

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "Back to School"

Oct. 14, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Hello! I'm Richard Rogers, and I want to welcome you to the Wednesday night service at Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center. You know, I just love that we get to gather, even if it's virtually! That we get to spiritually support each other in going deeper, and really living our spiritual life.

So there's a couple of announcements I want to share with you tonight. This first one is: Our "Circles of Gratitude" begin this Sunday, October 18. We want you to be a part of this. You can join a small group virtually, or we have groups that are meeting here at the church outside. So if you want to be a part of this: This is the 40-day period before Thanksgiving, where we really get to study and dwell in the spiritual power of gratitude. So you can call the office or go online and sign up for one of those groups.

Also, we're doing – on October 24 – we're doing a Halloween activity. You know, we've always done Halloween activities for the kids. And we're doing a Halloween activity on October 24, and it's drive-by. And I'm not exactly sure how this is going to work, but we've got lots of stations. There's going to be lots of things. Parents are going to be able to drive their cars – their kids – through the parking lot, and they're going to get treats and stuff, and it's going to be fun! So we're going to do a drive-by Thanksgiving – not Thanksgiving! – Halloween celebration on October 24. We're going to have 14 stations, so your child will be fully sugared up before you leave the parking lot that evening! So I want you to become a part of that.

Also, as you know, last week we went live! We are now live every Sunday morning, 9 o'clock, out in the Garden. Wear your mask. We're social distancing. The music is fantastic; Richard's message last week was stunning! So come and be a part of this special activity, now every Sunday morning LIVE out on the lawn. 9 a.m. And come, and you'll be safe and protected, and really get spiritually fed.

And we know that, in a few months, we'll be doing Wednesdays, as well. But right now, Sunday morning, 9 o'clock; be there – Aloha!

Alright. Let's go into our time of meditation.

MEDITATION:

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul. And I want you to feel the activity of God that's within your soul. And I want you to feel that activity of Spirit in you came to be expressed. That you were not given the Spirit of God – you were not given the activity of Spirit in your soul – not to give it as a gift to those around you. And that, as we learn that we have been spiritually gifted by God to express our talents and abilities, we get blessed even more. That God is within me and all around me. That, as I trust that Spirit of God that is within me and all around me – as I express that in greater and greater ways – I am blessed in greater and greater ways. As I give the Spirit of God in me to the people around me – to family and friends, to my spiritual community, to my neighbors – as I give my spiritual gifts, I am blessed in amazing ways. That God has given you spiritual gifts: talents and abilities that you are called to give to the world. That you are called to express to those people around you. And as you trust those gifts – as you give those gifts – you're actually being a channel for the Divine. God will use you in greater and greater ways to minister to those people around you. And then you will feel a profound joy in expressing your spiritual nature in a way that makes a difference in other people's lives.

God has blessed you. God has blessed you, and God calls you to be a blessing to others. To be of service. To uplift – to minister to the people around you. So tonight, I want you to wake up. I want you to wake

up all the spiritual gifts within you. I want you to wake up all the ways that you are called to make a difference in your life and in the world. I want you to wake up to the full power of God that wants to express through you. I want you to feel that power – that creative, dynamic power – that wants to use you in ways that maybe are greater than you thought possible. That there is so much God – there is so much good – within you. Today, just say, Yes! Use me, Spirit! Give your gifts through me. Let me serve in the greatest possible way. Let me make a difference to the world. Let me channel the Divine in greater and greater ways to uplift humanity. To uplift my family and friends, my community. I have been gifted by God, and I give my gifts to the world. I have been gifted by God, and I give my gifts to the world!”

Today I want you to feel the power of your spirit. To feel the power of God within you. And it wants to be expressed. It wants to be unleashed. It wants to do a mighty work. It wants to create in ways that are greater than you’ve ever done before. It wants to be unleashed! And I want you to allow yourself to be the channel for these amazing spiritual gifts: to the full power of God in you.

So today we give thanks, and we celebrate all that God is in us. All that we are called to be in God’s name. To be the greatest version of ourselves, and to express those gifts as the way that God desires that we be and do and share. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God, that I am gifted! I have gifts to give. I have ways of serving the people around me. Thank you, God! That we dedicate this day to being the greatest level of service to humanity. And so it is. Amen.

SONG:

Sean Mullaney: “This Gift” (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on the piano)

This gift will last forever
This gift will never let you down
Some things are made from better stuff
This gift is waiting to be found

Your heart's in wide receiving
Been too long buried in the sand
Some things require leaving
This gift will fall right in your hand
Just try to understand...

If you long enough
And you don't give up
If you're strong enough
And you don't give up
And you ...

You'll be no harbor to the sorrow
Just let it go

Ah, ooooooh ...
Ah, ooooooh ...
Ohhhhh ...

Don't hang your head in sorrow
Don't give up just before you win
Don't wait around for tomorrow
Open up your arms and let it in

This gift will last forever
This gift will never let you down

Some things are made from better stuff
This gift is ready to be found
Just you believe it now

This gift will last forever
This gift will never let you down
Some things are made from better stuff
This gift is ready to be found

Your heart's in wide receiving
Been too long buried in the sand
Some things require believing
These things just fall right in your hand
Just try to understand

If you long enough
And you don't give up
If you're strong enough
And you don't give up

If you long enough
And you don't give up
If you're strong enough
And you don't give up

[Light applause]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Rogers: Sean, that was fabulous! Craig, thank you; thank you; thank you! So good! So good! We're talking about gifts, and what a perfect song. It is a perfect song for us tonight!

Alright! Have you ever felt inadequate for the moment? Like, it's not really a feeling that I want you to be really dwelling on a lot, but there are those moments where we literally feel inadequate for the moment.

I remember when I was in ministerial school; you know, they have you kind of practice doing memorial services and funerals when you're in seminary. And you practice it, and you kind of do a little play run-through it, and you practice the words and writing a eulogy. And you practice doing all this. And then you actually go out of school, and then they actually ... there are people that expect that you can actually do that! Right?

And I remember the first memorial service – the first funeral – that I ever did was a woman in our congregation. She was our organist, and her husband died suddenly of a heart attack. And they had been ... He was in the military, and he had spent – he had been in the military most of his adult life. And they had been in love forever. You know, it's one of those couples that literally were in love from the first time they saw each other. They had been together, even when he was in the military – even when he was traveling overseas – they had this bond, this relationship, this love affair that was tangible. That people felt it. It was – you could touch it. It was juicy; it was good. It was fabulous.

And one day he had a heart attack. And I'm the new minister. This was in the first six months of my first ministry. And it comes to me; she says, "*Richard, can you do this? Do you want to do this?*" And I said ... She said, "*I really want you to do this.*" And I said, "*I'd be honored.*" And, yet, on the inside of me I'm feeling, "*Oh, my gosh! What ... Can I do this? Can I do this?*" You know, it was like, "*Really, God?*" Like, I

knew there was going to be a day where, as a minister, where you have to do it, but there's like so many ... Because, for me, doing a memorial service – doing somebody's funeral – for me, is as I've come to experience it, it's one of the greatest moments in ministry. Because you're there at people's hour of their greatest need. Like, you're there to give them comfort and support. And you're there to express words that their soul wants to say to their loved one. You're there to remember and celebrate a life well lived. And if there's family trauma, you're there to help mend it. And there's so much! There's so much that is available in that moment.

And, as a “newbie” minister, I felt completely inadequate for any of it. I just felt like I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it! What the moment demanded, I knew I didn't have. And, yet, there was a place in me where I knew it was mine to do. And so there was this human part of me fearful, shaky: *“Please don't make me do this!”* And, yet, there was a spiritual part of me that knew that I came for that moment. That there are moments in ministry where I know that my soul came for that. Where there's a greater Power – there's a greater Authority; there's a greater Something – that, if I just trust It, uses me in ways that I've really experienced multiple, multiple times and, at some level, I still don't understand. That there's a gift that I've been given that I don't always understand, but I have, over the years, learned to trust.

So on that Saturday afternoon, in a very full church, in my first ministry in Merced, California, I go up with my little book, and I began to speak the words that were written. And the reality is that something happened – there was a moment that happened. And it became bigger than just those little words on the page. It was my soul knowing that I came for that moment – that this is why I chose ministry. This is why I left being a sales guy – and left that career in sales – and came into ministry: to have moments where I could be a part of something that was bigger than me. And, at that moment, something happened in this woman's hour of greatest need. I felt like God gave me something: whether you say love or Spirit. God gave me something that made a difference in her life.

And I remember walking out of that service going, *“Holy moly!”* It might not have been the words I used! *[Chuckles]* But that was really ... It was like, *“Holy moly!”* Like, I walked into that service so afraid, and I walked out of that service going, *“God used me!”* There was something that happened there that was special.

And I look at our world right now, and I see the need all around us. Right? I can't believe that we can't all see it, right? That we live in a world right now where the need looks so heavy. It looks so overwhelming. That it looks so big that I think, *“What can I do? How can I give? How can I make a difference?”* And I go back to that original moment in ministry, where I felt completely inadequate for the moment, and yet I realized in that experience that God wasn't. That the God in me could rise to that occasion and do something special.

You know, this fall I've done – this is the fifth week – of a series that I've entitled “Back to School.” And the idea of going back to school was going back to our spiritual roots. Going back to those things that make a difference in our life. And I picked Emilie Cady's book, *Lessons in Truth*. And the idea of *Lessons in Truth* was that it was Unity's first textbook, written well over 100 years ago ... almost 145 years ago. And in Emilie Cady's book, she tried to define what Unity's understanding is. And when Charles Fillmore read it – the co-founder of Unity – he thought that was it; that was the work. That was the first book Unity ever published.

And so, in our series on “Back to School,” we've talked about God. We've talked about self. We've talked about thoughts. Last week we talked about affirmations and the power of prayer ... I mean, the power of affirmations and faith. And today I want to talk about spiritual gifts. Because part of our spiritual life is learning to wake up. And the idea of waking up is really coming to understand who we are: to “know thyself,” as written by the ancient Greeks at the temple of Apollo in Delphi. Right? Know thyself.

There are three axioms – three underlying beliefs – that were printed on that sanctuary, on that moniker. It was *“Know thyself.”* The first one, the first maximum. *“Know thyself.”* The next one was *“Nothing to excess.”* And the third one is *“Surety brings ruin.”* [Chuckles] And I actually like the third one almost as much as the first one, because those times when you’re absolutely sure that you know how things are going to work, that you know how things are going to play out – that you’re completely sure how it all works – those are the beliefs, those are the times when it’s good to take a breath and say, *“Well, maybe ... Maybe I don’t know everything I think I know.”* And in those moments, we open a space for the power of God.

So in the first paragraph of the chapter on spiritual gifts. Emilie Cady writes this: *“It is very natural for the human heart to first set out in the search of Truth because of the ‘loaves and fishes.’”*

See, I want you to see that! That what brought you into this ministry – what brought you into your spiritual life? And, for many of us, it was a need, it was a challenge, it was a problem. For many of us, we wanted to have a greater life, and we heard that there was this place that taught spiritual principles, and that spiritual principles could make a difference in our life.

And what happens for many of us, when we come into this place, that we get a bump up! Right? We learn spiritual principles. We learn how to apply spiritual principles, and our life gets better! And for many of us, it gives noticeably better: that we, that our life really does get better as we apply spiritual principles. And we think, *“Well, if that one spiritual principle – or the two or three that I know right now – if those can impact my life, I want to know more! I want to be more spiritually grounded! I want to be spiritually awake!”* And so then we begin this process of learning truth – of understanding spiritual truth.

And so, Cady’s thing goes on in Paragraph #2 and says this: *“Perhaps it’s not too much to say that the majority of people first turn to God because of some weakness, some failure, some almost unbearable want they have in their lives.”*

See, I believe there’s this underlying hunger that we all have for God. That there’s these two components of our spiritual life. That, over and over again, that we have this desire to know more God, to experience more God, to feel more connected. And we have this desire to live a better life. And those two things run side by side. That it’s not just enough to know God – in that knowledge, or that experience, of God – if it doesn’t translate into a greater, better, finer, more wonderful life. But just a wonderful life without God isn’t it, either! Even if you have all the whistles and bells; even if you have everything you desire ... but you don’t really have a deeper connection with God, then that, too, is inadequate! That we have these twin desires I think in every aspect of our life: to have a deeper, more meaningful connection with the Divine; to know ourselves, created in the image and likeness of God. But then to translate that into a greater, finer, more abundant, more loving, more peaceful life. Right? That we move into that.

Paragraph #4 she said that, *“Especially have people been led to seek Truth for the rewards, for the very ‘works sake.’ And during the last years, since they have come to know God, is not only able, but willing, to deliver them from all the burdens of their everyday life. Everybody wants to be free – free, free, free – as the birds of the air. Free from sickness, free from suffering, free from bondage, free from poverty, free from all forms of evil – and he has a right to be. For it is a God-given desire and a God-given right.”*

So she talks about, in the first part of this “Spiritual Gifts” chapter, she talks about why we come into spiritual community. Why we come into spiritual understanding. She talks about our desire: the longings that we have to receive. Right? She talks about that we have this desire to experience God, to experience a better life. That what we want out of the deal.

And then in Paragraph #13, she flips it. And she changes it, and begins to talk about spiritual gifts. Because what happens when we come into spiritual community is: We come into spiritual community for what's in it for me. Right? And all of us have that phase in our life where we come into spiritual community, and we're feeling empty, we're feeling needy, we're feeling broken, we're feeling beat up. And we come into spiritual community, and we begin to get full. We begin to heal. We begin to transform. Our life gets better and better and better.

And then there's a point where spiritual community: It's not enough if it's just about me. And at that moment, the game really begins to shift radically. And the shift is going from receiving to: How am I called to give in spiritual community? And what we don't yet know is that: That's actually the next level of receiving. That, as we learn to give in spiritual community – as we learn to give our spiritual gifts – we actually receive at a whole 'nother level. But if it's just about me and mine – if it's just about what I want, what I need, how to make my life better – we actually miss the next level of our own growth. We miss the next level of our own spiritual progress. Because there's a point in our own spiritual development where it has to be about giving back! Where it has to be about expressing the activity of Spirit in us!

And I look at my own life: when my life was transformed in my own experience of Unity, at my own little Unity church. When my life got better and better and better, there came to be a point where I knew I wanted to give back to others. That I wanted to be about expressing my spiritual gifts. And, for me, this activity of giving your gifts is tremendous!

So reading from Paragraph #13: *“The same Spirit, always and forever the same: the one God, one Spirit, but in different forms of manifestation. The gift of healing is no more greater than the gift of prophecy. The gift of prophecy is no more greater than faith, for faith (when it is really God's faith manifested through us), even as a grain of mustard seed, shall be able to remove mountains. The working of miracles is no more greater than the power of discernment. ‘And the greatest of these is love.’”*

So, in the New Testament, there are 27 spiritual gifts that have been identified. Now, why is that important? Well, one of the things that I want you to hear from me today is that, as you know what your spiritual gifts are, we can actually then give those to the people around us. We can give those in our ministry; we can give those in our life; we can give those to family and friends. And I want you to see a distinction tonight between a talent and a spiritual gift. That a talent is something that we tend to do out of our personality. It's something that we tend to do out of our humanness. But a spiritual gift is different. A spiritual gift is one of those things that is actually the Spirit in us that actually does the heavy lifting. It's the Spirit in us that actually gets in there and expresses through us, and allows us to do something greater than we can do from our own intellect or our own understanding.

Over and over again, I have been able to witness myself do what I do as a man – as a human, as a being – and then I've also witnessed what happens when I get out of the way, and God does it through me. And let me tell you, it is much better [*chuckles*] when I get out of the way! And I think I'm cute and fun and intelligent and well read, sometimes, right? That I sometimes think I'm all that! And then what happens is: When I think that I'm all that, I think I can do it! And then there's a moment where I realize I can't: that I need a Power greater than myself. And I get myself out of the way, and Spirit does it through me in a way that's significantly greater than I would ever imagine.

So what are the spiritual gifts? There are 18 that we focus on mainly. As I said, there's 27, but there's 18 that we really focus on. And I want to share those with you, because I want you to see if any of these gifts ... Now, again, these aren't talents; these are the way that God uses you to express your spiritual nature. To serve your community. To serve the people around you.

So the first one is **ADMINISTRATION**. Now, that is a spiritual gift. There are people that have the spiritual gift of administration, and when they're doing administration, it is God in them that does the work. That is not my gift! Right? Do I have the talent for doing administration? Yes! But it's not a gift! If I spent eight hours doing administrative functions, right? I'm exhausted! Right? It's mentally, it's just exhausting. But those people that this is their spiritual gift, they put systems together, and they create order, and it's just amazing what they do! And they do it with such a sense of ease and grace and power. And the systems that they create, and the things that do, are just phenomenal! That's not my gift! But the people that have that gift, I want them surrounding me! *[Laughs]* Right? I'm a group project; I need those people around me! Right?

Then there's the **CREATIVE ABILITY**, which is calling forth creative ability in the areas of music or drama or dance or graphics or writing or painting ... even computer design or craftsmanship. All those ways that they are called to give of their spirit through those creative abilities.

The gift of **ENCOURAGEMENT**. You know, people that can speak a word to somebody and it instantly uplifts them. That they have the ability to speak words in such a way that people feel empowered; they feel better.

EVANGELISM, which is the gift of being able to share your faith in such a way that people feel inspired to follow, and to know your understanding of faith.

The gift of **GIVING**. Those people that are called to give in generous ways. Now, this isn't just your ordinary level of giving. The people that have the gift of – the spiritual gift of giving – they are oftentimes blessed financially, and they are called to give. They are called. And for them it is a spiritual – giving is a spiritual act. Right?

The gift of **HEALING**.

The gift of **HELPS**. Now, the gift of helps is an interesting one, because the gift of helps are those individuals that are called to be helpful in other people's ministry. The people that have the gift of helps want to come in right beside somebody and help them really make the other person's ministry even more powerful. Even bigger, more wonderful.

The gift of **HOSPITALITY**. The gift of hospitality, like, really is the gift of being able to serve and to feed people in a way that their soul feels fed. You know, when ... You know, I've hosted a lot of things in my life. And people sometimes think I have the gift of hospitality. I don't. I just don't! Right? I mean, I could do it, right? But when I do it, I'm doing it. But people that have the gift of hospitality, they do it so easily. They do it so graciously. They do it so abundantly. You know, you probably have a friend that you know; like, they're the ones that are always inviting people over and they just ... that's their gift! This is not my gift. Right?

INTERCESSION. The ability to pray for others over a long time. The ability to have faith and prayer and seeing people healed and blessed and transformed.

The gift of **LEADERSHIP**. Now, I do have this gift! The gift of leadership is the Spirit-given ability to challenge, inspire and lead spiritual communities to their goals. That's one of my gifts.

The gift of **MERCY**. Don't have this one, either! *[Chuckles]* The gift of mercy is the Spirit-given gift to give genuine compassion and empathy for others.

PROPHECY.

SERVICE.

TEACHING.

And then there's also four gifts that we call the "Accelerated Gifts." And these gifts actually allow all the other gifts to be more effective. And so, most people have one of these four gifts that actually "accelerate" – or improve, empower – their other gifts.

So the gift of **FAITH**. The gift of **DISCERNMENT**. The gift of **KNOWLEDGE**. The gift of **WISDOM**.

See, what I want us to do today is: I want you to really think about how you're being called to minister in your world – in your life, for your family, your friends. And what I want you to see is that, there's a way that Spirit wants to use you. And it may not be the spiritual gift that you actually want. Like, I would love to be Rusty. I would love to be Sean. I'd love to be Craig. I'd love to come up here and just minister – I'd love to be Daniel. I'd like to come up here and just minister with song, you know, and just take people up through song. And have my words be transformative and, you know, that my music just moves out in all directions. It's not my gift. It's never going to be one of my gifts! Right? My gift: I have to stay in my area.

Now, we can have "gift envy." But what I want you to see is that, if you're trying to give the gift that's not you, it is 100% your personality, your ego, and it is going to get in the way. What are the ways that Spirit leads you to give? And when you're giving your spiritual gift, it's actually easy! It's graceful. It's not exhausting. You actually feel better. Like, I can teach all day long! And come away from that experience actually feeling uplifted. Actually feeling "high."

So today what I want you to see is that we live in a world that has needs. We live in a world where there's stuff going on. And if we just stay in the mindset of our own intellect – and we just stay in our own personality and if we just stay in our own ego – the world's just going to keep trudging along. But I'm going to challenge you today. I want you to know what your spiritual gifts are. I want you to identify them; I want you to pray about it. And I want you to be in the process of giving your gifts to the world in such a way that you feel profoundly blessed. And in such a way that the people around you feel blessed, because you're giving your gifts.

So what's your gift? What is the way that Spirit calls you to minister to others? Because, in one way or another, we're all called to minister to the people around us. You know, if you don't have the gift of creative ability, then let's find out what your gift is! Do you have the gift of helps or administration or hospitality? Do you have the gift of being able to pray for people? Do you need to be one of the chaplains that serve here? Like, how are you being called to serve your world – your ministry – through your spiritual gifts? We just need to know. You need to know. You need to know so that your life gets to be blessed at the highest level. Because there's a point where it's no longer just about you. But it's really about you learning how to give your gifts in the greatest possible way to make a difference in other people's lives.

You ready? I want you to discover at least one way Spirit uses you to make a difference in other people's lives.

Let's take that into prayer:

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. And I want us to give thanks that each and every one of us was created in the image and likeness of God. And that God's going to use you. God is already using you to make a difference. Spirit, show me. Lead me. Use me in the greatest possible way. Show me what my gifts are. And help me to give those gifts in a way that is transformative for me and the people around me. Help me uplift and make a difference in my world. I am ready to give in a greater way! To minister in a greater way! To heal, to bless, to

transform in a greater way. Show me. Lead me. Guide me! In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

COLLECTION

Alright, this is the time of giving of our gifts and tithes. I invite you to hold them in your hand as we bless them together. And our offermation is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive."* Together: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive."* In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

CLOSING

Alright! God bless you! Have a great week! I want you to discover what your spiritual gifts are. I want you to give them in greater and greater ways. And trust that every time you feel inadequate in the moment, what I know is true is that God in you is completely capable of using you in a way that will be more than enough. God bless you, friend!

Copyright 2020 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Rogers