has an important place. The eye cannot say to the hand "I don't need you!" We **need** each other. We **depend** on each other. God has made us that way.

Life **with** God is about that community. But life **without** God can be lonely.

If you **are** a part of God's church, let me encourage you to put aside everything that makes you want to think about yourself first. And think about the needs around you. And let God give you gifts when he sees that you need them.

If you are **not** a part of God's church yet, let me encourage you just to think about two things. Think about what the world offers. And, even though no church is perfect, think about what God has to offer you by being a part of his family.

Pray...