

CROSSROADS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Core Values Lessons for Neighborhood Gatherings

Mission: The mission of Crossroads Community Church is helping people on their journey back to God. We will do this by becoming a spiritually mature community of Christ-followers, equipping ourselves to impact the world as the presence of Christ, in order that lives may be transformed, God's purpose in the world fulfilled, and our Creator honored and glorified.

LESSON 4: SIMPLE GIFTS

Value: *GIFTEDNESS* — We believe that every believer is uniquely gifted by God the Holy Spirit with personality, talents, and financial resources which are to be used to help fulfill God's purpose for His creation.



Breaking the Ice (10 minutes)

- What are some of the best gifts you have received over the course of your life?
- In what ways do you feel you have been particularly blessed by God?



Discovering the Truth (20-25 minutes)

1 Peter 4:11; NRSV

¹⁰ Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, *serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received* ¹¹ Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, *so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ*. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever.¹

Ephesians 4:11; NRSV

¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, *for building up the body of Christ*, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.² (my italics)

In the collection of “stuff” I have insisted on keeping over the years is a bundle of recycled cards encircled by a rubber band. The cards were mailed to me in white envelopes likely purchased at the Dollar Store at a minimal price. Just second-hand cards in cheap envelopes . . .

The back of each card has a handwritten note from persons who are part of the mosaic of my Christian journey.

¹My italics.

²My italics.

Some of the cards were sent during difficult times of struggle in my life. Others came for no particular reason at all other than someone felt led to share a celebratory word of grace and love in the midst of the busy-ness we all experience.

The plain, white envelopes in which the cards were mailed each have a custom, painstakingly, hand-painted watercolor scene, often overwritten in black ink with a short verse of scripture or word of encouragement. These envelopes and the cards they contain are precious beyond measure. They cannot be replaced or duplicated. They are simple gifts given in Christian love by one who allows herself to be shaped and used to the glory of God. My life has been enriched and I have felt affirmed and valued as a result.

Each person who chooses to follow Christ has been divinely gifted in a manner unique to them. Everyone is different, even down to the prints of their fingers. So also are the ways in which they are gifted. Like pots of clay God forms us and pours into our very being a unique personality, a particular passion, a spiritual gift (or gifts), and various resources to be used for his eternal glory and to strengthen his Body which is the church.

Back in 1994, the [Willow Creek Association](#) published a study guide on spiritual gifts entitled *NetWork*. Although there had been much theological debate over the years on the subject, *NetWork* was one of the first attempts with which I am familiar to address giftedness on a practical level. The authors³ focused their efforts on helping individual Christ-followers “to be fruitful, and fullfilled in a meaningful place of service” within the body of Christ. They did this by helping Christ-followers discover their particular passion, spiritual gift(s) and personal style.

The issue of spiritual gifts is an emotionally charged subject for many Christians. There are many different, oftentimes conflicting, theological views. However, even those faith traditions which do not accept the present-day validity of certain spiritual gifts described in the Bible, or even agree on how many spiritual gifts there are, would consistently affirm *that all of God’s people are called to serve/minister within the kingdom of God*. We are to do so for two reasons:

- That God might be glorified, and
- That the body of Christ might be built up and strengthened

Ultimately, these two results of our service contribute to the accomplishment of God’s mission, a mission in which we have been invited to participate (see Lesson 3 in this series). They serve as the major test of our contribution to the kingdom of God.

For Reflection:

1. *Partners* — What happens when we fail to exercise our gifts? How does this affect our ability to impact the community around us?
2. *A Holy Priesthood* — Peter tells the Christ-followers to whom he is writing that they are “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9; see **For Further Study**). What do *priests* do? Why do they do it?
3. *Ultimacy* — To what is all of our giftedness subservient? (1 Corinthians 13; see **For Further Study**)



Embracing the Truth (15 minutes)

Our gift “mix” typically results in a special giftedness for particular service in the kingdom of God. My

³Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, Bill Hybels.

wife, for example has a *personality type* which desires to nurture, help, and care for persons. She has a *passion* for children; she enjoys being with them, seeing them grow, learn, and interact. She has a real *talent* for organization and administration. This talent has made her a valued member of the team in the company for whom she manages the front office, and they are willing to pay well for that skill. And she has what I believe to be a *spiritual gift* for communicating truth on a level and in such a manner that children are enabled to grasp it and come away from the experience enthusiastic and positive about their faith. When you roll all this up into a Christ-follower called Susan, what you get is a committed, enthusiastic, self-sacrificing teacher and equipper of children.

Susan looks for opportunities to bolster and encourage children in their faith. She invests hours in preparing to teach them or in organizing a special activity for them. She plans special recreational activities to help keep their enthusiasm for God alive and to provide them with special opportunities to reach out to classmates and neighbors. She invites them *en masse* over to spend the night and turns our house into the mother of all bedrooms. She's not the least bit bashful about asking her friends to allow her to bring the kids over for a pool party or her employer to finance hot air balloon rides and *Nascar* events for *the kids* whom God has called her to lead and entrusted to her care. And when there are insufficient funds in the church budget (which she has faithfully supported over the years), she often uses money that would have been spent on herself to purchase needed supplies for "her" kids. She uses the many ways God has gifted her to the glory of God and for the strengthening of God's people.

For Reflection?

1. *Life Impact* — Can you name one person with whom your walk with Christ has been blessed? What gifts did they exercise?
2. *Personal Giftedness* — With what gifts or abilities — spiritual, personal, or practical — have you been blessed?
3. *Application of Gifts* — How do you use those gifts and/or how might they be developed more fully to glorify God and build up the body of Christ followers?
4. *Life Situations* — In addition to the ways you are gifted, how might the following factor into your service in the kingdom of God: availability; level of spiritual maturity, experience?
5. *Truth for Life* — If time permits, have one or more group member share a *truth for life* from one of the scripture passages in **For Further Study**.



Connecting (10-15 minutes)

Spend some time connecting with group members regarding concerns and praises. All of us know persons who are in times of distress and need a special measure of God's comfort and strength. We need to continually bring these concerns before the Lord. What are some of the larger issues for which we as the people of God should be praying?

God consistently assures us in the scriptures that he is with us, that he hears and responds to our prayers. Persons for whom we have prayed have given witness that they sensed those prayers in positive and powerful ways. Pray in your personal prayers times as well as in your small group meetings for the persons whose names have been mentioned. Pray also regarding issues which affect groups of people: peace, justice, hunger, poverty, medical care, homelessness (add your own to the list). Continue to pray for *Crossroads Community Church* as we continue the journey of faith on which we have embarked.

Spend some group time in conversation with God about these praises and concerns.

For Further Study

Romans 12:3-7

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 27-30

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. . . . ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 7:7 (Paul speaking within the context of instructions concerning marriage)

⁷ I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.