

BUGGIN' OUT!

Newsletter

Applying Biblical Truth and Humor to the Struggle.

A Sex Addict's Gift

It had rested uncomfortably on me for some time. Whenever reading 1 Corinthians 12, 7-11, I'd feel left out. It touches on the special gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12, 7-11: A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in tongues, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

I worried about me. I don't do any of those things.

I cornered my friend Steve one day and, like a fool, solicited his help in identifying what my spiritual gift might be.

"Let me see your Bible", he said.

He skimmed over the verses in 1 Corinthians which I had highlighted and then said, "O.K., Robert, let's go down the list one-by-one and see if we can't identify your gift. Read to me each gift mentioned and we'll go from there."

"The first gift mentioned is **wise advice**", I said.

"No".

"I'm not claiming magi status", I defended, "but neither do I see myself as a dimwit". "How can you be so sure?"

Steve responded, "Do you recall a few months back when we were in a Mexican hotel and I woke you up, complaining that my lip was hurting me after I bit it while consuming a taco?"

"I do", I answered.

"And, in the darkness, you handed me a tube of minty healing ointment from your suitcase to apply?"

"Yes".

"That's why, Robert."

"You know very well I thought you had said 'hip'. I have already explained that to you and you will just have to believe that no one was more upset than I was when you squeezed Icy Hot onto your lip.

"Robert, that's my point. If the Holy Spirit is going to impart the gift of wise advice to somebody, hopefully it will be to someone who won't flub it up due to poor hearing or a short attention span. I'm not sure which one to blame in your case because you clearly exhibit symptoms of both. Good hearing and a keen alertness are essential here. You cannot offer wise counsel when you cannot process the problem at hand. Now, what is the next gift mentioned?"

(Steve saw my eyes grow wide and my face fill with hope.)

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"The next gift mentioned", I said confidently, "is a **message of special knowledge**".

"Calm down, Robert. I hate to be a dreamkiller but I know where you are going with this and **gaydar** is not a message of special knowledge from the Holy Spirit. At least I hope not. What's next?"

"Great faith is next", I mumbled.

Steve entered into thought for a few moments and then said, "I don't know. I hear that faith is supposed to move mountains. You have yet to move that empty can of de-icer that has been rolling around in your car's trunk for the past year...the one that sounds like we are transporting a hostage every time we make a sharp turn, accelerate quickly or stop abruptly. I won't rule this one out, but right now it's iffy. Let's keep an eye on it and see where it goes in 5 or 10 years."

"What about the **gift of healing**?", I asked.

"My goodness, no. You are a hindrance to healing if ever I've seen one".

"What are you trying to say", I asked.

"I will tell you what I am trying to say. Do you remember when our church was hosting an evening of healing prayer a few months back?"

"Yes".

"And, Robert, do you recall what you told Alan when he came up to the altar for prayer"?

"No".

"Well, Bill and I were right next to you and we were horrified by what you had to say. So allow me to refresh your memory. You said, addressing Alan impersonally, by only his last name... *O.K., Finkel, before we get this prayer thing underway, let's be clear about something. I've watched you receive prayer in the past and you're a swooner. Now, if Paul's car hadn't caught a bad tire on his way here tonight, I'd have a prayer partner and there would be someone here to catch you. But, as fate would have it, I am alone. So there will be no swooning in the Spirit tonight, got it? I'm tired. I'm crabby. And I worked all day at a hostile job that drains me emotionally and dulls my reflexes so stay alert, stay upright and no one will get hurt.*"

"Oh. Nonetheless", I responded," the next gift mentioned is the **power to perform miracles**."

"Totally not your gift, Robert. In fact, the only water I have ever witnessed you walking on has been in the form of thin ice, usually with me. And the nearest thing to miraculous healing I've seen from you took place in Mexico, when you pressed an ice pack to my swollen, burning and minty lip."

"What about **prophecy**?", I asked.

"Surely you just, brother. Back in '88 you said 'trust me, it will never catch on' when I wanted to invest some savings into a new company. To this day I cannot pass a Home Depot without wanting to hurt you. Let's look at the next gift mentioned."

"That would be **the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit**."

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When Steve stopped laughing, he said, "no".

"Robert, just look how flustered and disoriented you become when you hear a buzzer or a ringtone. Why, just the other day, as we were sitting right here on your sofa, three little chimes sounded that send you scurrying twixt, twixt and fro among you cell phone, landline, fax, microwave oven, front door, and carbon monoxide alarm, before you finally tracked down the culprit. It was your clothes dryer alerting you that your load was now dry and encouraging you to remove it before wrinkling set it. Identifying sources just is not a strength of yours. What's next?"

"**Speaking in tongues** is next", I said.

"Well" Steve speculated, " I suspect you've done just about everything else with that tongue of yours, but I have yet to hear an alien vocabulary roll off it. Don't get me wrong, Robert. There are indeed times when you ramble on and make absolutely no sense whatsoever, and I get hopeful for you. But when all is said and done, it always turns out that you were just rambling on and making absolutely no sense whatsoever again."

"O.K. Well, how about **interpreting what is being said**?"

"Robert, you struggle enormously with merely interpreting what you yourself are trying to articulate. With that said, I cannot imagine you being the Spirit's first pick for interpreting what others are uttering."

"Hmm", I sighed, "that is entire list and I find myself giftless."

Steve sensed my disappointment and, in a moment very atypical for him, addressed me in a softer, more compassionate tone.

"Robert, I believe that the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians represent a list of 'for examples', not necessarily a complete list."

"You see, when you came to Jesus as a gay sex addict, He took what He had to work with, a malfunctioning passion to love indiscriminately. The key word here is *indiscriminately*. You still have this same passion, but it is now a gift in the Restorer's hands. Before surrendering it to Jesus, it was an untamable passion that shackled you to Kingdom ineffectiveness."

Steve went on, "And that, my friend, is the sex addict's gift once his passions are surrendered to Jesus...the ability to love without prejudice. Jesus can send you to anyone who needs Him at any moment and you will not back away because, in your own desperation, you learned to meet needs without any thought to danger, fear, or looking foolish. Robert, any passion, even one that leads us to sin, surrendered to Jesus, is redeemed and then returned to us as a gift. If and how deliberately we use that gift is directly proportionate to our degree of subsequent victory."

After that day, I printed out 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 and posted it in a frame on my office wall and added my own personal reminder. It reads:

So let those with the gift of wise advice, advise. Those with special knowledge, know. Those with great faith, move mountains. Those able to heal, bring relief. Those who perform miracles, awe. Those who prophecy, foretell. Those who discern, weed out the fakes. Those who interpret, bring clarity. And those with the gift of tongues, tongue (I know that reads funny, but I don't know how to fix it).

And you, the repentant and frustrated sex addict pursuing Jesus.....it is time to take your passion, bonding with those

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whose names you know not, and position yourself behind the Master, letting Him lead you down the same streets of your addiction. Submit as He guides your heart, transforming your passion into your gift. Stay courageous as He leads you passed the adult video store. Stay strong as He takes you passed the bar. And do not fear as He escorts you to the un-showered and unfed man whom He loves and knows by name. His home is a flattened cardboard box which he knows will also serve as his deathbed. He has heard of Jesus. He has heard of Christians. He has heard of love. He believes they are all myths. The world looks upon him as it looks upon the fire hydrant and the porn shop....as an inanimate prop against the city's backdrop. Lay it all down when He whispers, "Stop here and let Me befriend this one through you".

And this courageous moment of surrender will birth a ministry of just Jesus and you, putting to use your gift to provide a lifetime of no-questions-asked, no-need-to-explain, immediate-need-focused outreaches of love, bringing hope to man, glory to God, and order to all the craziness, one anonymous encounter at a time.

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