

DCF:

Harry didn't have a lot of money and his 1976 Oldsmobile Omega needed a new starter. He couldn't afford to have it towed to a repair shop, but he did have enough money to buy a rebuilt starter. Now, Harry wasn't much of a mechanic. All he had in his toolbox was a hammer, a screwdriver, a pliers and a tin snips. He also had a drill, a few drill bits and a level, but that wasn't going to help him replace his starter.

So, what did he do? He went to a friend who worked on cars. His friend told Harry what he needed to do to fix his car. He walked him through the procedure, and then asked him if he had the tools to do the job. Harry told him what tools he had, and his friend knew they weren't going to get the job done. So, Harry's friend loaned him a complete socket set, some extensions, a floor jack and some specialty combination wrenches. His friend knew Harry needed the right tool for the job.

Today we continue our study of God's toolbox, our lives, and see what kind of tools or talents that He has placed in our lives. We are here for God's purpose, and He has given us everything we need to do what He has called us to do. He has given us **“THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB!”** We've been crafted by God to be used for His glory. Let's take a look at what God has placed in our toolbox.

### ***Part One: Crafted by God***

The apostle Paul is writing to a congregation that needed some help. It was fragmented. They weren't working together for several reasons. First, it was a new congregation and hadn't learned how to do so. Secondly, they were split along social lines. Some were rich, some were poor and it showed in the way they gathered at church time. Cliques had formed. Third, they focused on personalities. Some followed Paul. Some followed Apollos. You might say that this congregation had a tendency to tribalism, identifying with people and ideas other than identifying with Christ.

The Holy Spirit saw the problem and provides the solution. He reminds them of what they all had in common. ***“No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”*** All of them had a saving faith. All of them believed that Jesus sacrificed Himself to wash away their sins. All of them believed they were headed to heaven. Not one of them was better in God's eyes than another. They were all dearly and deeply loved by the Creator of this universe. Plus, Paul reminds them, every single one of them had been given talents, abilities by the Lord. Each one of them was special, unique, blessed by God with some truly precious talent. In a Christian congregation, there is no room for arrogance, thinking that you are somehow better or more important than another member. There is no room for cliques, or believing that you know better than someone else. ***“<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”***

God is the One who gives those gifts, those kinds of service, those kinds of working to each individual believer. Each one of us is truly one of a kind, for no one else has your blend of skill, service or working. Each one of us has been prepared by God to serve Him in a distinct way in His kingdom.

So, what are some of the talents or skills that God has given to believers? Paul lists a few of them in our text for today, but let's just look at the ones that are still given today. First, there's knowledge. Knowledge is simply knowing facts. Facts about Jesus, facts about earthly things, facts about life. That's a gift that all of us have been given in some degree. We grow in our knowledge of God as we read and listen to His Word. Second, there's the gift of wisdom. Wisdom is knowing how to apply knowledge. Wisdom is knowing when to act or not to act. So often that gift grows with age, but not always. Wisdom is something we need in today's world, as so often immediate gratification is the driving force in our lives. Then there's the gift of faith, a strong faith, a faith that continues to search out the will of God and grow. My prayer is that this talent is one we all pursue. Then, there's prophecy. That is simply the ability to speak the truth about Jesus clearly. Some of us are good communicators. Some of us are not. Remember, God is the One who gives the gift of communication. Finally, there's the gift of ***“distinguishing between spirits.”*** That's the ability to see the half truths and faith destroying errors in other philosophies or human reasoning. We especially need this gift, don't we?

Now, God is the One who gives these gifts, these abilities to each believer, in whatever measure that He has decided to give them. And, we can react in one of two ways. We could be jealous of the gifts that God has given to our fellow believers. We could pull apart into different groups and focus on the

personalities that we're most comfortable with. That's what the Corinthian congregation was trending toward. Or, we could rejoice in the gifts that God gave our fellow believers, knowing that God is the One who is blessing them.

Please remember this: God has brought us together as a congregation. He moved us to join here in various ways. Maybe it was a call from God, to serve as your pastor. Maybe it was your parents, who brought you here to be baptized and grow in your faith. Maybe it was a good friend, who invited you to come and hear the news of Jesus. Or, perhaps it was your own spiritual searching, which is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit led you here. In every case, it is the Holy Spirit who moved us to be a member of this congregation. You have been chosen by God to be here at this time in your life.

The big question is why? Why am I here? What's my purpose in being a member of Messiah?

### ***Part Two: Used for His glory***

People have various ideas of why a congregation exists. Some believe it's for social reasons, a place for people to connect and make friendships. Some believe it's just to worship, or teach morals to our youth, or a place to be comforted. Some believe it's an organization to enhance life on earth, fighting injustice and oppression.

But is that why you're here? No. God has brought us together because we need each other to do what God has called us to do. Spread the Gospel. Why, just look at the Corinthian congregation. They were in the minority as Christians. They were marginalized by society. They needed support to keep their faith and live for God.

We need each other's gifts to do the very same thing. We need wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy and discernment as we live in this world. Those are just the basic tools, the basic talents that Paul talks about. God has given us many, many more in whatever blend He has decided. You are unique, one of a kind. But remember. We don't all have all the gifts, the talents that God has poured into this congregation. We need each other.

You see, a congregation is always a work in progress. Satan is constantly attacking our faith with different challenges. New members are constantly coming in through baptism, confirmation or transfer. They need to be built together with us so we might do what God has created us to do. Spread the Gospel. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and He wants to use us to accomplish that will. He's the driver of this mission, and He has given us the gifts, the tools, the talents and abilities to do so.

We are in God's toolbox, and He wants to use us. Picture yourself as part of God's socket set. He's the driver, the One that uses us. We're His sockets, and He chooses to use each one of us for a specific task. When you use a socket set, sometimes you use a ½ inch socket. Sometimes you use an 11 millimeter. You use what is appropriate for the job.

So, what are your gifts, your talents? What will you use them for? Remember verse 7. ***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*** Perhaps your talent is one of prayer. You're a prayer warrior that loves to pray for others. Maybe it's encouragement. Maybe it's wisdom, or discernment, or being able to teach or lead. Maybe it's serving others as a member of a committee. Maybe it's as a musician. Maybe it's awareness, being able to read body language and knowing what to say and when. Maybe it's the ability to keep the peace. Maybe it's the ability to support God's work financially. In every case, God wants us to use two tools for the common good, for the extension of His kingdom. He wants us to use the tool of time combined with the tool of our talents. All for the glory of God, who gives us both for His purpose.

So, where do you fit in? What size of socket are you? There's only one of you, and you are needed here in this corner of God's kingdom. If you would, please take a look at today's pink insert, pray and ponder over the talents that God has given to you. Do you see where you fit? Or, do you see an opportunity to serve that isn't being addressed? Let us know, for your gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the common good.

We're not repairing a car. We're serving our Lord, and we have everything we need to do so. He's the One that has equipped us for the job. We have **“THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB!”** We have talents that have been crafted in us by God. May we use them for His glory.

AMEN