SERMON Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:7-11 9/14/14

Today is my second message in a series on DISCOVERING GOD'S UNIQUE CALLING FOR YOUR LIFE. Each week I am addressing one of the five indicators of what God has designed you to do—SPIRITUAL GIFTS, PERSONAL INTERESTS, NATURAL ABILITIES, YOUR PERSONALITY, and LIFE EXPERIENCES. Each Sunday I will give you homework to apply that week's message to your own life. Printed copies of prior weeks' sermons and homework are available on the table in the foyer as you leave (and on the church website—phbcweb.com). Today we will be focusing on SPIRITUAL GIFTS as one way God equips us for a special purpose and ministry...

PRAYER: Lord, remove from us now anything that would distract us from encountering You and Your Word. Speak to each of us personally so that we will all know more clearly Your calling in our lives. Through Jesus, Amen.

We are on a six-week spiritual journey to discover God's special purpose in your life. God has designed YOU to do something unique—something that He has created no one else but YOU to do.

Some of you don't believe this, but I'm here to tell you that somewhere God has a grand mission with your name on it. And when you find it, your will say, "This is what I was born to do."

God prepares you for this particular purpose by GIVING YOU CERTAIN SPIRITUAL GIFTS. In order to discover God's unique purpose in your life, you must IDENTIFY YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

Spiritual gifts are special abilities God gives YOU to do His work in the world. When you become a Christian, God gives you at least one spiritual gift—and usually more than one. You may not know what yours are or how to use them.

Spiritual gifts are NOT natural talents or acquired skills. You can't learn or earn spiritual gifts by any effort of your own; they're GIFTS from God.

Spiritual gifts are NOT for your own private benefit but for the common good. All of us are to use our unique spiritual gifts to serve God and others in specific ways both in the church and out in the world.

Spiritual gifts are only given to believers. No one gift is given to everyone, and no one has all the gifts; <u>that's why we need each other</u>.

We all have different gifts--that's just the way God made us. All of us are to use our gifts to glorify God, to help others, and to build up the church. That's important...let me say it again. You are given certain spiritual gifts for three reasons: (1) To glorify God; (2) To serve others; and (3) To build up Christ's church.

Spiritual gifts are NOT the "fruit of the Spirit"--love, joy, peace, patience, and all the other fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians 6. These fruits are the same for every Christian. They are <u>Christ-like characteristics that reveal Your SPIRITUAL MATURITY</u>; your SPIRITUAL GIFTS, on the other hand, <u>reveal our MINISTRY</u>, that is, what God wants you to do specifically to serve Him. **Spiritual gifts are NOT roles or positions in a church.** By office, I am your PASTOR; the word "pastor" means shepherd or caregiver. Some of you who have the spiritual gift of shepherding and caring for others, but that doesn't mean your calling is to be a pastor. You don't have to be a pastor to exercise the gift of shepherding and caregiving. In fact, there are members of this church that are better pastors than I am.

Don't expect everybody to have your gifts and to serve and do things the way you do. My wife has the gift of administration and organization. After we were married , she expected me to be as organized as she is; when I wasn't, she became angry and frustrated. Over time she realized there was a snowball's chance in hell of my ever becoming as organized as she is, so she began extending grace to me. We've gotten over this hurdle, and our marriage is better. **Every spiritual gift is absolutely important.** The Apostle Paul compares the different gifts of the members of a church to the different parts of the human body. **What if one day your lungs cried out**, *I'm tired of all this huffing and puffing; I'm qoing to let some other member of this body do all the breathing*. **Or what if your kidney said**, *I'm tired of cleaning up all the mess around here; I'm qoing to take a vacation; some other members will have to start cleaning up*. Of course, THE RESULT IN BOTH CASES WOULD BE YOUR DEATH.

One of my spiritual gifts is PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD. I have discovered this by experience and feedback from others. How I really know that I have the spiritual gift of preaching is that I am not a natural public speaker. In fact, I have always been DEATHLY AFRAID of getting up and speaking in front of people. I have always had this deep fear of public speaking.

I remember having to give an oral book report in my senior English class in high school. It was required to pass this class which you had to have to graduate from high school. I worried myself to death over this, but I wisely spent many, many hours preparing for this oral book report. I wrote a complete manuscript of everything I was going to say, memorized it word for word, and practiced it in its entirety many times.

It took a full week for everybody in the class to present their reports and that week finally arrived...Guess whose name the teacher called to go first? That's right. YOURS TRULY! It took my breath away; my heart started jumping; my mouth dried up like a desert...but that was okay, because I was prepared.

When I got up in front of the class, my mind went completely blank; I couldn't remember the first word I was going to say. BUT I HAD MY FULL MANUSCRIPT so looked down, and MY HANDS WERE SHAKING SO MUCH THAT I COULDN'T READ A SINGLE WORD. An AWFUL SILENCE came over the classroom. I WAS PETRIFIED; my heart was pounding; I thought I was going to pass out.

My teacher, Miss Horowitz, came over, put her hand on my shoulder and said, *Roy, why don't you go sit down, put your paper on your desk and just read us your report.* I did, and that's the only way I got through that embarrassing experience in front of my peers. THANK GOD my teacher, Miss Horowitz, had a compassionate heart!

Soon after that, a group of us were discussing what we were going to do after high school. I blurted out, *I know one thing. I'LL NEVER BE A PREACHER!*

Over the past 44 years, a number of people have told me that my preaching and teaching have helped them in their personal lives and relationship and relationship with God. If what they have said is true, then it has to be a spiritual gift that God has given me, because I couldn't do this on my own. I GIVE GOD THE CREDIT AND THE GLORY. <u>Determining your spiritual gifts</u> helps you discover WHAT God wants you to do with your life.

My strongest spiritual gift is ENCOURAGEMENT. In my work as a pastor, I deal with a lot of discouraged people in a lot of discouraging situations: divorce, disease, depression, disability, death, and so on. God has given me a capacity to go into almost any situation with any person or congregation—no matter how dark or discouraging—and be a positive person and give encouragement and hope for the future. <u>I don't have a degree in this; no one taught me to do this; it is a SPIRITUAL GIFT from God</u>.

How can you identify YOUR own spiritual gifts? There are multiple ways: (1) through study; (2) through experience; (3) through others who affirm your gifts; and (4) through tests that you can take to discover your spiritual gifts—like the SPIRITUAL GIFT ASSESSMENT you were given last Sunday.

The best way to discover your spiritual gifts is TRIAL AND ERROR. EXPERIMENT and try different ways of serving God and others in the church and in the community. In time you will learn what you're gifted to do. The best way to identify your spiritual gifts is MINISTRY, not study—GETTING INVOLVED, not reading a book.

Turn with me now to the HANDOUT you were given today. it is a list of spiritual gifts entitled UNWRAPPING MY GIFTS. It contains a clear definition of all the spiritual gifts in the Bible. <u>I encourage you to study and complete this handout at home this week.</u> It will help you better identify your spiritual gifts. It divides the spiritual gifts in the Bible into several different categories; follow along as I walk you through them now.

First, there are spiritual gifts that COMMUNICATE GOD'S WORD—preaching, evangelism, missions, and apostleship. You might think that the only apostles were the original twelve disciples of Jesus. That's not true; there are apostles today. The church needs APOSTLES in every age. These are God's entrepreneurs who are willing to try something new and start new ministries for God.

Then there are spiritual gifts that EDUCATE GOD'S PEOPLE—teaching, encouragement, wisdom, discernment, and knowledge. Those with the gift of encouragement are often good counselors. In today's world with so much secularization and so many ideologies and religions,

the church desperately needs individuals with the gifts of wisdom and discernment to keep the church grounded in the scriptures and from moving in wrong directions.

Next there are spiritual gifts that DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE like service, mercy, hospitality, pastoring, and giving. Every church needs people with the gift of serving or helping—those behind-the-scenes people who do whatever it takes to help the church accomplish its mission and vision.

Then there are spiritual gifts that CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE like music, arts and crafts, intercession, healing, miracles, and praying in the Spirit. These gifts when employed correctly enable us to worship and experience God personally.

Finally, there are spiritual gifts that SUPPORT ALL THE OTHERS—leadership, administration, and faith. If the church is going to fulfill its mission, it must have people with the gift of faith. These are people who are willing to take risks and go out on a limb for God. As Rick Warren reminds us, <u>that's where the fruit is—out on the limb.</u> The church also needs oak trees today—little nuts who refuse to give up.

All of us must have faith; that's how we're saved. But those with the spiritual gift of faith pray and believe God for things that others think are impossible. And when people see these things become a reality, people will say, *THIS IS A GOD THING. GOD IS REAL. TO GOD BE THE GLORY!* **SPIRITUAL GIFTS are one way God equips us to carry out the unique calling and special ministry He created us for.** You don't want to make your primary way of serving God something for which you are not gifted. If you have ever sat under the teaching of someone who doesn't have the gift of teaching, you know what I mean. Likewise, there are people who have the gift of teaching who are not teaching. This isn't the will of God either.

When some members of a congregation don't do their part of the Lord's work that God has called them to do, everybody else has to work harder and can become burned out. IT PUTS A DRAG AND DRAIN ON THE WHOLE CHURCH-- HOLDING THECONGREGATION BACK FROM FULFILLING ITS MISSION. I Timothy 4:14 says, *Do not neglect the spiritual gift that is within you.* If every one of you here today were to begin serving in a way God has gifted you, this church and community would be transformed; and the Kingdom of God would become a reality here on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.