

“Empowered: Gifted by God for the Good of Others (2022 Vision)”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

A little more than a year ago a young man knocked on our door with a clipboard in hand, which only meant one thing! Rather than saying: “I’m not interested,” I asked him to come back in a month.

He did, and to his credit, quickly confirmed the very GREEN benefits of his product: one is environmental. The other is dollar, dollar bills.

“Ok, we’re in.”

About six months later, 19 solar panels got perched on the back of our roof. (Almost as pretty as Medford’s new library)

But... through a series of delays, most seemed legit, the meters only were installed 17 days ago and an email finally popped into my inbox with the beautiful words: “Permission to Operate.”

There’s only one problem. We are still NOT operating. Now, I am trying to be patient with my new friends, First it was a technical detail about a serial number. Then, accounting (“No, we paid in full!”) “Ok, I’ll get back to you.”

Here’s the deal: We have a power source... just waiting to be accessed.... that is going to bring significant benefit... but currently is nothing more than a glorified prop.

I want the POWER. Give me that pan-el, POW-ER

T: When we follow Jesus, we are connected to an incredible power source (much bigger than 19 panels!). I’m talking about the same source that created the world, makes blind eyes see, and raises the dead, BUT if you are anything like me, so often, I have FULL access to but LITTLE activation of God’s POWER.

Please hear this today: Jesus wants you, he wants us to LIVE EMPOWERED.

We learn about this in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. **1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (text displayed)**

The Point: Live empowered by God’s Spirit for the good of others!

We would not be where we are today as a church without people living empowered by God’s Spirit for the good of others, but there is so MUCH MORE for us.

2022 will be a year of seeking and serving in the strength God supplies like never before.

Listen, to the vision statement our pastors and staff team created to focus our attention, prayers, and best resources over the next 12 months.

Empowered! (2022)

We see a church full of people gifted by God’s Spirit for the good of others. As each person’s unique design is discovered, lived, and celebrated with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others! Countless deeds of mercy, kindness, hospitality, healing, teaching, encouragement, and more will lead to story after story of the supernatural becoming natural and God’s

love going public in every corner of our church and city. Redemption Hill will be a church where everyone lives empowered everywhere!

To understand and activate this vision, I want to walk through 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and give you four foundational truths to help us live empowered by the Holy Spirit! #1

1. We are gifted by God's Spirit through faith in Jesus. (12:1-3)

Paul begins in verse 1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers [and sisters], I do not want you to be uninformed."

I feel the same! That's why we're going to work through a 3 week series on the Holy Spirit before Easter, followed by a 7 week series after Easter examining every key passage on spiritual gifts, not to mention a journey through Nehemiah starting next week and the entire book of 1 Corinthians after Pentecost Sunday.

Paul begins by saying all genuine activity of the Spirit happens in alignment with the central confession of Christianity: "Jesus is Lord!"

- When someone sincerely confesses "Jesus is Lord," it provides evidence the Holy Spirit has given them new spiritual life.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19 says: "*your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?*"
- When the Spirit gives us new life, he also empowers us with gifts to serve others and reflect God's kingdom.

So what are spiritual gift?

- Spiritual gifts are activities of service characterized and controlled by the Spirit as he graciously works through us.
- Wayne Grudem defines a spiritual gift as: "*any ability empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church.*"
- *Jordan Seng talks about, "Spiritual gifts giv[ing] us a power boost in specific ministry area[s]."*

If you follow Jesus, you have been gifted by God's Spirit!

"We see a church full of people gifted by God's Spirit..."

T: Paul then wants us to see...

2. We are part of a beautiful, unified diversity. (12:4-6)

With a rhythmic cadence, Paul sets forth a picture of unity in diversity. He describes God's diverse work through us in three different terms, while highlighting the unified work of the three persons of the Trinity as the source of our work.

He says the church possesses...

- "VARIETIES of gifts, but the *same Spirit*; and...
- VARIETIES of service, but the *same Lord*; and...
- VARIETIES of activities, but the *same God* who empowers them all in everyone."

The three terms: gifts, service, and activities are nearly interchangeable.

- The word “gifts” is the Greek word “charismata” which means grace (*charis*) gifts. [Paul would smile and say, “You are all charismatic. You all possess grace gifts from God.”]
- “Service” refers to all kinds of everyday acts of service.
- “Activities”-comes from the word “energeia” (you can hear our word energy) and refers to “ways in which the divine power is applied.” (Barrett)

To show how parallel the terms are, we could say: the spiritual gifts display themselves in activities of service.

Paul's highlights how the diversity of gifts flow from one unified source: the same working, through the same power, from the SAME GOD!

T: We are part of a beautiful diversity, but we are unified in the same mission. That is where Paul takes us next..

3. We display God's presence for the good of others. (12:7)

Many scholars call verse 7 the key verse of chapter 12, Paul's thesis statement on spiritual gifts. Let's break it down in 3 parts.

He begins by saying: “To EACH”

- Somebody say, “That's me!” I can't hear you!
- What does our 2022 Vision say? “AS EACH PERSON'S unique design is discovered, lived, and celebrated with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others!”
- What does our 2022 Vision say? “We see A CHURCH FULL OF PEOPLE...”
- Not just the pastors, not just the Staff, not just our Group & Team Leaders. A CHURCH FULL.
- One more time: “That's me!” THAT'S YOUUUUUUU!!! You are ESSENTIAL.

You want to hear some lies from the pit of hell?

- You don't have anything to bring to the table.
- They don't need you.
- Redemption Hill can reach it's potential without you!

This makes my heart rate climb! Please listen. To assume God will only work through other people disrespects his love for you and his desire to work through you!

God wants to give you “a manifestation of the Spirit.”

- Look back at verse 7. The word “manifest” means to “make known.” When something is manifested, it is “made clear to the eye,” displayed for all to see.
- When you serve, especially in the ways you are gifted to serve, here's what happens: God shines through you!

If I 85 BPMs before, I'm 100+ right now. You feel me? Received from God, the gifts point others to God.

- Sam Storms says, “Spiritual gifts are concrete disclosures of divine activity and only secondarily human activity. Spiritual gifts are the presence of the Spirit Himself coming to relatively clear, even dramatic, expression in the way we do ministry. Gifts are God going public among His people.”
- That's why we are going to tell stories of the **the supernatural (the work of God, the Holy Spirit) becoming natural (happening in the everyday - peep the poetry) and God's love going public in every corner of our church and city.** If you want to know why we inserted the word LOVE into the statement, just read chapter 13, not primarily about marriage, as applicable as it may be - hallelujah, but about how we serve with our spiritual gifts.

T: Spiritual gifts help people see God's love and power, but that's not all...

They also serve "the common good."

- Spiritual gifts offer spiritual benefit to the people around us.
- This could be literally translated "with a view to profiting."
- Ephesians 4 talks about how they "equip" and help us "grow." 1 Corinthians 14 talks about how they "build up, encourage, and console."
 - You got that administrative gift to strengthen somebody
 - You got that word of knowledge to encourage somebody.
 - You got that mercy gift to console a sister or brother.
- The gifts strengthen the church (super important) *and* advance the mission of God (also super important). If they are not for mission, by the way, we would not only need to delete certain gifts from the list, but we would need to remove the Book of Acts and most importantly, the teaching of Jesus.

T: Ok, ok, ok... thanks Pastor Tanner... God has gifted us. But how has he gifted us? What are his gifts?

4. We are empowered with specific gifts for God's purposes. (12:8-11)

God gives us all differently and specifically. Verses 8-10 provide nine examples of how the Spirit works through each one for the common good.

- We see the same Spirit (here's UNITY again) gives (a DIVERSITY of gifts like): "1) the utterance (or word) of wisdom; 2) the utterance (or word) of knowledge; 3) faith, 4) gifts of healing, 5) working of miracles, 6) prophecy, 7) the ability to distinguish between spirits, 8) tongues, and 9) the interpretation of tongues.
- Please know that we are going to do a deeper dive to understand these gifts are, consider examples in the Bible and what they should and should not look like in our lives and church.

If you are anything like me, you have a lot of biblical and practical questions like: How many gifts can a person receive? Can I receive more? Can I grow in my gifting? What's up with the gift of tongues? If people have the gift of healing, why aren't hospitals empty? And many more...

Today, I want to ask and answer two important questions.

#1) Are these spiritual gifts (in vv.8-10) the only gifts God gives his church? NO!

- 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 – 10) apostles, prophets, 11) teachers, miracles, healing, 12) helping, 13) administrating, tongues, interpretation.
- Romans 12:3-8 – prophecy, 14) service, teaching, 14) exhortation, 15) giving, 16) leadership, & 17) mercy
- Ephesians 4:11 – These are more positions of service or offices in the local church than abilities, but they are gifts nonetheless: apostles, prophets, 18) evangelists, 19) shepherds (or pastors) and 20) teachers.
- 1 Peter 4:10-11 – provides two general categories, which probably any gift God would fall into: speaking & serving.
- That's roughly twenty different gifts listed in five key texts, but these are clearly representative and not exhaustive.
 - We should expect to see other spiritual gifts like prayer, intercession, hospitality, deliverance, and passion.
 - Though not technically spiritual gifts, we see instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit empowered craftsman to build a beautiful tabernacle, made Samson strong, and anointed

David to play music, not to mention the work of God in giving Solomon wisdom and Daniel the interpretation of dreams.

- But then a second question:

#2) Are all these spiritual gifts available for the church today? YES!

- We believe the same God is moving by his same Spirit to distribute *all* of these variety of gifts throughout the world.
- We will take time to look at different reasons why some Christians and churches *do not* believe they are all for today and why others take more of a middle ground. No matter where you are in your convictions and experiences today, here's my encouragement for all of us: let's keep studying the Bible, and let's keep walking together.

I don't know about you, but I do not want us to miss out on one way God desires to make his love known through us!

I am very confident of is this:

2022 Vision

... As each person's unique design is discovered, lived, and celebrated with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others! And...

Countless deeds of mercy, kindness, hospitality, healing, teaching, encouragement, and more will lead to story after story of the supernatural becoming natural and God's love going public in every corner of our church and city. Yes...

Our church is going to be different, but so are your homes, relationships, and workplaces!

!!!The Holy Spirit does not go to the settings of your heart and "Turn off" - "Location Services."!!!

Redemption Hill will be a church where everyone lives empowered everywhere!

Verse 11 tells us: "All these are empowered by the one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each on individual as the wills."

Our God actively EMPOWERS & ENERGIZES us every step of the way according to his plans and purposes.

As we begin 2022, we have identified four priorities for the first four months of the year.

Strategic Priorities to Start the Year

1. **Jesus said: "Ask."** We will pray and fast for the empowering gifts of the Spirit.
2. **Foundations:** We will write a statement on spiritual gifts for our church.
3. **Storytelling:** We will share stories to celebrate joyful steps of discovery and service.
4. **Discovery Tool:** We will release a new tool to help everyone discover their gifts.

To jumpstart your discovery process, I want to give you three questions and three actions:

3 Questions to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts: When you serve...

- How are you particularly effective? (Effectiveness)
- What are you passionate about? (Passion)
- When do others affirm God's grace in you? (Affirmation)

3 Actions to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts: Don't put pressure on yourself to figure it out by the time you get home. God will reveal it.

- Pray. Ask God. Ask him to reveal how he has gifted you. Ask him to give you other gifts, specific gifts you desire to strengthen and serve others!
- And Serve. You will not know if you're gifted if you never step out and try to serve in that way. Take advantage of the MANY opportunities in our church!! If you don't know, just listen up or ask! But do all of this...
- In Community.

How are you using your God-given gifts? Are you actively engaged? Strengthening others with your service?

Conclusion:

TWISTER

My legendary wife bought our kids this legendary game for Christmas... That's right, "Twister!"

After an early win over the kids, she declared, and I quote: "I finally found a game daddy will never beat me in." Why is this? One of my wife's hidden talents is flexibility. If speed kills in football, flexibility kills in Twister.

And I have to admit she crushed me in round 1, but just before the rematch, the Holy Spirit dropped an idea in my mind, I'm not sure it was a word of wisdom, but it might have been! He said, "She's got flexibility. (I didn't say, "arrogance."). She's got flexibility, BUT you, you my friend, have size and strategy."

I put "the Bridge" & then "the Bull" on her, and she tumbled to the ground!

I don't know all the ways God has gifted you, but I know he has gifted each one of us uniquely. I cannot wait to see us take 1000s of joyful steps of service as we extend mercy, teach, pray, heal, exercise faith, prophecy, seek justice, and so much more.

I cannot wait to see us...

The Point: Live empowered by God's Spirit for the good of others!

This year is going to be a lot of fun. Why?

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

And when we do... this is what we see on the horizon for 2030 & Beyond.

Multiplying from New England to the Nations (2030 & Beyond)

We see a multiplication movement spreading across Greater Medford, as 755,000 people restlessly wait for the hope of Jesus. Fueled by our pursuit of God and filled with his Spirit, we will make disciples who urgently lead others from spiritual apathy to abundant life in Christ. As people taste true freedom, joy will fill living rooms, classrooms, and conference rooms. By 2030, we will see dozens of new groups and at least 3 new churches cover the map. This vision will come alive through bold prayer and action. We will impact lives from New England to the Nations.

Prayer. & Surrender. Certainly not to me. Not even to a Vision sermon, but to God and his Word, God and his plan for you, for us!

ACTION: I'm in. Move my heart to seek all you have for me, for us.