



Spiritual Gifts: February 1, 2018

Verses Covered This Week

Psalm 139:13-16

Jeremiah 1:4

1 Corinthians 12:11

Ephesians 4:11 - 13

1 Corinthians 12:7

Romans 10:17

Acts 11:27 – 30

1 Corinthians 14:39 – 40

1 Corinthians 14:22 – 25

Romans 8:26 - 27

Shaylie actually had the question that is the best question to ask from a salient utilitarian position. It's pretty easy to understand that the Bible says you pray God's will about a situation. You don't pray your will; you pray His will. It's really easy scripturally to understand that. Her question was, and she's right, she said, "I get in there and I've got this person I'm praying for, and I'm waiting and I don't hear how to pray for them." That's exactly what you're going to struggle with. You're going to put that prayer time between two book ends. Remember we talked about this, I want you to spend personal time, you're going to spend some time adoring Him, confessing sin, thanking Him, and then you're going to go to supplication, which is intercession. You don't want to start down your prayer list until you've spent some time focused on Him so as best you can, you're in a mindset of allowing the Spirit to be in control of the situation. This is why Jesus said you enter your closet. You can't do this sitting around shooting the breeze with people or sitting at Starbucks. You've got to find some place where it's just you and Jesus. So one end of the book ends is here. You're going to be focused on Christ. Then I think you pray what you feel. I don't think you necessarily wait for a vision or a word from the Lord. I think you pray what you feel with the caveat of Philippians 4:7 which is the peace of God, He says guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. So if your heart is praying the wrong place or your mind is directing you to the wrong place in prayer, you will have an unrest about that and a lack of peace. And when you have that, then you back away and then you alter your prayer. So you're going to let God as best you can lead you, then you're going to pray what you feel with the protection of Philippians 4:7 so you don't pray incorrectly. Probably the best example of this is Sherry Maggard, our Preschool Minister. She had a best friend, Donna Francis, I mean they were tight. They called each other every day. Met each other for coffee. Any kind of major thing in each other's life, they

shared. Donna got cancer and the first time she got it, Sherry felt very compelled to pray for her. And Donna got past that, and then it came back. Donna died, I did her funeral, Sherry spoke at it. But I remember after the death, I caught Sherry about two weeks later, and I said, "The second time, did you pray for her to be healed?" And Sherry said, "No." I said, "She's your best friend. Why didn't you pray for her to be healed?" And she said, "Because I knew God wasn't going to do that." I said, "Well what did you pray for?" She said, "I prayed for her family. That they would get through what they faced." Now if there's anybody who's heart was, "I want my best friend healed," it was Sherry. But the combination of these things enabled her to pray correctly and then her prayers go to the family, go to Donna first time, and then the second time, go to the family. So I think you pray what you feel in there. I think that's a great question. I think that's the question. So I think you pray between these book ends. You have some time where you do the best you can to get focused and then you allow this, if you have any unrest, then you stop the direction of your prayer.

We're going to look at spiritual gifts today. So we're going to slide over to Psalm 139. We're not going to read the whole thing, but I want you to listen to a couple things he says. Beginning in verse 13 he says:

¹³For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and intricately woven in the depths of the earth; ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were formed for me. When as yet there was none of them.

Now hold there. Then I want you to go to Jeremiah 1:4. Then we'll go to 1 Corinthians 12:11. Now listen to what he writes.

⁴Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Now slide over to 1 Corinthians 12:11. He's talking about various spiritual gifts which he lists, and then he says this:

¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as He wills.

So Psalm 139 says He builds my body, soul, and spirit. Jeremiah 1, he has a purpose for me before birth. Also the days are set for my life. Then he says that the Holy Spirit gives gifts after rebirth. So here's what the Bible says. God gives you certain things at your birth. He knits you in the womb. He gives you, probably generally here, is where you're going to find your talents, your abilities, your proclivities. And He's going to give those to you primarily for a career, for a purpose. These two things are going to be joined, but sometimes the purpose He has for you is not prophecy. He may want you to be an attorney, He may want you to be a housewife, whatever that purpose is, He will build your personality, your body, your spirit/soul, everything, to line up with

the purpose that He has for you. My dad was an electrical engineer. Brilliant. His name's on the moon, and in the Smithsonian. He told us it was on the moon; I don't know whether that's true or not. We certainly couldn't check it. But he was really brilliant. So I came along, broke his heart, he wanted this kid that was really gifted in mathematics and science and all this stuff. I had no interest. I remember him taking out a, you won't know what this is, a slide rule. He's trying to get me to know how to work it. And I'm looking at him; and then he showed me all the little stuff he did with all these little symbols. Electrical engineers are not real people. So the only intellectual proclivity I have is languages. I'm really pretty good at languages. It's the only thing actually I am good at. And so with that in mind, he had no value for languages, but accordingly, turned out to be a really good proclivity for my life because I've rooted my life around the Greek in the New Testament. So I think there are certain things given to you.

And then he says your days are ordained. You've got a set amount of time. Now this is going to come into play here in a minute when we look at one of the gifts. I've got a purpose now. So he gives me certain things at birth. Then he gives me certain things at rebirth. When you come to Christ and you're reborn, He is going to give you at least one, but probably more than one, spiritual gift to allow you to impact the body of Christ. So generally most people are going to have two purposes. They're going to have a purpose in life beyond the church and then they'll have a purpose in the church. So He does both things. He gives you what you need for the calling in your life and He gives you what you need to impact the body of Christ. So obviously this is true. There's nobody that should not be impacting the body of Christ.

Let me show you two things. Look at Ephesians 4 and then we'll look at 1 Corinthians 12:7. Now He does two things to the church and that's why it's a little confusing for somebody like me from the, because for me what He did for me in Psalm 139 and what He did for me here, is key because my calling and my spiritual calling are in the same arena, and that's the first list of people He uses. Look at Ephesians 4:11 – 13.

¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for equipment of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

He mentions there are certain people that He gives who are gifts to the church. Now I realize Central would argue with this point in regard to me, but what are you going to do? He says apostles. Obviously there are the twelve. Paul takes the place of Judas, even though they voted on it, threw the dice, before Pentecost which they shouldn't have done. Paul takes the place of Judas in the twelve, but there are other apostles mentioned in the New Testament. I still think there are apostles called out. I'm probably the only guy left with that theory. But I look at a man like James Dobson who has had a tremendous impact in the family. I think he's apostolic in a very real sense. I look at certain pastors like Adrian Rogers who was at Bellevue in Memphis who helped lead us through a return to the scripture. W. A. Criswell, First Dallas. There are guys that I think are apostolic. I don't know that we totally call them apostles because there is an apostolic era with the 12 that dies out in 100 A.D that we'll look at in a minute. But I still think that's valid. Evangelists, those are missionaries. Those are not people that go around winning people to Christ. An evangelist is a missionary. It's a person that could cross culture and go. It's always amazing to me. I grew up, I made money in college, it's not why I did it, but you got good money doing it.

I spent it at a Western Sizzlin' on women. I did a lot of revivals. I preached at a lot of churches. And finally one day it dawned on me, when you read the scripture you don't ever hear Timothy going to Corinth to preach a two-week revival. It's not in there. I went to, I shouldn't tell you this story, this is how bad I am. I'm jogging one year at the Southern Baptist Convention and I get done and it's Sunday morning, and Peg's in, and so I decide I'm going to go to church. But I really don't want to change clothes and so COSBE, the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists, is downstairs in the motel. So I go down there and I sit in there. This is terrible. I go every year now just to hear it. This guy gets up and he starts blistering guys like me; that we are ungodly, unscriptural, unbiblical, we don't love Jesus, I mean I can't even tell you the tirade that he gave because I don't have a full time evangelist in the church. And they were going nuts that we didn't do that. And so I'm sitting in the back fuming and laughing at the same time because that is not, and they were arguing God's call to evangelists, that is not what that is. It's a missionary.

Shepherds and teachers; that's not two different things. In the Greek there's a fancy grammar term, it's shepherds and teachers is the same person so basically these are people He gives to the church so oddly enough Psalm 139 and 1 Corinthians 12 are going to do the same thing for these men. But for you, look at 1 Corinthians 12:7, for most of you that's not going to be your calling. And here's what it's going to say to you.

⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

So everybody has a gift from the Spirit for the benefit of the church. So you're going to have certain things given to you in Psalm 139 and then certain things given to you at your rebirth and they are for the benefit of the church. Now let's take a look at what some of these are. 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 11. Now let me say one thing here. When we go here there's always two arguments on this list; that it's exhaustive and that it's not. Some say these are all the gifts. There are others that say they're not. I'm inclined to go with it's not exhaustive; that there are other spiritual gifts, that these are simply emblematic. But if you think they're exhaustive, I certainly would not debate you on that. Now look at what he says:

⁸For one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge;

There are two Greek words used here. Oddly enough wisdom and then knowledge, it's kind of reversed in the Greek of what we do in English. We generally think wisdom is applied knowledge. In the Greek, wisdom is the intellectual understanding of something. And this other Greek word is the ability to apply that in a correct way. Now a pastor, I think, has to have both of these. Academics generally just have deep knowledge. But a pastor should have both. Should have the ability to open the Word and then apply it. And I think you have to have both. But there are men that only have one. I was on a conference call, I won't say who it was, with one of the leaders in the convention, with several pastors, particularly young pastors, and he's one of the smartest men in the convention, a really sharp guy. There were probably 85 pastors on the conference call. And one of the kids was sharing about making sure we witnessed correctly and we love homosexuals. And so one of the kids said, "Look I've got a practicing homosexual couple in my church. They want to go on a mission trip." And this guy told this kid, he said, "Look I think that's a great idea. Take them on a mission trip. You can love them correctly that way and let them know they're a

part.” So when we got off the conference call, I called this kid up, he was in another state, I said, “Look my name’s Chris Osborne, you don’t know me.” He said, “No I know who you are.” I said, “Well look, don’t listen to this guy. He’s nuts. Number one, your deacons find out you took a practicing homosexual couple on a mission trip, you’re going to be looking for another church, like in Albania. Number two: I don’t think you want to take people who are living in unconfessed sin. I don’t care if they’re homosexual or not. If a guy is having an affair, you don’t take him on a mission trip and you don’t take people that are engaged in a constancy of unrepentant sin, no matter what they are, on a mission trip where you’re going to win people to Christ.” So obviously this guy had great knowledge, but he had zero wisdom. So you can have one gift. If you don’t have any wisdom, don’t act like you do.

Secondly, look at what he says:

⁹to another faith by the same Spirit,

Now we have a little issue here. You stay where you are. I’m going to read you, now listen to this, it’s very precise, it’s been mistranslated, so we’ve misused it. Romans 10:17

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Now in Romans 10:17 when I hear the Gospel and when you say hear the gospel that means what Jesus said in Matthew 16, “Blessed are you, flesh and blood didn’t reveal this to you.” When God, through His Spirit, gives somebody, they hear the gospel from God through the Spirit, there is an immediate faith insertion in their life. They are immediately able to believe in the word of Christ. The old translation was faith comes by hearing and hearing from the word of God. So everybody thought, “I’ll read the Bible and I’ll get faith.” That’s not the correct translation. It’s a reference point to the Holy Spirit which makes sense because the Greek word for conviction, *elegchó*, in the New Testament, is actually a Greek word that a man never has in his marriage: a convincing argument. No man has ever won an argument in his marriage. Any man that has is a liar. But the Greek word literally means when the Holy Spirit convicts me, I’m sure He’s right and I’m not. Which inserts faith in me. Everybody that is a believer has to have faith inserted. So what does it mean when he says I give you faith as a spiritual gift? In other words, He’s giving something as a gift because not everybody has it beyond the insertion of faith at your conversion. So what is he talking about when he says I give you the gift of faith? I think the best thing is, He gives certain people the ability to believe that they can do whatever God’s called them to do in a huge way. Let me explain what I’m talking about.

When the church separates in Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit calls out Paul and Barnabas to their calling of ministry. These guys leave the church and I think Paul had this gift of faith because he had this tremendous ability to believe he could go into any Roman town. Remember they’re the first Christian missionaries, right. So it’s not like they’re going out where there are other Christians. They’re going where literally no one’s heard the gospel and what he did was, there was a road that ran through the Roman Empire. He just got on the road and he just went from city to city. He’d stay there as long as they’d let him. A year and a half in Corinth. Three years in Ephesus. He would stay there, if they beat him up, he’d just go to another city. But he had this tremendous faith from the calling out of the Holy Spirit in Acts 13 that he could go to any town, anywhere, find a

synagogue, go in, share Christ when them, pull them out, and start a church. I think that is exactly what this is.

We had a staff member once here who absolutely had that gift, Monty Hunt. Monty Hunt came one time, I wasn't here at the time, when we started the pageant. This church is running three or four hundred, he comes up and says, "Look we need to do a pageant and touch the whole city." And everybody's like, "You've got to be kidding. There's no way we can do that." Well they did it and it blew out. I remember, I hate to admit this, but he came to me a few years back and he said, "Look I think we need to do a Christmas Eve service." And I looked at him and I said, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. We'll have 150 people here. Nobody's going to come to a Christmas Eve service." That's all I'm saying about that. I think the gift of faith is He gives certain people, because they're going to lead out in that area, He gives certain people the ability to say, "Look we can pull this off. Let's do it."

Then we have,

to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,¹⁰ and to another the effecting of miracles,

So we have healing and miracles. Now there are two theories here. If you go to a Bible church, and Bible churches are great, but generally a Bible church will take the position that these are, along with the gift of tongues, these are sign gifts, that is, that they were signs that God gave to the church before the New Testament came up. For example, in 1 Corinthians 13 it's going to talk about tongues ceasing. That these gifts were signs until the New Testament was settled and then once it was settled, God took these out which would be healing, miracles, and tongues. Now I really struggle with that because I don't think, I think if they were removed, it would be a whole lot more clear in the New Testament than they make it. So I really don't buy that. Now there is one intriguing historical fact. When you come to 100 A.D. and John dies, the last apostle, these things diminish, not necessarily tongues, but healing and miracles diminish almost exponentially overnight. For example, the Apostle John had two noted disciples: Papias and Polycarp. We know both of them. Polycarp was the guy that was burned alive at 886. Had the greatest closing line of his life. "I've served God 86 years. He's done me no wrong. Why would I betray Him now?" So these guys were deep men. There is no record of them ever doing a healing or a miracle. So it does sort of die out, but I think these are obviously still valid. I don't think these have been removed. So I think there are certain people that have the gift of healing. Certain people that have the gift of miracles. Now here's the problem. These are not, I don't think, left to the discretion of the person with the gift. If it were true, I think anybody in our church that was sick, would not die. I had a man in my office last night, I'll say who it was, it was Mike Walker, he teaches one of our Sunday School classes. I buried, Christie, his wife, I think 8 to 10 years ago. One of the finest couples we've ever had. As a matter of fact, last night I said, "So you date anybody?" He teared up and said, "No, still love her. I'm going to love her until I die." If I'd had the gift of healing, she'd still be here. But the problem you have is you have Psalm 139. She had an ordained number of days, and even if I had the gift of healing, I can't undo what God has predetermined for her. So I think because of that, these things are not left to my discretion. They are left to His discretion. But I still think those are valid gifts in the church. If you have the gift of miracles, there's a deer lease I want in South Texas so we need to meet when this is over.

Then he talks about the gift of prophecy. Now I want you to look at Acts 11:27 – 30. Prophecy, if you go to the Old Testament in particular, you read Isaiah, you read Jeremiah, you read any of the Old Testament prophets, almost nothing in them is foretelling. Almost all of it is a demand for repentance. So there are two aspects of prophecy. There is forth-telling and there is foretelling. Now in the Old Testament this is probably 90% this is probably 10%. The foretelling was to confirm that the forth-telling was legitimate. So this was not the main purpose of a prophet. I think you have the same thing here. Now you do have a New Testament guy who makes a foretelling statement. Look in Acts 11:27 – 30.

²⁷Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. This took place in the days of Claudius. ²⁹So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰And they did so, sending it to the elder by Barnabas and Saul.

So you do have an example, and so again, I think there still may be people who have the ability that God's given, He will give them the knowledge of what's going to come, but their primary role, and when he talks about prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, the primary role is to demand repentance and to get the church right with God. Now that is the primary role of a prophet; to present the truth and so that is going to be the primary role in the New Testament. There is, though, you can't negate the fact that there is foretelling in the New Testament. But, again, that's not the prime function. So when you hear these guys, there's a movement that I thought would die out because it's so incredibly stupid, but there is a movement where a guy, there will be a bunch of people like you in a room. You'll be sitting in a room and a guy will come in and he will walk from person to person telling them something that God's going to do in their future. And he'll just walk the whole room. That is nowhere in the New Testament. So obviously you do have some foretelling the future, but that's not the prime role of prophecy. The prime role of prophecy is to make sure that people get it right in their understanding of Christ.

Then he says, look at the next one, he talks about

[and to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,](#)

So we would call that the gift of discernment. Now let me be clear about something. So you can know spirits. That is, you can know the things that are coming that are dangerous or beneficial to discernment of spirits. Not a discernment of spirit. Do not come to me and tell me you have the gift to know what's going on in Bob's heart. That is judgement which you don't have. You don't know what's in my heart. I don't know what's in your heart. It's a discernment of spirits. A discernment of what is danger or what is a blessing to the particular body of Christ. They have the ability to say, "We need to be careful here." My dad's church in Huntsville, Alabama had a guy come in who basically Bernie Madoffed the church. He came in and said, "Man I've got a way for us to make money." Tons of people put their life savings in the guy's hands, he skipped town, so a ton of people in that church lost retirement and lost a ton of money. My bet is there was somebody that sensed that this guy was not on the up and up. And either they didn't go to the pastor or the pastor said, "No, he's great." But I'm telling you, there's some of you that have the ability to discern danger or blessing to the church, not that you can look in somebody's heart.

And then he talks about tongues and to know the interpretation of tongues. It's my own take. There are two arguments about tongues. That tongues in the book of Acts is clearly foreign languages. Tongues in the book of Corinthians are an ecstatic utterance. I think that doesn't make sense to me. I used to actually argue that point, but the more I've looked at the scripture, it doesn't make sense to me. I think the gift of tongues is the gift of foreign languages. A language you don't know that God gives you that you're able to speak. That's why you need an interpreter. Now that's the other reason why, for example, look in 1 Corinthians 14:39 – 40. It says:

³⁹So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, do not forbid speaking in tongues.

So he doesn't have a problem. So we don't do away with tongues, but if you'll look, again, in 1 Corinthians 14:22 here's why.

²²Thus tongues are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

So it's interesting. That fits as well. Will the gift of tongues be in a foreign language? So the gift of tongues really is more for the International Mission Board, which is intriguing because with our International Mission Board, if you say you have the gift of tongues, they won't hire you. So it's a little bizarre where we are, but that's the case. I think tongues is primarily for the mission field. And we don't have time to walk in this, but in 1 Corinthians 14:1 – 4 he says it's better to prophesy. In 1 Corinthians 14:18 Paul had the gift in enormous depth, it's purpose is missions. 1 Corinthians 14:23 – 25, it can be and I do want to look at that, look at what he says. He says,

²³Therefore if the whole church assembles together and speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you're out of your mind? ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever enters, he's convicted by all, he's called to account by all; ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so falling on his face he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

So tongues being used in the church in a deep way is probably dangerous to the church's mission. Now one other thing. There are a lot of people that take Romans 8:26 – 27 as a prayer language, that if you have the gift of tongues, you have the gift of a prayer language. That's not what that is because you're not doing the praying. In Romans 8:26 – 27, the Holy Spirit's praying for you. You're not doing the praying. So it's not your prayer language; it's His prayer language. So that's not it. I really believe in the bottom line of 1 Corinthians. If we forbid to speak in tongues, we've stepped away from the scripture.

So the question's going to be how do I know what my gift is? Now let me give you two things. You can get online and find all these little gift tests. They're really not bad. Some of them are really helpful. They'll ask you different questions. For me, I think one of the number one ways to know what your gift is, is what do you enjoy doing in the church? People still don't believe me, but I'm telling you, it's absolutely true, you can ask my wife. For example, I had to preach Sunday night down in Dayton. All the way down there, all the way before I get into the service I'm terrified. I hate being in front of people. I'm fairly comfortable here. But I am terrified in front

of people. I still am, I guess I'm going to be until I die. But I love, I'm energized, by preaching and teaching. And that energizing overwhelms my fear. And so one of the things that I think is key to finding your gift is what do you enjoy doing in the church. And I think you find that place and that's probably where your gift is. So I think for me that's a key in my life.

Now one last thing and then I'll open it up for questions. Between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 he has a chapter on love. Long chapter about love. Nothing to do with gifts. But obviously he inserted it in between the gift chapters. Why? Because you can't use your gifts properly if you don't first love people. Your ministry in the church comes out of your love for people. Not your love for people out of your ministry. Now let me show you what I'm talking about. If you perform ministry because you love people, their applause won't matter. But if you base your love for people out of your ministry, their applause will matter. You ask any pastor anywhere; you never have a problem getting people to teach in an adult Sunday school class. You fight getting people to teach in children's classes. Why? Because 4-year-olds don't send e-mails. 4-year-olds don't tell you, "You just meant so much to me. You changed my life." They don't do that. 4-year-olds throw things at you and then you go home. So the reason we struggle with getting people is not because people are not called and not gifted, but if you don't love people prior to enacting the calling from your gifting, you'll only do it if you get feedback. And that's when the gifts don't work well. And I think that's why he put the love chapter in between 12 and 14. It's the only way where you'll take your gift and minister no matter what you get. And I'm telling you, it's the last thing I'll share. You're in a different day. When I first entered the ministry, if you did somebody's funeral as a pastor, I've talked to several pastors about this, if you did somebody's funeral as a pastor, they were in your corner until you died. People today, doesn't matter what you do for them, there is no loyalty, there is no hanging out, there's no "Man I've got your back," you don't find that today. So in this particular day, and at the end of the day it really doesn't matter. I remember when God broke me and I was telling God how bad my church was and he said, "You know it doesn't matter what they think about you. It matters what you think about them." So I think you've got to love people and even if they don't respond the way you want to, you still utilize your spiritual gift in their life. And I think that's why 13 is sandwiched in between 12 and 14.

Questions.

Q. So I'm 70. My whole life I've really known exactly what my spiritual gift was. But I sense I'm doing something different. Can that be you've got this spiritual gift and you've used it your entire life, is it possible that God has an add-on?

A. I think that is a great question. Absolutely! I've watched my wife, when my kids were little, she did children's choirs, then she moved to a deal now where she ministers to young moms. So I think there's no question. Her spiritual gift has not changed, which is boss, but it's in there somewhere, I can't quite find it, but I know it's there. But I do think it can change. He obviously gives you something at your rebirth. He may give you other things down the road.

Q. Do you stay in prayer over it?

A. Yeah, I think you'll have an urge to go work over here. And I think then the gift shows up.

Q. It's kind of scary.

A. You don't know scary. When I had a 14-line poem to memorize for school, I would cut class, which in my day you didn't do, because I couldn't do it in front of the class. He always pushes the envelope with you. I remember, I don't know if I've shared this with you, but obviously I'm terrified in front of people and He calls me to preach. So I always took notes up there. My pastor had showed me how to use 3 x 5 cards. I don't know if I've ever shared this story, but one week, a buddy of mine and I are interim pastoring a church in Mississippi. So I'm in the shower on Monday and this sermon is just coming to me. So I go in to write the sermon down; I can't remember a thing. So I think, "No big deal." So Tuesday I get in the shower, it's rocking. I get back to the room; I can't even remember the scripture reference. Happens Wednesday and Thursday. So Thursday night I get alone and I said, "OK, God, I think You're telling me not to use notes and You know how dumb that is. So I'm going to get up Sunday morning without any notes and if I bomb, I'll know that was not you." Now you have no idea of terror until you have Friday and Saturday waiting for Sunday morning to see if you're right when you're already terrified of being in front of people anyway. So I get up, remembered every single word and since that day, in 1972 I've never used notes when I preached. I use notes when I teach, but I never use notes when I preach. And because He made that shift in my life, even though it was a terror filled moment for me. And I still have the terror on Sunday morning sometimes. I actually have in my Greek New Testament several Greek phrases I sometimes read right before I get up.

Q. Would encouraging be a gift?

A. Yeah, I think encouraging can certainly be a gift. I think absolutely. John Maurer, to me, absolutely has that gift. It's really disgusting. I told him on the golf course the other day, "I hate nice people. You can't trust what they say. They're too nice." My secretary had the best line about John Maurer. She said, "Pranking John Maurer is like kicking a puppy." Which is probably the best analogy you can come up with for John Maurer.