



## Gifted for Love (Part 1) – For the Common Good

Matt Chandler – June 24, 2018

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If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. First Corinthians, chapter 12. The year 1998 was a huge year in my life. In fact, I would say it changed the trajectory of my life. It was around '98 that I heard John Piper preach for the first time ever. I don't know how else to say it except he melted my face off. I had just never heard anything like what he was saying.

I had become a Christian at First Baptist Church of Texas City, Texas. It was a faithful Southern Baptist, First Baptist church that preached the Bible and sang hymns and had Sunday night church and Wednesday night prayer meeting and all of the programs and all that. I have nothing negative to say. It was a great experience. It was in that place that God drew me unto himself, and I'll be forever grateful.

After my conversion I became friends with a group of Assembly of God kids and a group of Church of Christ kids, which was wildly confusing for a Baptist kid, yet there was something in that dynamic that began to set the stage for where the Lord was taking me. In 1998 I heard John Piper preach a message at Passion, where he stood up and asked the question, "Is God for God or is God for man?" I was like, "He's for me!" with most of the other people in that room, and he was like, "You're wrong!" If you're like, "Surely he didn't," you have not listened to a lot of Piper.

Piper opened up a world to me. He opened up a world of theologians I knew nothing about, dead men in history who thought deeply about the things of God. If you've been around and you know my personality, I'm an all-in kind of brother. I read everything John wrote, and then I started going back to the primary sources. That took me to a lot of Jonathan Edwards, which then led me to John Owen, which then led me to the Puritans. I was just devouring it.

Southern Baptists believe firmly in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, which I have been unbelievably shaped by. My whole Christian experience has been nothing outweighs the Bible in matters of life, practice, faith, or anything. The Word of God is what informs us and shapes us to understand God

rightly and to interact with the world correctly. I still stand there. I have not ever moved from that place.

So, in '98 I hear Piper. I take a deep dive into, if you know these words, what would be considered *Reformed soteriology*. If you don't, don't worry about it. We'll teach it another day. So I'm all in on Reformed soteriology. In '98 I'm dating this cute little girl from East Texas. Her name is Lauren. You just finished listening to her sing. She became my wife. I head to India in 1998, and I just saw some things in India. I don't even have time to unpack. Just supernatural, crazy, Jesus stuff. I just saw it.

There wasn't any, "Could this be the Devil? Are these demons trying to deceive me?" It was supernatural revelation, supernatural healing. I mean, rocked my world. So I flew back in. I was in school out in Abilene, and now I have to know. I have to know how this works and what this is. So I go on, as Lauren and I call it, the great quest of '98 and '99.

I start dragging my beautiful new East Texas, First Baptist, Longview girl to all of these charismatic revivals. I think *charismatic* is probably not the right word. It was more like "charismania" or "charismaniac." So I'm with Lauren. I'm in this little revival, and everyone is slain in the Spirit but me. Literally everyone is on the floor but me.

Here's my thing. If the Ghost wants to slay me, I'm willing to be slayed, but the old fellow in the suit ain't pushing me down. So what happens, if you've never been in that environment... It's him and me and the elders of that church. It was like Bread of Immanuel, or something like that. So now I'm the primary focus of the room, because it's a failure if the Ghost doesn't get me.

All of these brothers are over me, and they're praying in tongues. Lauren starts to cry and leaves and goes and sits in the parking lot. She just thinks, "He's going to join this cult. Where are we going?" Most of what I saw in the great quest of '98 and '99 were charismaniacs who rejected the sufficiency of the Scriptures and believed they were hearing revelation from God that superseded the text. That's what I kept finding.

It was in that space I learned to reject that nonsense until, like a miner in a dark, cold mine, I saw this little thin thread of gold and started to follow it. I found this group of men and women who defined themselves as *Reformed charismatics*. What? There are no Reformed charismatics. The two theological concepts are opposed to one another. So say man. I began to follow that down, following

the line of gold until I found what I believe to be the jackpot: scripturally serious, robust, doctrinal belief inflamed with the power of the Holy Spirit. Reformed charismatics.

This isn't new. I've taught on this for 15 years. We have never believed anything *but* this the entire time I've been at The Village. Now if you're getting lost in some of the words, let me explain the two schools or theological beliefs. Anytime you hear *theology*, don't clam up like you're too dumb to know it. *Theology* just means a study of God and what he's like.

*Cessationism* is the theological belief that spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and the healing gifts (*healing gifts* is the right phrase, because cessationists still believe God heals; they just don't believe in healing gifts), ceased with the apostolic age. So at the death of the last apostle who walked the earth with Jesus before his ascension, all of the sign gifts vanished. That's what cessationists believe.

We are not cessationists; we are continuists. *Continuationism* is the theological belief that the spiritual gifts have continued to the present age, specifically those sometimes called *sign gifts*, such as tongues and prophecy. I think anytime I talk about these things from the stage you have these groups of people. Some are really, really anxious because they think I'm leading us down a path of liberalism, where we're just going to disregard the Scripture, baptize cats, and it's going to be chaos in here.

Then you have others who bend a little toward charismania, and they're just hoping fire falls from the sky and the entire room speaks in tongues and we begin to levitate across the room. I just want to happily say you both probably are really wrong. What The Village Church wants to be about is robust doctrinal purity, rooted in the sufficiency of God's Word, while embracing the sufficiency of Scripture as the Scriptures reveal to us that the gifts of God are available to his church to this day for the same purposes they were given in the first century.

It's interesting to note that these three chapters we're going to be in, 1 Corinthians 12-14, are always viewed as, "This is how you understand the gifts," but these three chapters are not ultimately even *about* the gifts. In fact, the great irony of the church at Corinth, which is a train wreck of a church... It is dysfunctional. It is chaotic. It is unhealthy. It probably should have just gotten shut down.

What they think they excel at are the gifts and God's grace, and Paul's rebuke is that what they're terrible at is the gifts and understanding God's grace. I mean, you want to talk about brain broke. "What are you great at?" "I am great at these things," and all of the evidence is like, "Well, no. No, you're really not." Anybody ever watch the first week of *American Idol*? There's exhibit A. "I can sing." No. No, you cannot.

The church at Corinth think they're great at these things. They think they've got it, and yet their background and history in paganism had twisted and distorted the gifts in such a way that Paul is actually writing to them about ordered worship, authentic love for one another, and a unity that should mark any and all Christian communities.

So we're looking at these three chapters because the gifts are mentioned quite a bit in them, but the text itself is actually about Christian unity and understanding what God is up to among a given group of Christians who have gathered in a local body. There's no way I'm going to be able to answer all of the questions you might have about specifically the sign gifts.

I'm going to get on a little bit of a tangent about how we get all geeked up about the sign gifts in a moment, but I want us to dive into this text. For the next six weeks we're going to go chapters 12-14, but this week and next what I want to be able to do is define, normalize, and redeem the concept of giftedness. That's my hope. With that said, let's look at 1 Corinthians 12, starting in verse 1.

**"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans..."** I rarely do this, but sometimes I need to do it. I don't ever want to take from you confidence when you read your Bible, but look back there. **"Now concerning spiritual gifts..."** That word *gifts* is not actually in the Greek. They're kind of pulling that up from later on in the text, because it's a nebulous piece there.

What he's actually saying is, "Concerning spiritual realities, I don't want you to be ignorant." He's not even talking about gifts yet; he's talking about spiritual realities. "Concerning spiritual realities, I don't want you to be uninformed" or "I don't want you to be ignorant." Remember, they think they're great at this.

**"You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God [third person of the Trinity] ever says 'Jesus is accursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in**

**the Holy Spirit. 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. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**

**For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 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. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills."**

I want you to look at those first three verses. He's saying that they are ignorant about spiritual realities, and in their ignorance of spiritual realities they're taking a good thing and causing division and harming one another with a good thing because of their ignorance about spiritual realities. Namely, he ties it back to their paganism and how they used to operate as pagans.

In the ancient world, paganism worked like this. There was a god for everything. If you were struggling getting pregnant, you would go to a fertility god, and that fertility god that doesn't exist would gift you a baby. If you needed a good year of crops, you would go to a god that was responsible for that. You would sacrifice to that god, and that god would gift you a yield on your harvest. We could keep going. If you were sick, you would go to a god over that specific sickness, and you would sacrifice to that god, and that god would gift you healing.

That's their concept. That's the world they indwelt. They were Gentiles, not Jews. They didn't know the Law, didn't know the Torah, and this is how they were operating. So when they're saved and become followers of Jesus Christ, they're not quite sure how the gifts work. They see these men and women with these profound... There were some people at the church of Corinth who apparently took up some space. They just had some monstrous gifts.

People would look at them and go, "Well, I'm a Christian, and I don't have that. I wonder where they're getting that." They would try to have one foot into Jesus and one foot into the pagan world as they tried to consume all of the gifts possible. Paul is going, "You're ignorant," and he gives them this litmus test: no one who is indwelt by the Spirit ever says, "Jesus is accursed." Now let's chat here. He's not saying there were actually people at the church in Corinth...

By the way, if you're new to the Bible and have no background in church, I'm not talking about Corinth right up from us. This is Corinth in the ancient world. I don't want the email this week that's like, "You Highland Village folk." (I don't live in Highland Village; I'm in Copper Canyon, but that's neither here nor there.)

He's saying to them not that there was somebody in Corinth who was like, "I'm a Christian. Jesus be accursed!" but there were these men and women who said, "Yeah, I'm a follower of Christ, but I'm going to get my comfort, power, strength, energy, and peace somewhere other than Christ." He's saying no one is indwelt by the Spirit who puts a foot in both worlds.

Then he says that, instead, those who are indwelt by the Spirit say, "Jesus is Lord," which is this concept we talk about all the time where we push our chips in and say, "I'm all in on Jesus Christ." It doesn't mean we're perfect. It doesn't mean we don't have times where we stumble and fall. It doesn't mean we don't fall short daily. It just means we're all in as best we can do right now with the grace we have and the power God has given us in the Holy Spirit for today. All in. Jesus is Lord.

I don't want feet in different worlds. I want to be all in on Jesus Christ. I'm not sure how often I'm actually in that space, but I want to be in that space. I'm fighting for that space. I'm trusting that God is moving me more and more into that space. I'm trying to put sin to death. I'm trying to grow in the presence and power of Jesus in my life. This is where Paul is rebuking them because they think they're strong, and they're actually weak.

Then he moves on from there. In fact, I'll just read this. "The following passage will stress that for Christians there is only one God and Spirit. The same God is experienced by all of his people, and he blesses them all in the most diverse of ways." You and I know this to be true. All of us have some shared experiences. All of us were saved by grace alone through faith alone by no act of our own so that no one would boast.

That's true about all Christians in this room. We were lost, and God saved us. If you're a Christian, that's your story. We share that story. We have been adopted into the same family. We have that in common, yet God has gifted each of us uniquely. He has placed us each uniquely. He has called us to different things, and we have different backgrounds. We have wrestled through different things. God has shaped us and sanctified us with different things.

This is what we *don't* have in common, because the one God blesses in gifts in a variety of ways in a variety of times in a variety of levels, a variety of outworkings of that gift. Some people get a little bit of this gift. Some people get a lot of this gift. Some people won't get *any* of this gift but get a lot of *this* gift. Some people have one really great gift and then everything else is awful. Some people get that dreaded "good at everything, great at nothing." At least you *feel* like it's dreaded. I would just rejoice and dance around that you get to be good at everything.

This is what he is arguing here, and I think we need to hear this today for a couple of reasons. First, you and I live in a post-Enlightenment world. Where the Corinthians were running to all sorts of spiritual principalities to find comfort, power, approval, and control, you and I, as post-enlightened human beings, reject almost all spiritual realities. We want to live in our heads as though the solution to all of our problems is more information.

Can we have real talk for just a second? How well are you doing at practicing the information you already have? I'm guessing nobody is waving the flag today, going, "I'm nailing all *that*. Everything I know I'm doing." No, no. It needs to be ignited. There are spiritual realities at play in the same way the church in Corinth was trying to serve Jesus while serving other spiritual principalities and demonic forces. It's taking place among us even to this day.

Every time you turn your back on Jesus and turn it toward something else for comfort, something else to get you power, something else to get control over others and situations and scenarios or to seek the approval of others, you're actually giving yourself over to demonic principalities. I know that's not easy for us to hear because we think everything is intellectual, but here's the great thing about the Bible: the Bible doesn't think that.

Remember that "sufficiency of Scripture" piece? Well, here's where it confronts us in love. Not all things are a matter of information. There are things that are a matter of power. Then he moves on from this rebuke to helping them understand how it *does* work. Look 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."**

I love this. Here's what he's saying in this text. First to the individual. To every individual who's a believer in Christ, you have been uniquely gifted by God. There is no one in here who is a child of God who has been left giftless. Now God help us. What I think we're guilty of is looking at more

public, more platform-oriented giftedness and saying that's what it's supposed to be. That paralyzes us and makes us feel as though, "Man, I don't know my Bible like that. I'm not courageous like that. I don't know how to do that. I couldn't do that."

It paralyzes us and turns us into spectators rather than participants. If you're wondering why your Christianity is boring, I'm telling you it's boring because you're meant to participate and you've decided to be a spectator. If your play is, "Well, I'm not gifted like that, I don't look like that," this is the LeBron James effect. Here's what I mean by that. I'm not doggin' LeBron James, but I couldn't, for the record, use Michael Jordan for this, because he always won. Hey, I'm just preaching the truth in love. I'm not trying to take anything from Bron Bron. The dude can ball.

LeBron James is a superior athlete to anyone else in the NBA. You cannot debate that there is no one as athletic and as powerful in the NBA right now than LeBron James. If you combined all our athleticism we would still lose by 22. He's unreal, and he can't win it by himself. It doesn't matter how big of a platform he has. It doesn't matter how everybody knows his name. Cleveland can't win it. Just follow it. Couldn't win it with Cleveland. Couldn't win it with Cleveland. Left. Came back. Won it. Won it. Couldn't win it with Cleveland. Couldn't win it with Cleveland.

This is a dude who's unstoppable. Everybody knows him. You can go overseas and they know who LeBron James is, but he can't win it, because it's going to take more than one skill set and one über-gifted man or woman. It's not God's plan. It's not God's intent. Each and every one of us is gifted by God, not that we might hoard that gift but that we might spend that gift on one another.

This is important to note. This text is unbelievably Trinitarian. Look back at it with me. Look at verse 4. "**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord...**" That would be Jesus. "**...and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.**" Did you see that? It is the Spirit, it is Jesus, and it is God the Father.

You cannot call what you and I have been given the *gifts of the Spirit*. They are the gifts of God to his people, empowered by the Spirit upon salvation, cultivated and used for the greater good of the body of Christ. We don't need a bunch of platform, public, big-time, über-gifted people eating up all the space. We need everyone using the gift God gave them without the excuse of, "If I'm not *that*, I'm nothing."

The kingdom has not moved forward on the giftedness of a thousand people. It has overcome the world in the ordinary, spiritually empowered faithfulness of men and women, most of whose names we will never know. The greatest in glory will be someone no one has heard of who endured much with great joy. I'm telling you, this is the Bible talking. When we get to glory, it's not going to be Billy Graham sitting next to Christ at his right hand. That's not taking anything away from Billy.

The greatest is the least. That's kingdom economics. The more popular, the more visible... You have to be faithful wherever God places you, but the greatest in the kingdom of God is somebody no one in this room has heard of. They've suffered immensely and have done it with joy. They've pushed back darkness and brought order to chaos by the power of the Holy Ghost, and they've done it in a way where nobody saw it, nobody recognized, nobody spoke life into it.

They were just faithful where they were. That's the man or woman who's greatest in the kingdom of God. So for all our "I have to be popular. I have to have *this*. I have to get *here*. I have to be known like *this*..." No, no, no. Actually, you're working counter to what you want to be working toward. Lift high Jesus. Shrink back. Be small. Let Jesus be big. That's our goal.

Then he moves to the gifts themselves. Let's pick it up in verse 8. By the way, look at verse 7 because it's so huge. **"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit..."** For what reason? The common good. Why have you been given your gift? For the common good. Do you have the gift of hospitality? See, here's how I think it works. You know not everyone has the gift of hospitality, right? Have you ever come across someone who's just not hospitable?

They're like, "Come over for dinner," and you get there and they're like, "What did you bring to eat? Don't sit there; that's my chair." Not everybody has the gift of hospitality, but some people can make you feel like you're home no matter where you are. There are people who have the gift of encouragement. God calls us all to be encouragers, but some people can't *not* encourage you. Like Steve Hardin down at our Dallas Campus.

I have never met anyone so edifying and encouraging in my life. He's like a hyped-up golden retriever that is so amped to see you. You are his best friend ever, and he has never met anybody more important than you in his life. God just wired him that way. It's a gift God has given him, and he doesn't hoard it; he spends it, and he certainly doesn't go, "Well, because I can't preach like that or sing like that, I guess I'm worthless." No, no, brother. Love everyone.

People have the gift of administration. You want to talk about people who don't get a lot of praise who deserve the most praise? People with the gift of administration. You know there are people who lack that skill, right? Yes. But how does this thing get organized in such a way that you can actually do the work of ministry without someone with the gift of administration? That's someone in the background, someone you probably won't know their name, somebody who doesn't get celebrated as much as people...

So you can't say, "Because I'm not that I'm no good." In fact, we'll cover that at length next week when Paul uses the amazing analogy of the human body. The hand can't say he's worthless because he's not the foot. We are what we are, and God has gifted every one of us for the common good, which means you've been gifted not to hoard that or to hate that but to use that for the building up of the body. Then he gets into this list of gifts.

**"For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 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."**

I think this is important to note. Nowhere in the Bible does Paul provide a complete list of the gifts that are available to the children of God. In fact, what we see throughout the Bible is he provides us a variety of partial lists. We have a list in 1 Corinthians 1:5. We see this one here in 12:8-10. We see in verses 28-30 another list, in 13:1-3 another list, in 13:8-9 another list, in Romans 12:6-8 another list, in Ephesians 4:11 another list, and then even Peter hops in in 1 Peter 4:11 with yet another list.

These lists do not correspond to one another. It's not the same list but a series of partial lists. It's as though the Bible wants us to know that according to the text there are varieties of gifts and varieties of services. It's not Paul or Peter or the Bible's heart to lay before us all that is possible but just to let us know to be on the lookout for gifts given to us by the Spirit to build up the church for the common good.

For all the excitement the sign gifts get, *all* gifts are miraculous. For all the play, action, and excitement the sign gifts get, those supernatural, weird gifts, every gift given to sinful men and women at their salvation is a gift of God's grace and is a miracle. It was dead, and now it's alive. So, your natural giftedness given over to the world reaps...what? Nothing that's not temporary and will

ultimately be burned off, but that gift saved, sanctified, empowered, and set free leads to the common good, the building up of the body in love.

I want to make sure we're talking about the same things when we see these things in the Bible, so I want to define the ones that are here. The first one he lists is the *utterance of wisdom*, which is a word of wisdom that encourages others to live their lives in accordance with the gospel. Words of knowledge or wisdom are best understood as illuminating or prompting of the Holy Spirit to bring about the knowledge of God or knowledge of self that is faithful to the disclosure of God we see in Scripture and in Christ that results in Spirit-wrought maturity in the church.

Maybe I could simplify that even further. I thought JT English's sermon last weekend was so, so powerful. I don't know if you were here or not, but he told the story of being in Watermark waiting until they went back... It looked like his wife had a pretty serious cancer threat in her body. They had kind of rooted themselves in Philippians 2. It had been a life verse, and they had just been praying that over one another and encouraging one another with it.

While they were waiting to go back to the doctor they sat down in Watermark. I don't know if you've been there, but it's a stunning building. They were in one of their multiple coffee shops, sitting back in the corner, and this guy who, according to the Englishes, looked almost homeless came and just sat down where they were sitting. There's all this open space, and he sat down right next to them. Does that bother anybody else? It's like, "Man, you have this whole place. Why are you snuggling up on me right now?"

So he sat there, and then all of a sudden this guy, who they're like, "This dude is homeless probably," opens up his Bible to Philippians 2 and starts to preach it to nobody. Maybe he's crazy. Maybe it was an angel. (I'll explain that later.) Maybe it was an utterance of wisdom to a weary and exhausted couple that God sees them, that God loves them, and that God is holding them tightly.

What a lot of my cessationist friends would say... And they're friends. They're brothers and sisters in Christ. They're going to be in glory with us. They would say, "Why couldn't you just read the text? Wouldn't the text edify them? Wouldn't the text encourage them?" Yes, but in that moment, how much more is the heart encouraged by the fact that God, in a sweet little encounter, through an impression of the Holy Spirit is saying, "I see you. I love you. You have not been forgotten. I know this is hard. I'm here. I'm going to hold you fast."

The sufficiency of the Scripture is not threatened by impressions of the Holy Spirit that encourage people to walk all the more rightly and fully in what God has revealed about himself in the Word and what is true about ourselves that we might not be able to see at a given moment. Surely this doesn't lead to chaos but edification.

Next is an *utterance of knowledge*. A message of knowledge would seem to be a message marked by theological understanding, including understanding based on Spirit-inspired study of Scripture. If you've ever watched the Discovery channel, you know there are people who can read the Bible and miss the entire point of the Bible. What we want is not to read the Bible like it's the newspaper. We want to read the Bible asking the Holy Spirit to do the work of illumination, to open up our eyes to see, to create depth in our understanding of who God is and what he's like.

Then there's the gift of *faith*. This faith is not the faith that is granted to all Christians but a kind of faith in an almighty and sovereign God that specifically believes he is capable of intervening in the most dramatic or supernatural or even more subtle and mundane ways. I don't know if you've ever come across somebody with the gift of faith. They look like crazy optimists. They just believe God is going to handle this, and I love them.

You don't want to be the guy who helps the guy with the gift of faith come back down to reality. You shouldn't do that. You should just rejoice and want that for yourself. How awesome is that? They just believe, just supernaturally believe God's got this and he's going to handle it and it's going to be great. You don't want to be the guy who's like, "Well, there's a lot of suffering in the Bible too, brother. Not everybody..." You don't have to be that guy.

I know people who have the gift of faith that comes and goes in differing seasons, and they know that sometimes it goes badly. They have this faith in this moment that not *this* time. What if they're wrong? What have they lost? If they're holding all things with an open hand going, "God is sovereign. I'm not sovereign, but I, for whatever reason, feel strengthened in my inner being to just trust that God is going to do this..."

It's not a person you rebuke; it's a person you want to emulate. Great faith with openhanded trust that God is sovereign and good and no matter how this plays out this side of glory we win. We want to be more like that, not less like that. You don't want to be the guy who keeps it real. Don't keep it real. Real is broken, Genesis 3, fallen madness. Lift your eyes up.

The next thing is *healing and miracles*. I don't think I need to define healing and miracles. I can tell you my own story. Nine years ago, I was diagnosed with anaplastic oligodendroglioma WHO grade III. It's a mouthful. Basically, malignant brain cancer. "It can't be cured. You have about two years. By the way, we'll poison you a bit before you go." That's what I was holding. As soon as I was diagnosed with that, my Christian community that was around me just split off in all these different directions.

Here's what happened. You had this group over here that was like, "Man, you just need to have faith, brother. You should believe, because if you don't have faith, the Lord is not going to heal. The Lord honors faith. He blesses faith. You have to muster faith right now." I just want you to know what kind of pastor you have. I will never visit you in the hospital and ask you to muster strength and blame you for your illness for not having enough faith.

That is toxic nonsense, and the preachers who preach that and espouse that are shysters and scoundrels, and I couldn't use any more strong language for them right now because of our setting. It's a lie. What kind of crushing, horrific weight would you place on people? I'm trying to come in with the faith for both of us and just praying that God just might.

Then there was another group, my more Reformed, staunch, "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Bible" brothers, who were like, "May the will of God be done." Yes and amen, but you have kind of used some reductionistic theology there, brother. Yes, may the will of God be done. I even know what text you're coming out of. The Lord's Prayer. "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

But what do we do where the Bible tells us to pray that people be healed in the name of Jesus? What do we do with James who says to lay hands and ask him with great expectancy to heal disease? We ask and we believe. I think both are doing harm, and I think the place the Bible would have us is to pray boldly, believing that God is able and willing, and then holding our hands open knowing that the will of God will be done.

The will of God is going to be done. Do you think that highly of yourself, that someone's physical healing is all hemmed in on how you either pray or how much faith they have or whether or not you're praying whether the will of God be done or not? No, no, no. Go read Moses' prayers. It'll scare you. If you hear somebody pray like that in Home Group you might try to kick that brother or sister out. We're bold in our prayers. We want to pray for healing, expect it, and then trust him. He's good.

Not everybody is going to be healed. We see that in the Bible. That doesn't mean we don't pray and ask and plead and want and long. I love this quote from Anthony Thiselton. He says *healings* implies various kinds of healings. "The kinds may appear to include sudden or gradual [healing], physical, psychosomatic, or mental, the use of medication or more 'direct' divine agency, and variations which are not to be subsumed in advance under some stereotypical pattern of expectation."

Thiselton also argues that "Healers are given varied gifts at varied times for varied tasks, and we should not impose a post-eighteenth-century dualism of 'natural' and 'supernatural' upon the ways in which God chooses to use, or not to use, regular physical means." If you're like, "Huh?" let me explain.

God healed me of anaplastic oligodendroglioma WHO grade III. He healed me supernaturally. He healed me through an amazingly gifted surgeon with advanced technology. He healed me with a drug called *temodar* that, in his common grace, he has given to all humankind whether they love him or not. He healed me through six weeks of radiation and supplementation and diet that kept my system strong while they pounded me.

If you're like, "Oh, please, Chandler. Why are you giving God credit for what man has done?" well, help me understand what I need to do, then, with the four or five others who started the same regimen with me and are no longer with us. Don't divide these things. God will heal through common grace. It doesn't mean we don't celebrate that he heals. We celebrate that he heals, whether divine, miraculous, unexplainable or through the means of common grace. God heals miraculously.

Then I saved this one for last, because I thought you would love it: the *distinguishing of spirits*. Specifically, this is a special ability to evaluate the origin, authority, and application of a prophetic message. More generally, this gift may be the ability to distinguish between demonic forces and the Holy Spirit.

Now, I left out *prophecy*, *tongues*, and the *interpretation of tongues* in this week's definition list. Why? Because if you know where we're going, almost all of chapter 14 addresses those three specifically, so we'll deal a lot with those when we get to chapter 14 in a few weeks, but for now these are the ones I want to cover.

Look back at verse 11. "**All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.**" You are not the audience; you are the actors. The more you embrace a view of gifts that concedes the work of ministry and the work of building up the body to paid professional ministers... First, you put yourself in the corner in regard to what God is up to. You negate the gift God has given to you, and you become a spectator rather than a participant. God doesn't want you in the stands; he wants you on the field. That's why he gave you the gift.

So how do you know what your gifts are? More on that in the weeks to come, but simply for this week...wherever your passions and your giftedness collide you should be paying attention. I would look into your own life. What are you drawn to? What are you naturally good at? What do you feel most alive participating in? Then here's what I want you to do. If you're a mature brother or sister, why don't you call out other people's giftedness this week?

If you see somebody who's in your Home Group or you see somebody here and you can just see in them a heart of service or the gift of encouragement or a real knack for teaching, you should just call that out in them. There are few things more life giving than someone else saying, "Brother, I see this in you. Sister, I just want to call this out in you." That's life-changing stuff.

Also be prepared for someone in love to go, "Yeah, that's not really your deal. I'm so glad you love that and you feel drawn to that. I just think the Lord has more... I see more of *this* than *that*." Not all of us are going to be teachers. Not all of us are going to lead worship. So where do your giftedness and your passions collide? That's the place I'd pay attention to, and then I'd just unleash your gift.

I think Home Groups are the best place to start this. Home Groups should be about cultivating each of our gifts so we might serve one another, build one another up, and be a part of building up this body in love. Each and every one of you has been gifted according to the grace of God for the common good. Let's pray.

Father, thank you that in your mercy and grace you have gifted us with a variety of gifts and a variety of services. I pray that we would embrace those, that you would unleash those in this body, that you would call all the more out of this body spectators and move us into being those who are participants on the field, in the fight, using our gifts, however small, however large, for the glory of God and the good of the body. You are kind to give us these things. We bless your name. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.