

**THE BIG IDEA: The gifts fill the gaps with grace.**

### The Take-Off

How do you respond to the following situation?

It's the night before your child's birthday party, and after a long day and a fight to get him or her in the bed and asleep, you pull out the big gift to start putting it together.

3 hours later, it looks done and you are absolutely done, and that's when you see it - the one piece that you missed.

Some of us would make sure the gift would work without it and ignore it.

Some of us would take it all apart so we could get that piece in.

But all of us would be kicking ourselves for missing that piece while we were assembling the gift.

What about this scenario? You're putting together a 1,000 piece puzzle and realize at the end that you only have 999.

Remember back when it was big to glue puzzle together and hand them as art work? Nobody's hanging a 999 piece puzzle as a masterpiece, are they?

Well, God's the best at putting puzzles together, and as we'll see this morning, he's also good at keeping all the pieces.

We've been talking for a couple of months now about the Holy Spirit, and we've called this series The Helper because in John 16:7, Jesus said that it was good for him to leave so that he could send us the Helper.

We've seen that he's called the Helper because we need help, that's he's God, and that He comes to empower us in order to boldly overcome sin in our lives and to boldly proclaim Jesus to the world.

As we come to the end of the series, I want us to start talking about what the Helper gives us in order to help us do what he wants us to do.

In other words, how does he actually help us proclaim Jesus?

That means that we're going to start talking about the gifts of the Spirit.

Surprisingly, though, the first purpose of the gifts isn't to take the gospel to the world. It's actually to get the church ready to take the gospel to the world, and he does this by filling the gaps.

You can go ahead and turn to 1 Corinthians 12, let's jump in...

## 1. How God fills the gaps

- a. It shouldn't take much to convince you that we've all got gaps, right?
- b. Some are noticeable (famous gap-toothed people); some aren't.
- c. First, let's just enjoy the relief of knowing that God sees and knows our gaps.
- d. That alone was worth you coming today. No more stressful pretending to be perfect, because God's already got a plan on what to do with the gaps.
- e. He's gonna fill them, and before we talk about what he uses, let's talk about how he does it.
- f. Let me show you a few verses in 1 Corinthians 12 that reveal his approach to filling our gaps.
- g. In 1 Cor. 12:8-10, Paul lists 9 different gifts, and then he says in v. 11 that they all come from the same Spirit (The Helper) who gives each of them "just as he determines."
- h. Next, Paul describes a body with different parts and says in verse 18 that God has "arranged" the body
- i. Then Paul wraps up the chapter in verse 28 by saying that God has "appointed" the gifts
- j. If you're watching Survivor and you relate to the "No Collar" tribe, this will be hard for you to really appreciate, but there is an intentional plan by God when it comes to the gifts
- k. In fact, the Greek word in v. 18 translated "arranged" is the same word found in Revelation 2:10
- l. This describes an angel coming down out of heaven and striking a superhero pose! The word for "planted" in Revelation 2:10 is the same word here for "arranged"
- m. Just like that angel isn't tripping and falling, God isn't haphazardly throwing the gifts like candy in a parade.
- n. He's like a coach who puts his players in the right place at the right time so that they can succeed.
- o. God's goal? The salvation of the lost. His game plan? Build strong players to achieve that goal.
- p. And so, as we start to examine briefly the gifts Paul mentioned in vv. 8-10, it's important to keep the Big Idea in mind: **the gifts fill the gaps with grace.**
- q. Let's see the gifts that God uses to do just that.

## 2. What God fills the gaps with

- a. Before we look at the 3 main categories of gifts, let's talk about what the gifts really are.
- b. They are little packages of grace! 5 times in 1 Cor. 12, Paul uses the word "charisma" for the gifts

- c. Charisma literally means “grace gift” or “gifts of grace”
- d. So what does God use to fill the gaps in each of us? He uses grace, but it’s comes in the gift.
- e. How many donut lovers do we have here? I’m partial to the filled donuts, and the best ones are so full of creme or jelly that when you bite into the donut the filling goes everywhere.
- f. As we do an overview of these gifts - especially if your weird meter starts pegging off the charts - remember that picture: the gifts are simply the way God delivers grace into the gaps.
- g. Let’s try to define them briefly, and then next week we’ll look more in depth at how they work in the church and in the mission of the church.
- h. Let me read to you the nine gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 and then we’ll group them in the 3 categories that Robert Morris uses in his book that we’ve given to all of our member families here.
- i. The first category is the DISCERNING gifts:
  - a. The word of knowledge
    - i. knowing something specific about someone that you wouldn’t normally know
    - ii. Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4)
    - iii. praying for a boy at camp and knowing about his father and unforgiveness
  - b. Word of wisdom
    - i. a divine answer or solution to a specific situation
    - ii. Have you ever found yourself giving someone advice that you knew you didn’t think of?
    - iii. Matthew 17 - Jesus tells Peter to go catch a fish to get tax money - divine solution
  - c. Discerning of spirits
    - i. having an awareness of demonic presence
    - ii. that’s NOT what you expected, because we always think this is a gift of discernment
    - iii. but it’s discerning spirits - like in Acts 16 when a woman was saying all the right things and yet Paul turned around and cast a demon out of her!
    - iv. Jesus said to be aware of wolves in sheep clothing, and this is the gift that helps us do that
    - v. Just because you’re critical and kind of a jerk doesn’t mean you have this gift
- j. Second group is the DECLARATIVE gifts
  - a. Prophecy
    - i. a message of encouragement for a person or persons
    - ii. 1 Cor. 14:3 - prophecy strengthens, encourages and comforts
    - iii. this isn’t grumpy old men shaking their fists at sinners
    - iv. it is often when the general becomes specific, like a laser focus on our lives to encourage us to see God even more clearly
  - b. Tongues
    - i. speaking in a language unknown to the speaker
    - ii. we’ve taught on the private prayer language, but this is the public gift
    - iii. Goes hand in hand with the last of the declarative gifts...
  - c. Interpretation of tongues
    - i. the understanding of the idea being communicated in tongues
    - ii. I can remember wondering why sometimes the tongue and the interpretation weren’t the same length - one short or one long
    - iii. realized after a mission trip that this isn’t the gift of translation, but interpretation
    - iv. taking the idea and communicating it to the people
- k. The last group is made up of the DYNAMIC gifts
  - a. Faith
    - i. supernatural confidence to believe God in a specific situation
    - ii. this is the “not on my watch!” reaction
    - iii. if you’re facing an impossible situation, you want this gift or at least others with this gift!!
  - b. Healing
    - i. he gives GIFTS of healing - not just one person with a gift
    - ii. I’ve actually seen a leg grow, but when the service was over, I thought the man with the gift left because the speaker who prayed for that man left town
    - iii. but the Helper is the healer, and he can give gifts of healing through any of us at any time
    - iv. the same is true of the last gift

- c. Miracles (or miraculous powers)
  - i. when God intervenes in a way that alters natural circumstances
  - ii. Acts 20 - Paul preaches so long a kid dies, he raises him from the dead - miracle!

### The Landing

That's a lot to take in, and it's easy for our weird meter to be pegging through the roof!

But the thing we've got to remember is that none of these are given to make our church weird, or to make our service chaotic.

They're given so that the gaps we all have can be filled with grace that comes as the Helper gives gifts to the church

**The gifts fill the gaps with grace.**

Next week, we'll look at where and how these gifts are to be used, and then the week after that Phil will be wrapping it all up by looking at the one evidence of the Helper that none of us can afford to be without.