

Christian, Jesus Gave You Spiritual Gifts

Ephesians 4:7-16

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Well, good morning, everybody! Happy New Year! This morning, we're going to be in Ephesians chapter 4.

Throughout history, people have been asking what some call life's big questions—things like: How did we get here? What is the purpose or meaning of life? When we really ask those questions, we're ultimately trying to get back to, "What is the purpose of my life? Why am I here? Why am I the way that I am? What is God trying to do through me?"

One of the things that happens when you look at how people have answered those questions is that not every good answer has been put forward by Christians. But I'm going to tell you something: the good answers that have been put forward without consulting the Bible ultimately fail. Going through life with those answers is like driving a rear-wheel-drive car after the snowplows have come and removed the snow. Eventually, you're going to hit a patch of ice.

I ran into this recently. My four-wheel-drive truck is now a rear-wheel-drive truck because the four-wheel drive isn't working. I was driving up King Street, and everything was fine. But when I pulled into the parking lot—Friday, I think it was—everything was fine until I hit a patch of smashed-down snow, which was basically a sheet of ice that looked like snow. All of a sudden, the truck went sideways. It was kind of fun because there was nobody else around. In fact, the second time it happened, I did it on purpose!

Trying to go through life using non-biblical answers to life's questions is like my truck was that day. Things are fine until you hit some rough patches—some slippery ground. Life has slippery grounds. We have challenges in this life. When we look at this, I want you to know that, as Christians, we have answers from God about what the purpose of life is, about how we got here, and about where all of this is going. The Scriptures talk about this.

Christian, if you are a child of God this morning, the book of Ephesians has some wonderful things to say to us—to you. For instance, when we look at the book of Ephesians, I didn't come up with this myself; somebody else pointed it out, and I said, "That's right." The book of Ephesians shows the Holy Spirit working through Paul to give him this big picture. The big picture is this: we see the things in front of us, but behind them, there is a God who is working sovereignly and almightily throughout history to advance His will.

When Paul gets to Ephesians chapter 1, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father who has blessed us with every spiritual gift, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." That means a lot of things, but one thing it means is this: if you are a Christian this morning, you are not a Christian by accident. God works sovereignly.

Then, in Ephesians chapter 2, Paul talks about our salvation. He says, "We are saved by grace through faith, not of works, so that no one may boast." We are saved on purpose. Watch this: we

are saved for a purpose. Verse 10 says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

The first three chapters of Ephesians talk about the majesty of salvation and what God has done, defying the imagination. When Paul gets to chapter 4, he says, "Okay, you're a child of God. Here is how I want you to live. Live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." In chapter 4, verses 1–6, Paul emphasizes the theme of unity: "There is one church, one salvation, one Lord, one baptism." He urges Christians to function in a way that strengthens and maintains the unity of the church—this incredible thing God has created.

When we get to chapter 4, verses 7–16, Paul begins to talk about spiritual gifts. I want you to catch this: God's purpose for you, Christian, is tied to the spiritual gift that He has given you. As we read this passage, I want to give you an overview first because I like to see the big picture from a bird's-eye view before diving into the details, or the "worm's-eye view," as we go verse by verse.

Here's the bird's-eye view—are you ready? Paul is going to talk about spiritual gifts, and he uses three different metaphors—two, possibly three, since the second and third kind of overlap.

The first metaphor is Jesus Christ as a conquering King. Through the cross and the gospel, He is a conquering King, and as this King, He gives spiritual gifts to His people. Next, Paul compares the church to a human body. Lastly, he uses the analogy of a baby or an infant.

Through these metaphors, Paul conveys the idea that while we are children of God and part of the church, there is a growth process that must take place. Both individuals and the church as a whole are to grow and be strengthened, and this ultimately happens through the Holy Spirit's work in us.

Let's take a look. I'm going to read the whole section, and then we'll go back through it.

"But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, 'When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.' In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:7–16)

Let's pray:

Father in heaven, we thank You for this reminder from our forefather in the faith, Martin Luther, that You are a Mighty Fortress. I pray for those who are dealing with various struggles in life—whether financial, emotional, physical, relational, or spiritual. I pray that they would wisely run to You, Lord Jesus. I ask that we, their brothers and sisters, would come alongside them and walk with them through this next step of the journey. Give us wisdom, Lord. This morning, as we look at the gifts of the Spirit, I ask that You give us gratitude, humility, and boldness for how You are working in us and through us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Years ago, when Chrissy and I were still pretty new to marriage, I remember one particular event at Christmastime. I asked her permission to share this story because, honestly, it mostly makes me look like a goof. So, I asked her, “Honey, what do you want for Christmas?” Do you know what she told me? A vacuum cleaner.

I thought it was a joke. I asked her a couple more times over the next two weeks, “What do you want?” And she kept saying, “A vacuum cleaner.” She even mentioned a specific one, saying, “This vacuum cleaner is great for our hardwood floors. Get it for me for Christmas.”

So, I got it for her. On Christmas morning, she opened it, seemed excited, and I thought, “When is the other shoe going to drop? When am I going to get in trouble?” But here’s what was really going on. At the time, Chrissy was still working at the hospital. She was busy in ministry—because I was a youth pastor, and that’s a busy role—plus we had a child on the way. She was being practical.

The vacuum cleaner was more efficient for cleaning the hardwood floors, and she was finding ways to save time and be effective. That’s the bottom line. One of the things about growing up is that our Christmas gifts tend to change. When I was a kid, if I got socks, I would react like Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*—just throwing them over my shoulder.

But now, as I’m getting older, I’m like, “Okay, I could use some new socks,” but Christmas is about six months off, so I can hold on. When you think about Christmas presents, you usually want something functional. It’s much rarer to intentionally ask for something that’s just pretty or smells nice—like cologne, which I asked for this year. Chrissy gladly bought it, which might be telling me something!

When we think about spiritual gifts, we can draw an analogy to Chrissy asking for a vacuum cleaner. She wanted it to make her more effective at the job at hand. Similarly, when we look at what God has done for us as His children, we see that we are part of the family business—making and maturing disciples of Jesus together. We glorify Jesus together. Part of that involves teaching and preaching, but it can also involve taking care of babies in the nursery, visiting someone who is sick, or calling someone who needs encouragement.

When we talk about spiritual gifts, what I want you to know is that Jesus enables you to serve in the family business in some way—more effectively than you could without His help. Your gift and my gift, the ones God gave us, are probably going to be different—and that’s by design.

In verses 7–10, we see that Jesus gives every Christian a spiritual gift. Let’s take a look at this. If you’re someone who highlights, circles, or underlines, there are some words you might want to mark here. It says, “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” You might ask, “How do I know that Jesus gave me a spiritual gift?” Look at those words: “to each one of us.” In my English Standard Version, it’s clear. Highlight or underline that phrase. Do you know what it means, Christian? It’s talking about you. If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, you have received the Holy Spirit. What this passage is saying is that each one of us has received some gift—some spiritually empowered ability to serve God and others, both inside and outside the church.

One more thing I want to add—I didn’t think of it until earlier, but I think it’s right. Ken, is it okay if I talk about something you asked me yesterday? Last night, we were reading in Romans during devotions, and it talked about spiritual gifts. You asked, “Dad, what do you think my spiritual gift is?” I said, “Well, that’s a good question. I don’t know the answer for sure. But one thing I can tell you is this: ever since you were little, you’ve always been really interested in helping.”

When he was about two years old, he would help the nursery worker clean up after church on Sundays. The other kids weren’t doing this, so we thought, “Why is she making him do this?” But it turns out, he wanted to! He even had a nickname—we used to call him *Helperman 2000* because it sounded cooler. I told him, “I don’t know for sure, but there’s a spiritual gift called ‘helps,’ and that could be your spiritual gift—or one of them.”

Why am I pointing this out? Here’s why: I don’t know for sure if that was just a personality trait, Kenny, or if it was a work of the Holy Spirit. But I thought about this this morning. A spiritual gift, while it works through human persons and personalities, is supernatural. At that young age, the Holy Spirit could very much have been working through my son. I don’t know—it’s still early to tell—but he still likes to help.

This morning, since I’m the youth pastor, I bring iced coffee. Kenny said, “Dad, you make the coffee, and I’ll take care of all the condiments that go with it.” He’s helping. How is that a spiritual gift? He’s helping our group have a sweeter time of fellowship around the Word. I’m not bragging about my son—although it kind of feels like it right now! I’m proud of him. But I want you to catch this: a spiritual gift works through human personality, but it’s not ultimately dependent on human personality or ability.

That truth, as a preacher, ought to scare me a little. As a guy with two master’s degrees and a doctorate in preaching and teaching, all of this is a work of the Holy Spirit. I want you to know: every Christian has a spiritual gift—including you, Christian. That includes you. Jesus gave you a spiritual gift, and it’s connected to the gospel, as it turns out.

Years ago, I remember when Ephesians 2:8-10 really stood out to me. Everyone focuses on verses 8-9, which talk about salvation by grace through faith. But then verse 10 says, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*” I thought, “Wait, that’s purpose!” I love purpose. Having spent time without purpose, I’ve come to see that purpose is a beautiful thing.

What I want you to see is that this is connected to the gospel in Ephesians 2, and it's also connected to the gospel in Ephesians 4. Look at verses 8-9: *"Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.'"* Here, Paul is quoting Psalm 68. He continues, *"In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?"*

Verses 8-9 describe the gospel, showing Jesus defeating sin, Satan, death, and the world on our behalf when He died on the cross for our sins and rose again. That's the victorious Christ. Bible scholars like to call this *Christus Victor*, which is just a way to describe Jesus' victory over sin, Satan, death, and the world. Here we see that this conquering King then gives spiritual gifts to us—not so we can sit back and admire them, but so we can be a part of the family business.

In verse 10, Paul speaks of the supremacy of Christ over everything. Then, in verses 11-12, he transitions to the role of key leaders in the church—or we might say public leaders in the church. These verses say, *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."*

Who are these people, and what do they do? Paul is describing those who serve in public ministry—people who are more visible in their roles of faith. As I was talking with Kenny about the gift of helps, I mentioned that the gift of helps doesn't often get a lot of recognition. But as someone who preaches and serves in a public role, I can tell you that if the gift of helps isn't operating in the church, you feel it before too long.

Brother Jeremy shared something similar when talking about our youth conference and all the kids who attended. He pointed out that if Miss Sylvia hadn't been adding toilet paper rolls to the bathrooms, we would've noticed. Miss Sylvia doesn't get a lot of recognition, but her work is an example of the gift of helps in action.

Then Paul talks about these public ministry figures, starting with the apostles. The apostles of Christ were instrumental in the early church. They went out, shared the gospel, started new churches, and God used them as the primary people to write the New Testament. You might ask, "How do these people affect us today? They're long gone."

I'll tell you this: there are no new apostles of Christ. Some people claim this title for themselves, but they're mistaken. The apostles were those who were sent with a commission and had seen the resurrected Jesus after His crucifixion. They were the ones who wrote down the New Testament. And look at what we're reading this morning—the New Testament. If you did devotions this week, you read what the apostles wrote. Their ministry is still blessing the church today, long after they've gone to be with the Lord.

Paul also mentions prophets. There's a lot we could say about prophets, but I'll give a simple answer: prophets give timely messages from God. Sometimes that involves foretelling the future. I have friends and brothers who say that never happens anymore—not because God can't, but because they believe He won't. They often claim that people who say they have a word from God about the future are charlatans, and there's some truth to that. But not always.

For example, in the 1500s in the Scottish church, there was a specific preacher who was able to foretell the future accurately. There was a king and queen who had defiled some spiritual things in the sanctuary in Scotland, and God revealed to this preacher how they would die as an act of judgment. It happened exactly as he foretold. God also showed him other things, like a plague that was coming to wipe people out.

Do I trust everyone who says that God has given them a special word about the future? No. But neither can I rule it out. All the time, I would say this: the gift of prophecy is usually a timely message from God and carries a certain bit of authority with it.

Then we have evangelists. Now listen, the gospel message is something every Christian has been tasked with sharing. The gospel is actually very simple and has three components. You all will know this. First, it addresses sin or rebellion against God: *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Second, it proclaims substitutionary atonement: Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again on the third day. Third, it calls for a response of faith. That’s the gospel.

Now, all of us have been tasked with sharing that message. What makes an evangelist different is not that they are charged with something different than us; it’s that they are uniquely empowered by the Holy Spirit to be very effective. I’ve shared this story before, but I found it to be, for me, a very eye-opening moment. I was at a youth conference with hundreds of teenagers, and there was an older gentleman preaching. I’m telling you, he kept going on and on, and I was thinking, “Buddy, land the plane!”

When he finally did land the plane, 50 minutes later, kids got up and streamed down to the altar—some to receive Christ for salvation, others to respond to a call to gospel ministry. I said to myself, *That’s what it looks like when someone has the spiritual gift of an evangelist.* The sermon itself was just okay, but the Holy Spirit took hold of it, igniting a fire in these people. They believed in Jesus Christ. That’s what it looks like.

Then we have shepherds and teachers. Really, this is a combined role—what we call pastors today. Pastors teach God’s Word and provide spiritual oversight to the church. These leaders serve by equipping Christians to serve. That’s their function. We see this in verse 12, which says that these leaders are given *“to equip the saints for the work of ministry.”*

What does that mean? It means I’m not the only one who gets the joy of doing ministry. It means you can experience the joy and purpose that comes with ministry as well. In fact, one of the ways I serve the church—or anybody who preaches serves the church—is by equipping other Christians so they can step forward in faith, confidence, and competence in serving Jesus and others, both inside and outside the church. These leaders serve the church by equipping other Christians to serve. Christ sent these people to disciple us for greater service to God and others because every Christian has a spiritual gift.

This leads us to some questions. Why does Jesus give every Christian a spiritual gift and send leaders to equip us? What is He trying to accomplish through us? What’s the purpose? In verses 13-16, we start seeing that Jesus has many purposes in mind. He gives us spiritual gifts with specific goals.

Let's look at verses 13-16 and then go back and make observations. What stands out to you in these verses? Verse 13 says He sends these people to equip the saints for the work of ministry (verse 12) *"for the building up of the body of Christ"* (verse 13), *"until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

Why? *"So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."* I caught five purposes there.

Rather, *"speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."*

Let's talk about this. When you look at this image of the body, and when you look at the image of the body in 1 Corinthians, you can hold these two pictures together. They agree with each other and complement each other. The idea here is this: in a human body, we have different members—hands, fingers, toes, arms, and so forth.

And here's one of the things that happened to me this week: my back's a little irritated. So, I opened a bottle of this stuff called Tiger Balm. Actually, my brain went to the store and said, "You should get something." I bought Tiger Balm because that was the best option I had at Dollar General. I put it on my hands, which were fine, but then I applied it to my back, which was not fine. My hands were taken care of; my back, not so much.

Do you see how this might relate to the way the church is supposed to function? We may not all be hands. We may not all be arms or backs. But we take care of each other as necessary. What an image God has used to convey to us how spiritual gifts work! Now, He talked there about purposes—let's look at them really quickly.

He talked about the **unity of faith**. Unity of faith speaks of being aligned in our belief and practice. He also talked about **maturity**, so that what we say and do reflects the holiness, love, and truth of Christ. What we say and do should show the holiness, love, and truth of Christ.

Check this out: as Christians, when we're talking about spiritual gifts and the body, other Christians are intended by God to play a role in your spiritual growth. Other Christians are designed by God to help you grow spiritually.

I often talk about **gather, grow, and go**. I want you to remember those words—that's why I repeat them. They are powerful tools. There's a certain level of growth that happens when you gather for worship. Here's what happens in worship: we sing God's praises, we give as an act of worship, we pray, and now, of course, I'm preaching, and you're learning and taking it in. That's a good thing.

But here's what happens: if your primary experience with the body of Christ is coming to church, you got out of your vehicle, walked through the doors, maybe said hello, sat down, and the only people ministering to you were me, Alex, whoever prayed, or Steve when he gave a prayer or passed the plates, that's limiting.

When you get together in a small group, something unique starts to happen. People who have different spiritual gifts and are wired by God differently than you start to speak truth in ways you couldn't have seen on your own. One of the spiritual gifts is mercy. I don't consider myself, by nature, a "mercy guy." But, you know what's funny? When you're in a Bible study, looking at the Scriptures together, and thinking about how to apply them in ministry, you gain new perspectives.

I have a Tuesday morning Bible study where everyone in the group is, or would be, a leader in some church—either ours or another. What we're really talking about is how to serve effectively as leaders. When I hear someone with a mercy gift talk about how we apply Scripture, they look at it differently than I do. There's a good chance they have a better understanding of how to handle certain situations than I do.

I remember when Pastor Kurk came to the Bible study. One day, he just stopped and, in that awesome voice of Pastor G, he said, "Where are the lambs?" What he was getting at, as someone who is an evangelist from head to toe, was: *Where are the people who don't know Jesus or are just getting to know Him?* His mindset was, "We're doing this Bible study, but there ought to be people who don't know the Bible here." Everyone at that table was pretty educated in the Scriptures, but he saw things differently.

Of course, I'm more scholarly, so that affects how I approach things. When you're in a small group, someone with a mercy spirit or someone with a prophetic gift like Steve Benson, who just says it like it is, brings a different dynamic. It's not how I'm wired, but sometimes I need to learn how to confront situations. Having a Steve Benson in your life, someone who says, *Here's how you confront—whether they like it or not*, is for my good.

That's what happens in small groups. That's why I emphasize: **gather for worship, grow in small groups, and then go.** This is how spiritual gifts are supposed to work.

It goes on to talk about being strong in the face of trials. As we sang earlier, Satan is still our old foe, who seeks to bring us woe. In this life, as Christians, we face difficulties. Our health doesn't always hold up. Given enough time, your health won't be good, and we're going to need people to come alongside us to encourage us and say, *Hey, I know you're dealing with these health issues. You can't get out as much, but I haven't forgotten about you. I love you, and I care about you. Is there anything my family can do for you?*

Those are things that people do to take care of people when they're going through the hard stuff of life, and that is the job of—that is our purpose as Christians. When somebody who doesn't know how to handle their finances especially well meets somebody who's really good with finances, and they come into their life, once you get to know them well enough to talk to them about what's going on in your finances—how many of you guys are really comfortable just

talking about, "Here's what my money looks like"? But now, if you have a friend who's really good at finances and you've really gotten to know them and you trust them, that's a conversation you are more willing to have.

I saw a statistic from *Focus on the Family* that said something like a quarter of every Christian marriage is going through struggles. Now, struggles mean a lot of things, but if you had a Christian man in your life—you're a man, you've got a Christian man in your life—and it's like, "You know what? Nobody's perfect, but his marriage seems happy." Wouldn't it be nice to know him well enough to be able to confide in him and get input? Because sometimes, hey ladies, when you're mad at your husband, it could be you're just not seeing him right. And when you talk to the ladies at work who don't believe in Jesus or don't believe that a marriage really should be fought for, they're not going to tell you that you're wrong. But a sister in Christ, who knows what God's Word says, who says, "Yeah, I've got a husband who's not perfect too. I know what it's like, but you're being unfair to him," might.

What do you mean, "I'm wrong"? Yeah, you ladies, you can be wrong too. Men? Yeah, some of you are like, "No way, that's not in the Bible." But I didn't just make this up. You can be wrong too sometimes. And your husband tells you, and you're like, "He's an idiot. He doesn't know what he's talking about." "He can't see this situation clearly. He can't even find his glasses half the time!" She's never said this, as far as we know. She's probably thought it. But the man can't find his glasses half the time. You're telling me he sees this situation clearly?

This is true. She's like, "You left them on the tablecloth, and it's got black in it or dark colors, and you're colorblind." "I ain't never going to find them." She's like, "Daniel, your glasses are right there." Yeah, ladies, when you've been married to the guy long enough, you know he does dumb stuff. But you know what? He also sees things that you don't always see correctly. And men, that's a two-way street.

Here's the thing. It's easy to talk in general terms, but if you know somebody closely who's a Christian, they can help you see things clearly—whether it's a marriage struggle, perhaps with your children. We, as Christian parents, we do our best to raise our kids to do right. You know what's going to happen? They're going to make their own decisions, and golly, they're not always going to do the right thing.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a Christian that you could go to and say, "Here's what happened. Here's how we handled it a little bit"? So yeah, when we're talking about gathering for groups, that's ultimately one of the goals: that we hear from each other who are living life, who have lived this life, and they might speak. You know, hey, maybe you need somebody. You're not a merciful guy when it comes to anything. You know, the Bible says this, and then you have a mercy spirit sitting next to you—got that spiritual gift of mercy—and he's like, "Yeah, it's true, your kid's kind of being a knucklehead, but maybe you want to handle it differently." Two heads are better than one.

So we talk about this: how spiritual gifts work in the face of life's problems. We need each other to encourage us, to challenge us—whether it's illness, relationships. And then he talks about why

this is important in the face of deceptive teachings. Why is this? Deception is one of Satan's tools, and he loves to pervert the gospel.

I want to tell you something. It used to be that all a pastor would have to do—all a pastor would have to—well, it was never easy to do, but you're the preacher, so you're controlling who's preaching, and you've got Sunday school teachers. And when you get wind, "Hey, I need to go talk to this person to find out what it is they're teaching over there," you'd go and say, "Okay, okay, I see why you're saying that, but here's what the Scripture's actually saying." The person goes, "Oh, okay, thanks for sharing. I'm sorry I messed that up." Or they say, "You're wrong, preacher." And now we have a different set of problems.

But here's the reality now. One of the beautiful things is I can go home, get on the internet, and listen to Chip Ingram, and I'm going to hear a biblical sermon. I can get some old Charles Stanley stuff—great stuff—and so can you. The problem is that not everybody on TV is teaching the gospel purely, and this hurts the people of God.

So, I have this awkward position. I don't mind calling out error; I just don't like to. I don't want to offend people. But here's the reality: I think I will answer to God if I don't tell you when there are false teachers out there—and they *are* out there. One of them's going... the Lord said, "Don't preach in anger on this; this is My battle," because I am angry about it.

One of these gentlemen says you shouldn't get sick if you have enough faith. I didn't know this until recently, but he was in the hospital for 10 weeks. His response when he finally got back to the pulpit was to say even more outlandish stuff. And the people who send him money—then, when it doesn't get better, it's so that *you're* not in enough faith. Yeah, I care about that because they keep tying all this health and wealth nonsense to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I answer for that—for you.

So don't listen to these people who pervert the gospel. There is a difference between having different opinions on some things and getting the gospel wrong. The gospel is not one of those things.

The church is supposed to function this way. I heard a wonderful phrase—I'm preaching about myself to myself—a guy coined a term: "sheepdogs who won't bark." For decades, we've had this. Now, when you speak out (and I'm not naturally wired to do that), you're the bad guy. Well, not before God, and I can live with that. I don't offend on purpose—at least not when preaching—but this is how the church is supposed to function. There are people who are supposed to call out and warn. Guess what? They call them shepherds.

Why? Because God's goal for us is that we would grow. Every Christian is lovingly called to use their spiritual gift to serve others. Christian, God has a purpose for your life. He saved you on purpose, for a purpose. What's the beauty of that?

One of the things that happened to me a lot—I was kind of like this really average basketball player—is I would get picked last. A lot. And that bugged me. So, I played harder. I didn't score all the points; I probably scored more than anybody thought I would. But I got more rebounds

than just about anybody. Then I'd pass it to the best guy on the team, set picks, and do all the little things. I made sure to play pesky defense, get more rebounds, and set picks because I was angry about being picked last.

But it's not that way with your salvation. See, they picked me because there wasn't anybody else to pick. Jesus didn't pick you because there wasn't anybody else to pick. He chose you from the foundation of the world. That's intention. The question then is *why*? It wasn't because of what you brought to the table. It wasn't your greatness. It wasn't my greatness. He had a purpose in mind, and His purpose for you is tied to the spiritual gift He gave you. Are you using that spiritual gift?

One of the gifts we talked about is the gift of an evangelist. This week, I had an opportunity to share the gospel with someone, and I was reminded: I do not have the gift of an evangelist. But Scripture commands me to do the work of an evangelist. What is an evangelist supposed to do? The same thing any other Christian is supposed to do.

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, here is the good news that God wants you to know. While all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God—we've sinned in word and deed—you've thought something bad about someone, held hatred in your heart, lusted, lied, stolen, or any of those things. You're a sinner, just like me. You have rebelled against God's purpose for your life. The Bible calls it sin. And the wages of sin is death—that's the warning.

But here's the good news: the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins—yours and mine—and He rose again on the third day. What God has said is simply this: if a person will repent of their unbelief and believe in Jesus—that His death, burial, and resurrection for your sins is enough—you will be saved.

So if you're believing that, you might say, "What do I do now?" Well, I think the next best thing is to call out to God for salvation. *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* You can't call out to Jesus if you don't know you need to be saved.

If you know you're a sinner, you know you need to be saved. And you won't call out to Jesus if you don't believe in Him. But if this morning you're believing in Him for the forgiveness of sins, why don't we call out to Him in prayer?

Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner. I have broken your rules, and I am guilty before you. But I believe that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless life, died on a cross in my place, and rose again on the third day. Today, I believe that. This morning, I am turning from unbelief to faith in Jesus. Father, now I pray that you would help me to follow Jesus by faith. I don't know what all is included, but I pray that you'd help me to find out. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

If you prayed to receive Jesus this morning, I want to say, *Welcome to the family!* Ultimately, the reason that you are in the family of God is not because you prayed, but because you believed. The prayer was an act of faith for you.

I want you to know the next step is believers' baptism. If you're interested in that, come and find me. I'd love to talk with you about it.

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