



Gifted for Love (Part 6) – A Gospel Reminder

Matt Chandler – July 29, 2018

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in 1 Corinthians 14 again. We're going to land the plane on our six-week series on the gifts, 1 Corinthians 12-14. I am going to move a little bit into chapter 15 for five verses, and I'll explain why momentarily. Before we dive into that, I just want to honor my sister Kathleen. Do me a favor, Kathleen. Will you stand for me? I know you'll hate this, but you're not going to be able to harm me.

Kathleen has been faithfully serving, holding babies at our church for 27 years, and this weekend is her last. She is moving. Kathleen, I just want to say this in front of everyone. When I see the fruit of grace in my children's lives, I know one of the first people who prayed it into them is you when you held them in your arms in that nursery, and there isn't anybody my age who has been here long at all who doesn't have that as a part of their testimony.

All this stuff we've been talking about the last six weeks you have faithfully embodied for 27 years. So I want to honor you, sister, and tell you the fruit and the ripple effect of your faithfulness will echo farther than most of us can fathom. Jesus sees you. He loves you, sister. I love you. Thank you. Will you thank Kathleen?

I want to summarize the last six weeks with a simple statement we've been reading. What are these three chapters about? Well, they're about this: *We must never lose sight of the purpose behind the gifts of the Spirit in the first place: the building up of the whole church through the Spirit-empowered ministry of the whole church.* The church is not built up by a select few über-gifted individuals, but the church is built up and matured when all of us use our God-given gifts for the glory of God where we are.

To be a spectator is not an option. God has called us all into the middle of the arena, gifted us with his grace, and called us to give of that gift for the building up of the body. No one gets to look at their gift and say, "Well, because I don't have *that* gift I guess I don't matter," because you *do* matter, and

the text has over and over and over again said you have been gifted by God's grace for the building up of the body. *You* have been gifted by God's grace for the building up of the body.

Some of that is the gift of administration and hospitality. It's not always the pizzazz gifts everybody wants. God has gifted you, and you don't get to say, "Because I have not been made a hand I'm not part of the body." That was Paul's argument in his body illustration. The hand cannot say to the foot, the foot cannot say to the hand... We all play our parts. So that's what we've been covering.

No individual receives all gifts, so we need each other in the body of Christ. I've said pretty consistently through this series if you are bored in your Christian faith you're doing it wrong. No one is a spectator. Everyone is a participant. In our little Western model, what has ended up happening is everybody has become spectators of a show, and that doesn't get us where God is leading us.

By the way, when I was leaving last week... We did tongues last week if you weren't here, the week before that prophecy. On the way out, one of our members was like, "Bet you're glad to have *that* one behind you." Then I thought to myself, "You are unaware of some of the text that's in next week's sermon." I know you're like, "Phew! Tongues is over." I still have "Women should remain silent in all the churches." Ladies, we'll get there. Just breathe. It's not bad news; it's good news.

What I want to do now... Paul is going to begin to summarize these three chapters, and he's going to move into chapter 15 to do that. What I want us to look at is...*How do we take all of these things we've learned, and what are we to think about in our experience at The Village Church as those who belong to the community of faith here?*

Let me give you my outline. I want you to hear this before we dive into the text so maybe you can see Paul's argument. Paul is arguing for *order*, he is arguing for *authority*, and he's arguing for *clarity*. That's the flow of Paul's argument, starting in verse 26 through 15:6. Let's look at this together. **"What then, brothers?"** Let me start this way. Ladies, when the Bible says "brothers" he's talking to you too. In the same way, fellows, when he says the "bride of Christ" he's talking to you.

"What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak

to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent." That's the second time we've heard that Greek word: *be silent*. I'm going somewhere with this.

"For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches." Breathe. "For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."

Now let's look at this. Remember, I said the argument Paul is making here is, right out of the gate, he's making an argument about *order*. All of this about the gifts, prophecy, teaching, these lists we've all been given... There's an order they play out in when we gather together. By *order* I don't mean *this* one is more important than *this* one. Rather, that when the people of God gather it's not chaos. We knew when we came in here today who was more than likely preaching, and it wasn't you. Right?

None of you this week studied and was like, "I've got a word for the flock this weekend, brother. I've been in Revelation. I've got a fresh word for the people of God." You haven't come going, "Hey, where's the face mic?" That has been given to me, but you *have* come with your gifts. You didn't come this morning thinking, "I'm going to be the one who leads in worship this morning." You came saying, "I'm going to worship the Lord," but Bleecker is the one who led us in worship this morning with Lauren and the rest of the crew.

There is an order, and as Paul lists these gifts again... We already covered this in week one. All of Paul's lists around the spiritual gifts vary, which means they're not full lists. They're just partial lists. He's saying here, "Hey, there's an order when the people of God come together." It's not chaos. Not everybody shows up and says, "I'm doing *this*" or "I'm doing *this*," but we do all come expecting and we do all come with our gifts.

If you remember the things we've covered so far... All of us are meant to come into the gathering with this sole intent in mind: to build up the body in love. I just want to keep telling you there's nothing more freeing than that. Why have I come into the gathering today? To speak life into the saints, to build them up in love. So in the parking lot, even, I'm like, "Okay, who can I encourage? Who might I speak life to? Who might the Lord give me a word for that I might just step in and encourage them and speak life into them?"

I've come expectant and as a participant, not as a spectator. If you continue to come as spectators, I will eventually bore you or life will get too hard for you to be a part. You haven't been designed to watch; you've been designed to play. You've been *gifted* to play. The Bible says when we come together there's an order to be had. Now who sets that order? Well, that order is set by an authority. Who gets to decide and who gets to determine? Ultimately, the Spirit of God gets to decide and determine, but the pathway of authority God has built is through a plurality of elders.

That plurality of elders is a *plurality* of elders, which means there are no kings. Well, there *is* a king. His name is Jesus. Everybody else is an under-shepherd to the *true* Shepherd. Elder bodies are put in place with the intent of plurality, which means we're all equals. I'll tell you this about plurality: it is awesome and it is awful. I'm just going to say it. Plurality is awesome and awful. It's awesome because it protects the body. It's awful because it slows us down at times.

We operate in a plus-one majority in our elder room, which means there's always one more lay guy than there is staff guy, and we have to win the room. We lose the room all the time, because we have

to be able to catch up. We have to be able to commence. We have to be able to lay before them through prayer and fasting and the seeking of his face. The Spirit of God has to speak to all of us so we can move in unison. There are no kings in that room.

Now, one of the reasons this whole concept is difficult is because you have been trained, I have been trained that all authority will eventually abuse power and is corrupt and is not to be trusted. Watch this. How many of you have been a part of churches where nepotism, good ol' boy club, abusive men in power have actually taken place? I don't know your background, but you can just raise your hand. Yeah, we've all seen it.

Do you know the Bible gives you, as members, permission to confront that, to call that out, to come together with two or three and go, "That's out of step with the Word of God; that's not right," and to call elders to repentance? They're not untouchable men. They are sinful men being sanctified, but they should be mature men, which is why the standard is so high to get in. The Bible says, "Hey, if a man doesn't die for his family he has no business in that room."

Why? Why bring family into this? Because if a man is not willing to lay down his life for his wife and his kids he certainly won't for the body of Christ. He will be in it for him. So you're looking for a kind of man who empties himself *of* himself to serve his wife and children or if he's a single man he lives in such a way that this is a man who is servant to all. He shows in his interactions with his friendships and with the church that his ultimate allegiance is to the God of the Bible.

This is the leadership that's meant to take place, but I want to address the text you want me to address. A couple of things on this. This is a great opportunity for me to teach a little bit about how we approach the Bible. Here's what I mean by that. If you proof-text the Bible, which means go find some verses to pull out of their context and build a theology around, you can make the Bible say almost anything, but if you read in its context it'll help you with things that you're like, "What in the world is going on there?"

A couple of things about this text. Let me explain some Greek stuff to you. By the way, I couldn't commend more highly to you when we offer classes like The Story of Scripture or Christian Belief, jumping in those classes will help you understand the unity of the Bible and how to read the Bible, specifically when you come across texts not that you don't like but that are confusing, because you're going to read things in the Bible you don't like. Amen? The Bible confronts all of us. There's not one of us who doesn't have a little bit of a paddling somewhere there in the Scripture.

The Bible confronts us because God is eternal and we are not, and he's going to confront us in foolish ways of thinking. I want to dive into this text in particular. Let me say this to begin. I don't plan on rolling out a robust picture of the roles of men and women. We've done that extensively here over the last 15 years. We are complementarians. There's a whole sermon... I even brought graphs into it, and I don't ever bring graphs into it, just to show you exactly where we land on these things, because it can get confusing.

Here's a little lesson on the Greek. There's not a lot of punctuation in Koine Greek, so this phrase, "As in all the churches of the saints," either goes with that God is not a God of chaos but a God of peace, as in all the churches of the saints, or... You can see what they did with it in the ESV or at least in *my* Bible. What they do here is they say in verse 33, **"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."** Period. Break paragraph. Start new paragraph. **"As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches."**

Let me tell you why this is problematic. First, just go back to 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. First Corinthians 11:4-5 says, **"Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven."**

I'm not going to get into all that. Ladies are like, "Oh my gosh. I'm not wearing a ball cap." You're fine. Here's what he's saying. In chapter 11 you have, "When a woman prophesies, when a woman prays, in the gathering when she comes forward with a word from God, in the gathering when she comes together to pray, let her do it like *this*."

So then how, two chapters later, are we to take, "As in all the churches, let the women remain silent," in the same letter in which he gave parameters in which women should prophesy and pray in the gathering? Do you see how the Bible interprets the Bible? There seems to be a way that women, *this* group of women in particular, in Corinth are operating that's in line with the way he has already told people to be silent. There's a rhythm in this chapter.

This "women should remain silent" is the third time that Greek word is used. Let me show you the other two. In verse 28, you have a reference to tongues. Basically, he's saying the one with the gift of tongues should remain silent when there is no interpreter. Same Greek word. He's saying, "If you

have a tongue and there's no interpreter, be quiet. You just hang out with the Lord. You just talk to God. You don't bring that word public. There's no interpreter."

Then he says the same thing about a prophet who brings forward a word. If someone has a revelation, then he should be quiet so the prophecy might be interpreted. Now he has moved on to these women. I don't know, but I know Paul isn't afraid to address them. He's just going, "The way you're speaking is causing disunity. The way you are speaking is causing dishonor. Be quiet."

I don't believe you can take this phrase "As in all the churches" and attach it to "Women should remain silent" when women are speaking all over the church in the first century. Gosh, even in this *book* he says women are prophesying and praying. Again, this is me encouraging you to know the Word of God and not cherry-pick verses. If David Koresh can convince people he's Jesus with the Bible, you should probably be careful. Just be careful of people who pull a verse out of context.

Know the Bible. If you're like, "Well, gosh, that just seems..." No, no. You can do this. Had you read your Bible and you were just reading through 1 Corinthians, you would have already gone through chapter 11, and you would have hit this verse, and you should be like, "Wait. I think in chapter 11 he said... Oh my gosh. What do I do with *this*?" Then guess what you get to do (it's crazy): study the Bible. It's awesome.

You'll grow, and your affections will be stirred for Jesus. It's just pouring gas on that little flame in your heart. You'll love him more because you'll understand him more and you'll rejoice in him more and you'll worship more, which is what you were designed to do, so you'll walk in more joy. See how that works? That's awesome.

Now, disunity can happen through men, disunity can happen through women, disunity can happen around any topic and any subject. All we know about what's going on at the church in Corinth is there's a group of women who are married who are causing disunity and distraction in the gathering, so Paul says, "Stop it. If you have a question, ask your husband when you get home. Stop interrupting the service."

He's not pleased with how this specific group of women are behaving. There are all sorts of theories around why that is. Maybe there's a temple in Corinth that has women priests, so there's a whole theory about... I don't like that stuff, because I just want to go with what the Bible is telling us. We don't hear anything about that temple, but the Bible has given us enough.

This isn't "All women remain silent always in all the churches." This is "There's a way to behave in the gathering that doesn't buck up against the authority God has put in place for the ordering of his people." All of that is for a singular purpose, and that singular purpose is clarity. Let's look at this together. Chapter 15, starting in verse 1:

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."

Hear me. The whole purpose around the gifts, whether that be the gifts of administration, whether that be the gift of hospitality, whether that be the gift of tongues or prophecy or the supernatural sign gifts of healing and all of that, the purpose behind it all is so that when the body of Christ comes together the gospel becomes clear.

Think about this. In the middle of a church that loves the gifts more than the Giver (that's what they're being rebuked about on this), Paul's correction is "The gifts make us marvel at the gospel or they're pursued in vain." The gifts are about clarity around the gospel because we're prone to forget it. The apostle Paul here starts to summarize these three chapters by saying, "Now I would remind you, brothers, what you're prone to forget. You're prone to forget the gospel, so let me remind you of the gospel."

Here's what he teaches about the gospel: "**...which you received...**" That's past tense. "**...in which you stand...**" That's present tense. "**...and by which you are being saved...**" That's future tense. The gospel is not a door we walk through in order to get to deeper, better things. The gospel is the thing we never move off of but only go deeper into. You don't get saved by the gospel and move to the gifts. That's loving gifts not Giver. All this is about the gospel.

If our attention moves from the finished work of Jesus Christ for sinners and onto spectacular sign gifts, we become far from the heart of God in a given location. The sign gifts serve the gospel; the gospel does not serve the sign gifts. Think of how prone you and I are to forget the gospel. Here's what we do. Gosh, we're so dumb.

If you have a church background and you read the Old Testament, the people of Israel are always like they love him and then they stray off, and you're like, "Those fools. If I was there and Moses hadn't shown up, I would still be serving the Lord. I would not have participated in turning my back. I'd just walked through the Red Sea. How could I?" This is us.

We're like, "When the spies came back from the Promised Land and were like, 'There are giants in the land,' I would have been like, 'Bring on the giants,' not like, 'Oh no. Let's just wander around in the desert for 40 years.'" We always think we wouldn't have been part of that group. We always think we wouldn't have been the Pharisees or Sadducees. Look at me. We are. Over and over and over again we are.

Don't think when you think about the Pharisees that all they knew was the Bible and not the Spirit, because what becomes clear about the Pharisees is the one thing they certainly did not know was the Bible. They knew it without knowing it, and that's scary. Paul is saying, "No, no, no. Don't forget the gospel." So, when we come together, what's all of this about? It's about re-gospelizing ourselves. Why? Because all week long outside of these doors the world is discipling you.

Every movie, every commercial, every ad in a newspaper or magazine is telling you one thing. Are you ready? "You're not happy. You need this to be happy." I'm telling you, I can just condense every ad you've ever seen with "You're miserable. You need this." The world is hell-bent on convincing you that you're miserable and that your identity is found in stuff and acquisition rather than being.

Who else makes the offer, "Come as you are, broken and battered, into my love"? In every other domain of your life it's "Earn. Achieve. Accomplish. Go." Only Christ says, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Only Jesus extends that invitation. We are not a religion of "Do, do, do." We are a religion of "Christ has done."

If you don't get that, you don't believe that, you don't walk in it, you're just prone to forget it, because every ad you see has a guy sitting on a \$10,000 couch, petting a perfectly manicured Goldendoodle and selling you a coffee maker. What they're saying is, "Hey, your life stinks. You need

better coffee." Here's what we do. Without even knowing it we're like, "Oh my gosh. I'm miserable. I need a better coffee maker." You're giggling, but I'm not lying.

When you get bored, do you feel an impulse to go purchase something? If you really get bored, aren't you like, "Oh, you know what I've been wanting? I've been wanting that thing I saw. Amazon." Right? Because we're being disciplined in it. So when we come together, we re-gospel one another and we remember.

I haven't even gotten into the spiritual warfare involved in all of this, which is doubt and shame and guilt that's constantly berating our souls, remembering things we did a long time ago that'll sneak up and keep us out of real community, keep us from running toward God but actually hiding from him. This happens all the time and steals joy and power from the children of God.

So when we come together, what are all of these gifts about? Prophecy is about pointing people to the gospel. Tongues is about pointing people to the gospel. It's about making these things clear. They are not of first importance, which is why Paul ends this whole thing on the gifts with "*This* is of first importance," and then he reminds us that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

What Scriptures is he pointing to? Well, he's pointing to the Old Testament. He's pointing to the fact that Jesus coming and saving all of us wasn't plan B. He's saying, "The Bible from Genesis to now has said that a messiah is coming, a lamb is coming who takes away the sin of the world." *All* sin. That's why the gospel is ferreted out in this text as past, present, and future. "You received it. You stand in it. You'll hold fast in it."

I've taught this enough that I know people get really anxious about that "unless you believed in vain" line, but I want you to look at this so we can actually be encouraged and not scared. Look there in verse 2. "**...and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.**" A lot of people will hear that and go, "Oh my gosh! I can lose my salvation," but here's Paul's point, actually.

Paul is making the argument that it's not by moral betterment that you'll judge your salvation; it's actually resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ, which is how you got saved to begin with. It's another argument that you don't move past the gospel. If you shift from "Christ has saved me where

I am; he has rescued me in the wretchedness he found me" to "God will only love me if I'm incessantly getting better," you've denied the gospel.

The gospel is saying you will never run to him or be in the kind of community that cultivates holiness if you don't get this. If we punt on all this to speak in tongues and to prophesy, God help us. No, we want *this* and *this* gets us *that*. Any type of pursuit that doesn't seek to clarify the gospel is a fool's errand that ultimately will be built on the sand and washed away in the difficulty of life.

Now, I want to lay this before you. If we're looking at order, authority, and clarity... One of the things I love about The Village (for 15 years the Lord has just done this) is many of you come to us either as nonbelievers or as jaded church kids. You're in your late 20s or your 30s now, and you're like, "Ugh..." You're thinking back on something that went badly for you, some hypocrisy you saw that you used to justify not following after Jesus, or maybe your parents were super inconsistent, like *you're* going to be with your kids.

Here's what I want to lay before you. Maybe you've been hanging out here for a long time. I think by now you've heard the message of the gospel. I just want to lay this invitation before you. Maybe today is the day you finally say, "Yes." Here's my gentle challenge: there is not coming a day where all of your questions are finally answered. So much has to be chalked up to mystery and faith.

You will not have all of your questions answered, but God will give you enough to believe in his goodness and grace, and if you'll say, "Yes," to that, then the faith to wrestle those questions moving forward is provided. I have all sorts of things that still confuse me. There are conundrums I've been unable to answer, but I know he's good because I look to the cross. I look to how he invited me in and where I was when he invited me.

I look at my silliness and foolishness over the last 20-something years and how his steadfast love has never punted on me. He has never regretted that he saved me. I have had some cataclysmic failures, and they were met with love, met with forgiveness and grace, both from the people of God, from *you*... Gosh, you had me when I was 28, an idiot. Maybe today is the day you say, "You know what? Yes." So I want to invite you to that.

Then, Christian, I want to just keep saying it. We have been trained that Christianity is best given to those with elite gifting. In week one we called it the *LeBron James effect*. Bar none, the best basketball player in the NBA. You can save your little Steph Curry email from me. One-on-one,

somebody is getting crushed there. I get it. We can argue that another day. That's not my point. My point is the best there is in the game today can't win it by himself.

God has given the power of the Spirit, the gifts of the kingdom, and the call to all of us. A variety of gifts at a variety of levels in a variety of places for the praise of his glorious grace. If you are bored in your Christian faith, I love you, but you're doing it wrong, because you've been invited right into the middle of the arena. I'm telling you, what God has accomplished in Kathleen, 27 years of faithfully holding babies, praying for their souls as she rocked them... The ripple effects of that we will not know until glory.

There are things in the lives of my children she prayed into them. Service in the shadows. God sees. God knows. God is blessed. Some of the more profound work of the kingdom happens in obscurity, but that obscurity doesn't mean we don't matter. It actually means God is really serious about *his* name and his renown.

So, Christian, once again, if you're like, "Okay, I get it. I'm not supposed to be in the bleachers; I'm supposed to be in the arena. I'm not just supposed to study the game; I'm to play it. What do I do, Pastor?" then, again, I'll point you to Connection Central. They have a whole team in there committed to helping you find where your spot is and how God has uniquely wired you and where your passion and burden collide. We want to put you in that space, because that's where we think you'll feel most alive.

I pray that you might leave this place today re-gospelized, reminded of the saving work of Jesus Christ. It is no small thing that you and I are sitting in here today hearing the Word of God, singing the Word of God, rejoicing in the Word of God. You know as well as I do that all around us are people who are far from him and have no idea they actually need him. They just keep buying coffee makers, hoping it's going to solve their lack of happiness, and it's not, because what is temporary cannot fill the hole of eternity. Only the Spirit of God can do that. Let's pray.

Father, bless these men and women. We thank you that you died for our sins, that you were raised, showing us that that price was paid in full. I thank you for how you've blessed us with every gift in the heavenly places. I pray that we would walk in that, operate in that, and rejoice in that. Help us encourage one another, speak life into one another, get into the middle of the arena, get dirty and bloody and tired and spent for your kingdom.

I thank you that you're saving this morning and you're maturing. You are just ruthlessly committed to our maturation. We love you and thank you. Spirit of the living God, encourage our hearts. Build us up. Remind us of what's true. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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