

Love By Serving
Series: I ♥ My Church
1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Romans 12:3-8
October 30, 2016

VIDEO

Welcome everyone to worship today. It's great to be together and I'm looking forward to the fellowship and good food later.

I'd like for you to turn in your bulletin to page 6 and follow along and take notes.

Superheroes and superpowers. When you were growing up, did you have a favorite superhero? Who was yours?

One of mine was Spiderman. Normal guy who got his powers from a spider bite. Able to climb up walls, jump around like crazy, swing from webs, anticipate danger with his spider-sense—Spiderman was pretty cool in my book!

Now, you can say this superhero talk is all kids' stuff, but millions of dollars in profits from movies over the last few years would beg to differ. There is something about superheroes that we are fascinated with.

I looked up the definition of "superhero" in Webster's. It says, "a fictional hero having extraordinary or superhuman powers; an exceptionally skillful or successful person."

Now, I don't mean to criticize Webster, however, I don't think this one is correct. It's not inaccurate; it's just incomplete. Superheroes are more than just extraordinary, super-powered, exceptionally skilled people. That's not even half of what makes them who they are.

Superheroes are superheroes because they utilize their abilities within a specific context to help in a specific way. Who is the superhero of Metropolis? Who is the superhero of Gotham? New York? Okay – New York is spoiled, there's actually a few, but you get my point. I don't care what the superpower is someone may claim to have, whether it is flying, fighting, webbing, running, strength, or anything else. If they aren't using that power in a specific context to help in a specific way, then they're just a dude sitting on the couch. Having superpowers is one thing, but it takes action to make one a hero.

Author Leon Bloy once said, "Any Christian who is not a hero is a pig." Interesting quote. But I believe Scripture affirms it. If you are a follower of Jesus, did you know that God has given you superpowers so that you can be a superhero? I'm not saying that He's made it possible for you to become famous and have movies made about you. Most of us will never be known widely. But fame is not part of the equation in what makes a superhero. A superhero is someone who utilizes his or her abilities in a specific context to help in a specific way. In fact, I think part of loving your church is being the hero God has made you to be. And the hero God has made you to be has superpowers, is part of a superpower team, and has a community/city in need.

You have superpowers: they are called spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12 tells about spiritual gifts. Verse 5-7 says:

*There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*¹

The part I want to zoom in on is verse 6:

*God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.*²

Paul is telling us that that God empowers gifts in His followers. God gives each and every one of His followers at least one, sometimes more than one, spiritual gift. A spiritual gift is a Holy Spirit–empowered ability that is given to serve others. It is a spiritual superpower, if you will, given for you to use in a specific context to help in a specific way.

There are two really important things to remember about spiritual gifts; write these down:

First, God is the one who picked yours.

The passage tells us that God is the one who empowers us. It's important to realize that we didn't apply, request, campaign, or petition to get these gifts going. God, in His infinite wisdom, love, care, and power, knew exactly which gifts you needed and which gifts were best suited for you. So don't waste time being jealous of someone else's gift when you should be spending time developing your own. Just think, God blessed you and entrusted you with this specific ability to make a difference in your community and the world!

Second, a spiritual gift is a Spirit-empowered gift. When you hear the list of possible gifts, you might be doing a proverbial scratching of the head. You might be stumped, thinking, "I've had some really good teachers in my life and some of them didn't love God, didn't even like Him. How can they be a good teacher if they weren't given the gift of teaching?" Great question. The thing to realize is that there are a lot of really good teachers out there, some amazing, incredible teachers out there.

But there's a difference between great teaching and teaching empowered by the Spirit. One is exhibiting their natural ability and the other is exhibiting an ability infused by the power of the Spirit of God to speak in such a way that surpasses the mere passing on of information and inspiration. One teaching with the spiritual gift of teaching does so while being led by the Spirit, guided by the Spirit, powered by the Spirit, supported by the Spirit, and sustained by the Spirit. That's incredibly different.

Think of it like this: When Mike Tyson, even in retirement, throws a punch, it is going to be powerful and it is going to hurt. Even more so if it was thrown during his prime. That's his natural talent. When Superman throws a punch, it is going to hurt **way** more. There's more than natural ability going on, there's something supernatural happening. There were many great leaders throughout history, but someone leading with the gift of leadership is exhibiting something supernatural.

You have been given an amazing ability to be used by God! That is incredibly exciting. It might also be slightly confusing because the natural question is, "What are my gifts?" Here are four ways you can discover your gifting:

First, take a spiritual gifts class. We offer a class where you can do an in-depth study of spiritual gifts, then take an inventory and find out what your spiritual is,

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:5-7 (NLT)

² 1 Corinthians 12:6 (NLT)

and finally learn how to use that spiritual gift to glorify God and edify others. If you would like to learn more, let me know.

Second, Experiment in serving. Get involved in the church somewhere. If you're not sure where, then check out the Ministry Fair after worship. There some great ministries in our church that really impact people.

THEN DIP YOUR TOE.

Try out a ministry for a month or two. After that time, ask yourself how it is going. Ask the leader how it is going. If you are both ecstatic about what you've been able to do, then what you've been doing might make clear what your gifting is. If one or both of you feel it is just not your area, then don't be discouraged – move on to something else. The big thing is, where do you see results? Specifically, where do you see results of impacting people for Jesus? If you are gifted in a specific way, then it is going to bring people to Jesus, help people in their relationship with Jesus, show people Jesus, etc.

Third, **Ask others.** Ask specific people whom you've spent time with, whom you trust, and whom you know love you, the ways they see God using you in the church community. Specific questions you could ask them are:

- When you hear the different spiritual gifts, which one(s) come to mind when you think of me?
- What am I doing when you see Jesus in me or coming out of me?
- How is it that I make this community better?

Remember—this isn't to give us a big head. This is to help us discover how God has gifted us. No one will know better than the people you are in community with and serving with.

Finally, Check your energy level. As you try different serving opportunities, ask yourself how you're feeling. If you are tired, dreading going to the serving opportunity, or not feeling a lot of passion, then whatever you're doing probably isn't something you're gifted in. It may be a wrong context for your gift though, so be mindful of that. A "right gift, wrong setting" type of thing. If you are ready to go, looking forward to the opportunity, feeling passion, then that is more than likely something that complements your gifting.

Whatever your gift(s) are, they were supernaturally given to you by God. They are something you are empowered by the Spirit to do, not for your own gain but for the benefit of others. You have a superpower in the church. But you're not alone! Write this down:

You Have a Superpower Team: The Church

The thing I love about several of the superhero groups: the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, the Justice League, the Avengers, is that it wasn't about one person. They are a team, an ensemble, a group. They couldn't meet the specific needs of earth alone; they needed one another.

This is God's plan for you and me as well. The Bible tells us to use our gifts together as a team. Your gift was not given to you for you! The Bible teaches that spiritual gifts were given **to** us but **for** others. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says that your gifts and my gifts were given "so we can help each other." Your gifts were given to you to help others, to serve others, to benefit others. They weren't given for you and your enjoyment. So your gifts aren't yours; they're mine. And my gifts aren't really mine;

they're yours. Because God made the DNA of this church to be supernaturally infused with all of these gifts.

This should be a lesson in both humility and responsibility for us. Humility because the gift is not about us, but responsibility because God knew someone else would need our help, would need to experience God working through our gifts to minister to them.

Thor can't save the world on his own; he needs the rest of the Avengers. It was the same for the rest of them. The truth of the matter is that God doesn't need any of us, but He chooses to use us and invites us to be used by Him – but He does that by bringing us *together*, mobilizing us *together*, teaming us up *together*, using us *together*. Sure, there's strength in numbers. But numbers brought together by the hand of God and empowered by God... that's more than natural strength. That's the type of power that can change a church for God, change a neighborhood for God, change a nation for God, change the world for the Gospel. You have been given superpowers. You are part of a superpower team.

But remember... to just have power isn't what makes a hero. There has to be action. Write this down:

This Superpower Team Has a Community and a City in Need.

This church needs you. This neighborhood needs you. This community needs you. Not because they need *you*, but because they need God. And God in His wisdom and plan has decided that He would empower us with the ability to serve one another and the world around us.

We have a children's ministry that needs people to model Jesus to them. We have a youth ministry that needs people to model Jesus to them, befriend them, and mentor them. Young adults, couples, older adults need the gifts that God gave you to be in action and in motion. This community has issues that need the gifts that God gave you to be in action and in motion.

Can you imagine with me a little bit right now? Can you imagine what our church would be like if everyone was flowing in their gifting? Can you imagine what our community would be like, what this city would be like, if we all were serving in ways that utilized the gifts that God has given us? Think about it, imagine it.

If you are a follower of Jesus who is not utilizing the spiritual gifts that God has given you for the betterment of the church and community, then you are like a Christmas present that's ignored and unopened. You are walking up to the gift that God has given you, shrugging your shoulders, saying "eh," and then walking away. And that's not how it is supposed to be!

Here's my final question: Why did God give you to our church? Most of the time we ask what we can get out of church. Wrong question. Why did God give this faith community the gift of you? Was it because of your teaching, your leadership, your encouragement, your discernment, or whatever it is that makes you the super-powered you? Why did God give us the gift of you?

Don't be an unopened gift. Discover the gifting God has empowered you with. Discover the ways you can passionately utilize those gifts. Be the gift that you are—serve this church and this community the way God made you to with the gifts He's given you. Be a hero for Jesus. I can't speak for you, but I know for myself... I want to be a hero for Jesus. I certainly don't want to be a pig.