

Shepherding the Gifts of the Spirit (Because of the Gospel)

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, June 25, 2023
PASSAGES	1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:9-11; John 7:37-39; 1 Samuel 16:7; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Every believer already has the Holy Spirit — in them, on them, among them, sealed with him. That is not the end of the story but the ground of it, and it is exactly why the gifts look different from person to person and from season to season. The church's job is not to enforce one template; it is to shepherd a body that was designed to have many organs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Shepherding the gifts would be unnecessary if sheep always walked in straight lines. The complexity comes from people, not from a lack of clarity in the text.
- ◆ Scripture puts the Spirit in us, on us, among us, and seals us with him. As Matt put it, there is no preposition left where he isn't.
- ◆ The Acts conversion accounts do not follow one pattern, so a hard-and-fast rule built out of one of them will not hold — including the rule that tongues prove you have the Spirit.
- ◆ “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” is all the explanation needed for why your experience and your neighbor's do not match.
- ◆ The Spirit does not come in percentages. He is a person, not a quantity, and you cannot hold a fraction of a person.
- ◆ Differences in gifting are God's own choice, which means the right response is not tolerance but celebration.

- ◆ The gifts exist to build the body and to make the members care for one another — not to establish anybody's credentials.
- ◆ Being certain you already have him and asking for more of him are not in competition. Do both.

► 1:00:13

Matt opened with a pun about a Roman emperor who somehow never made it past his teens — Constantine — and then waited, with visible patience, for the room to get there. From that he went straight to the premise: shepherding would not be necessary if sheep always walked in a straight line and knew where they were going. God put shepherds in the flock for the same reason.

1. Why the gifts need shepherding at all

► 1:01:50

A great deal in the Bible is clear. The complications arrive with the people, and with the fact that this is a relationship with depth and new layers rather than a fixed idea. “God’s not just like a couch,” Matt said. “Once you have it, you have it, it’s just a couch.”

► 1:03:11

The human factors he named around the gifts were specific: insecurity, which most of the room was probably carrying and each assuming was theirs alone; pride, which reinforces it; a legalistic zeal that grows where confidence in the gospel is thin. From there come comparison, spiritual person points, dismissals of someone else’s experience, harsh words. All of that can happen when a church embraces the gifts. Matt’s answer was not to back away. “The opportunity cost of leaving that on the table is far greater — besides, we could just be screwy about something else.”

2. The argument he actually wanted to settle

► 1:04:28

This was material cut from the earlier message on tongues for length, and the question is the one that divides believers who otherwise agree: who has the Spirit, and what does it mean to be baptized in him? Some hold firmly that you may be saved and still lack the baptism of the Spirit unless you speak in tongues as proof.

► 1:05:29

Matt began by conceding the strongest point on the other side. There is more to the Christian life than saying a prayer and retiring to Bible reading. Our Christian life is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit. And God is not limited to one register: the still small voice happened to one prophet on one day; other people got fire out of the sky.

► 1:06:44

Could God make everyone baptized in his Spirit speak in tongues? Certainly. But the conversion accounts in Acts do not report it — Paul on the Damascus road, the Ethiopian official, the Philippian jailer, the Bereans, Crispus and his household. Paul certainly spoke in tongues later — he says he did it more than any of them — but at the moment of his encounter, which would have been the obvious place to mention it, nobody does. “Where we go wrong,” Matt said, “is not in hungering after the gifts. It’s forcing onto people one-size-fits-all templates.”

3. Every preposition is already taken

► 1:09:06

Then a stack of texts, read in sequence, each answering the same question from a different angle. God establishes us in Christ, anoints us, puts his seal on us and gives us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Sealed with what, and who is the “us”?

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

EPHESIANS 1:13–14 ↗

► 1:11:07

The audience is believers, full stop. And the prepositions keep piling up: God has given us the Spirit as a down payment; God’s Spirit dwells in you as a temple; the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Matt lingered on the phrase “in our hearts” — not the aorta, and not only corporate, because we do not share hearts. He is in the congregation and in each person in it.

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him... If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

ROMANS 8:9-11 ↗

“He’s in us, he’s on us, he’s around us, he’s among us, and we’re sealed with him,” Matt said. “That’s taking up all the space. There’s no preposition where he isn’t.”

4. Rivers, not a reservoir

► 1:13:31

Which raises the obvious objection: is that it? You get saved, he is there, and nothing deepens for the rest of your life? People plainly do grow in their relationship with the Lord. The verse Matt called the most helpful in the tension:

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

JOHN 7:37-39 ↗

► 1:14:49

Three things out of one dense sentence. It is *whoever* believes, not the Marines and the elites. It is a river, and a river is not a one-time event — you live beside it, it is always there, and it is never the same water twice; it ebbs and floods and returns to normal. And John says outright that the rivers *are* the Spirit. The expectation that a life with God should graph as a flat line is what sets people up for disappointment when the retreat high gives way to a morning of forgotten sandwiches and traffic.

► 1:16:56

The timing in that verse matters too. The Spirit came when Jesus was glorified — not because the disciples prayed long enough. Their sequence is not a mold each of us has to re-enact individually. “We are not reenacting the same timeline over and over again as cycles. We’re living in the same timeline, just farther down.” He is the baptizer in the Spirit; we are not the buyers. “We don’t purchase him with prayer points and coupons.”

5. The Lord looks on the heart

► 1:18:30

Samuel went to Jesse's house and started at the top of the family, oldest and biggest first.

"For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

1 SAMUEL 16:7 ↗

► 1:19:40

Here is the crux, Matt said. What the Bible says about believers having the Spirit is barely contested. Where it goes sideways is when we start assessing with our eyes — grading someone else's experience, or our own against expectations that were never realistic. He offered himself as evidence, cheerfully: he has, by his own account, a fairly dead-looking face, and nobody watching it would guess much about what the Spirit is doing.

6. Variety is the design, not the malfunction

► 1:21:27

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7 ↗

That last clause, Matt said, is all the biblical basis anyone needs for the range of experience in a room — person to person, and within one person over time. It is the Spirit manifesting what he wants as he wills.

► 1:23:51

The variety is not fixed at birth, either. Reading through the list of gifts — wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation — he landed on the closing phrase: *as he wills*. Sometimes you walk in a gift today that you were not walking in yesterday and may not tomorrow. "The Holy Spirit's not a can of soup, where you just have it and that's it. He's animated. He knows exactly what you need."

7. A body is not a very large amoeba

► 1:25:28

In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and all made to drink of one Spirit. Matt recalled an illustration that stuck with him years ago: a human body and a patch of pond scum, with roughly the same number of cells. The body can do advanced things precisely because its cells are not all doing the same thing.

► 1:28:07

Then the insecurity, in Paul's own words: *because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body*. Since being baptized in one Spirit and being joined to one body were equated a few verses earlier, the sentence translates directly: *because I am not like brother so-and-so, I must not be baptized in the Spirit*. People genuinely carry that. It is not true, and the reason is that the Spirit does not arrive in percentages. "He's a person. He's not the Force from Star Wars. What percent Christ do you have? Isn't he whole?"

► 1:31:21

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26 ↗

God arranged the members as he chose, which means difference is not something a church puts up with. "We haven't gone far enough unless we celebrate the fact that we have different gifts and callings, because it's his choice, and celebrating it is a way of honoring his choice." And verse 25 names the purpose plainly: that the members may care for one another. The gifts are not there to establish us.

► 1:33:18

Paul finishes with a run of rhetorical questions — *are all apostles? are all prophets? do all speak with tongues?* The answer to every one of them is no. And then he points past the whole argument to *a still more excellent way*, which Matt flagged as next week's message.

8. What this looks like in a local church

► 1:35:42

The last stretch was pastoral advice, and Matt admitted most of it would be review — which is exactly why he said it out loud. Don't become over-dependent on one *kind* of gift: a church that is all tongues, or all teaching, or all prophecy has traded the body for a uniform. Don't become over-dependent on one gifted *person*. He named the warning sign precisely: a group where there is no counter-authority, where questioning is technically allowed but functionally the same as being wrong. Either it curdles into something cultish or the pressure implodes the individual.

► 1:40:47

Don't become obsessed with your own gifting — self-discovery done in a Christian accent is still self-discovery, and the point of a gift is to build up someone else. Don't inflate ordinary spiritual life with hyped-up language. He described Baptists who would never call themselves charismatic saying, *I've been praying for your family out of Isaiah, I just feel like that's what God has for you*, and Pentecostals describing the same experience with fire and lightning on the cover. "He doesn't need hyping. He's glorious. His work is wonderful."

► 1:45:50

And two on discernment, which he treated as one piece. Whoever acts spiritual must be spiritual, and whoever acts ordinary must not be — that is bad discernment, and it is the same error as reading Matt's face. Everything gets measured by the gospel behind it, by the fruit in the person's life, by its effect on the community. Which then requires the harder half: confronting what is false even when it comes from a friend. A strong gifting on Tuesday does not make anyone infallible on Wednesday. The first line of defense is not studying counterfeits but knowing the true and living God.

► 1:48:55

"We're not the brains of this operation anyway," he said. "The Christian church wouldn't exist today if we were. Thank goodness there's a real shepherd."

9. Ask for more

► 1:50:08

He closed by agreeing with the Pentecostals one more time. We have not because we ask not. So ask — and why stop at a second filling? Why not a third, a fifth? The cartoon version has you saved, then baptized in the Spirit once, and Matt refused it on the grounds that it implies he was absent in between. He wasn't. The language strains here, and Matt said so: like knowing a spouse for years and knowing them more, or like someone already in the room who comes very close. We are rooted in the fact that we have him, and we still long for the day we see him with unveiled face.

► 1:52:09

His prayer said it better than any of the argument had: “Come, Holy Spirit. I say that knowing you are already here, but I don’t know what else to say. Guard our faith that you are here, and at the same time give us the faith to ask for more.” Then, because it was the obvious way to end a message on the gifts, the heart ministry teams came forward to pray with anyone who wanted it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Zechariah 4:6](#)
- [1 Kings 19:11–12](#)
- [Acts 9:1–19](#)
- [Acts 8:26–39](#)
- [Acts 16:25–34](#)
- [Acts 17:10–12](#)
- [Acts 18:8](#)
- [1 Corinthians 14:18](#)
- [2 Corinthians 1:20–22](#)
- [Ephesians 1:13–14](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:4–5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)
- [2 Timothy 1:13–14](#)
- [Romans 8:9–11](#)
- [John 7:37–39](#)
- [1 Samuel 16:7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:4–7](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:8–11](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:12–14](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:15–20](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:21–26](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:27–31](#)
- [1 Corinthians 13:1](#)
- [James 4:2](#)
- [2 Corinthians 3:18](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt named insecurity as the most common human factor around the gifts. Where does yours show up — in comparing, in dismissing, or in going quiet?
2. If the Spirit is in you, on you, among you and sealing you, what would change about how you pray if you actually believed all four?
3. Which template have you been holding yourself to — one you inherited, or one you built out of somebody else's story?
4. Matt said difference in gifting is God's own choice, so celebration is the right response rather than tolerance. Whose gift in this group could you name and celebrate out loud?
5. He urged us to ask for more of the Spirit without doubting that we have him. What does asking for more look like for you this week, in something more concrete than a feeling?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVz7LCPZkAw&t=0s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.