



07 The Greatest of These Is Love

0:00:00.3 S?: Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual progress? Feeling stuck without knowing why, even after deliverance, prayers or years of therapy? Recover your dignity, find your purpose and discover the thrill of walking with God once again. Explore spiritual consultations with Sonja at biblestudyevangelista.com. Click Go Deeper on the homepage, then one-on-one, and find out how to co-operate more deeply with the Holy Spirit's action in your life with a spiritual consultation.

0:00:28.4 S?: If you like having Bible study in your pocket and you have an iPhone or iPad, why not leave a review? Search Bible Study Evangelista on iTunes and tell everyone how you're loving and lifting all you've been given. Here's Sonja.

[music]

0:00:51.8 Sonja Corbitt: Welcome to the Bible Study Evangelista show, I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Catholic Evangelista. And I am absolutely thrilled that we are about to wrap up in this show, our series on Spiritual Gifts. And I'm so excited in part because so many of you didn't even know you had gifts, you didn't know you had spiritual charisms, and yet now you do. You have taken the test, you've begun to discern, and how thrilling that is to me, because just knowing that you're gonna go out and you're gonna begin lifting up the church out of this terrible mud hole that we find ourselves in, you and I are the key to the renewal of the church that we've been praying for and seeking. We are the key. How do we do that? We use our spiritual gifts. Paul is very clear in 1 Corinthians 12 and also in 14, we're gonna actually look at 13 today. But he's very clear. And also, in Ephesians 4, he's clear that it is the key... The key to renewal in the Church is the use of our gifts, because that's what helps build the church, so you are a church builder and you have spiritual charisms.

0:02:01.9 SC: Now, I wanna reiterate for just a second that these are not the virtues that we receive at baptism, and that are cultivated through grace in the life of grace. It's not the virtues, we're not talking about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that we receive in confirmation, because those are for the edification and the building up of ourselves. The spiritual charisms, the spiritual gifts are for building up other people. Now, we get built up while we use them, it is an absolute thrill and we are healed actually through using them, which is part of why I wanted to do the series because that's one of my main gifts. So we're healed through using them and we heal others through using them, specifically because they are gifts of the Holy Spirit, who is the healer, the Lord, the giver of life. He renews everything. And so we invite the Holy Spirit, we expect the Holy Spirit, come Holy Spirit. We've looked so far... I did an introduction on the spiritual gifts and just talked about those three things, about the virtues, the difference in the virtues and the seven gifts that we receive at confirmation, and then the spiritual gifts.

0:03:09.4 SC: I gave you a list of those in the very first show, then we talked about the Holy Spirit as the primary gift. The gift really is him. We focus a lot on spiritual gifts, but the gift is the Holy

Spirit Himself, and in himself, he gives us these diverse abilities, supernatural abilities that are effective in building up the church, so he uses us to do that. And then we looked at identifying what our spiritual gifts were through the conference and through the little quiz that I gave you. You can still access that on my website, if you go to biblestudyevangelista.com or Sonjacorbitt.com, you can scroll down to the spiritual gifts banner there and just click that and it'll take you to the gift descriptions, and it'll take you to the quiz. You can take it as many times as you want, but we identified and began implementing and activating our gifts in that conference through the quiz, and then in the week afterward. And then we talked for several weeks about what each gift was and what it looks like, and how it differs from other gifts and how they can be clustered together. We looked at equipping gifts, we looked at service gifts, and we looked at sign gifts, and that's gonna come back up again today as we look at love, because love, Paul says, is the most important thing. It's important to identify our gifts, but it's not enough. Gifts are given to be used. Once you have a decent idea of what your gift might be, you need to get out and start practicing with it.

0:04:41.3 SC: And we saw how Paul describes the church like a human body, so each part plays a critical role in the functioning of the whole body. You've been given gifts and a key role to play in the church. You have a particular purpose because you have a particular gift, and because of where you've been placed in the geography of the country and in this time of church history, you are vital. Every person is vital. We cannot sit on the sidelines anymore and think that something is going to change, we have to get involved in changing it. And we do that through the use of our gifts. So, get busy using them in every possible way, every possible way that you can think of and that you are invited to through the Holy Spirit in your circumstances. So until each of us implements our gift, our church is not gonna mature in faith. It takes all of us. So, Paul tells us that the body is not made up of one part, but of many. The foot needs the hand, the ear needs the eye, and so we all need each other. And if you're trying to collect gifts just for the neat idea of having them and knowing what they are, then the whole body is gonna be handicapped.

0:05:58.6 SC: We have to use them. We can't just know what they are, we gotta use them. And I'm only saying this as encouragement, I'm not indicting anyone, because I know this is new to a lot of you. Many of you have been with me for a long time, and so you've heard some of this before, and many of you have knew it way before I ever brought it up, because other people in the church, other ministries in the church talk about gifts a lot, especially in the charismatic side, but we don't see it so much in the more traditional side. And it's a shame, because the Holy Spirit is real, he is alive, He is at work, and he is on the move right now. And he wants us to get to work [chuckle] using our gifts. And they're gifts, they feel like a gift. When you're using them, they feel like a gift. It's amazing to be able to use your gifts and watch the Holy Spirit work supernaturally through them. Now, one little word of warning from Paul. Paul... The bigger list of the gifts and the whole image of the church as a human body is given to us in Corinthians where Saint Paul is talking about the gifts, and he's speaking to the church in Corinth and the church in Corinth had a little problem.

0:07:10.8 SC: Actually, they had quite a few problems, and in fact, if you read the book of Corinthians, both of them, you'll see that Paul was kind of taking them to the woodshed over some of their issues. He's writing a letter to the church to sort of correct them and encourage them in several things, but one of the issues at the church in Corinth was that they had elevated the sign gifts and had relegated the lesser gifts, in their estimation, to second class. And so Paul... He corrects that, he talks about the spiritual gifts in Chapter 12, he outlines them, and then he talks about the Body of Christ so that there is unity in diversity, and then he talks about love being the greatest gift in chapter 13, and then he addresses the imbalance that the church in Corinth had fallen

into regarding especially tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

0:08:02.7 SC: Because what had happened in that church is that everybody was jumping up, speaking in tongues, and it was a free-for-all, and it was causing disruption in the church, and it was actually causing even division in the church. So he spends a whole chapter correcting them on the proper order, which we talked about last week in the sign gift, so I'm not gonna do that. But if Paul were to write a letter to us today, it might say something like this, "Brothers and sisters, say one of you owned a set of tools, would you spend all your time counting them, naming them, organizing them, polishing them and putting them on display? Would you not simply use them? So it is with the gifts of the Spirit, they are tools not to admire, but to use. They are not medals to be won or trophies to be displayed, or treasures to be guarded. Use them.

0:08:47.6 SC: It is as you serve that God by His Spirit will reveal the gifts that He has given you, and that's why it's so important that we practice and we experiment with the results of our quizzes so that we can discern more closely what the gifts are and how they might be clustered so that we can use them most effectively. So, get busy using them, but don't get discouraged if you don't find the right fit right away, because it might take some time. Peter says, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." This is a way that you can offer other people the grace of God, it's that important. And Paul actually says to Timothy that he not only should be able to identify his gift, but that he should also implement it. He says, "Do not neglect your gift." This is directly from Saint Paul the Apostle. "Do not neglect your gift, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God." I love that. So that's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to help you fan your gift into flame, the gift of God. The gift of God, we know primarily is the Holy Spirit Himself, but then we're talking about these spiritual charisms. So, maybe you needed to allow the Holy Spirit to kind of fan that gift into full flame, and maybe this series has helped you do that, and if it has, I'm so thankful, I'm so grateful, and I want you to burn brightly for him, I want you to burn brightly.

0:10:24.2 SC: This is why Katherine of Sienna said, "If you are who God made you to be, you will set the world on fire," and part of that includes your gifts. So part of what we can learn from the church at Corinth is that having spiritual gifts does not make you holy, and it doesn't make you spiritual, necessarily. It's possible for a parish to have all the gifts that are needed, and even every believer to know what their gift is, and still miss the mark. We see in the last verse of 1 Corinthians 12, the reminder that there's something even greater than these spiritual gifts, these supernatural, divine abilities. Paul says there, "Eagerly desire the greater gifts," and now I will show you the most excellent way. So, we've probably heard 1 Corinthians 13 over and over and over. If you've ever been to a wedding, I'm sure you've probably heard it. But it comes in the context, this love chapter comes in the context of the spiritual gifts, it's sandwiched between 1 Corinthians Chapter 12, and 1 Corinthians Chapter 14, 12 being the least of the gifts and unity in diversity, and 14 being this correction on tongues. In the middle of that is the love chapter.

[music]

0:11:51.0 S?: You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that taste like cake.

0:12:02.3 SC: Let's get social. I'm no longer on Facebook, so come and connect with me and the new Catholic Evangelista community. Visit biblestudyevangelista.com and click community on the

menu, or scroll down to the radio notes and click the link to our community. We're sharing picks and prayers, Love The Word takeaways and insights on the daily readings and everything else social. Come share with me.

0:12:26.1 S?: Sonja created the Love The Word Bible study method just for you. Based on Mary's personal practice and formulated for your personality and temperament. Get your Love The Word meditations every Monday morning by signing up at biblestudyevangelista.com. Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:12:54.3 SC: This is simply my opinion, but I think that 1 Corinthians 13 is without a doubt the very best explanation of love ever written, and we do a total disservice to Paul's intention when we only read it at weddings. As I said, this Love chapter is sandwiched between a discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter 12, and then in chapter 14, this sort of correction on the Corinthian church and their abuse of speaking in tongues. So, Paul, he recognizes the danger of frosting over our spiritual gifts, if they are divorced from love. And that's what he's getting at in that correction, he's saying, you're not even considering your brothers and sisters in that assembly, you're just standing up and... I guess they were excited, I don't know. But he's getting on to them because there's no order in the assembly, and because there's no order, he can see that there's no consideration for the other people who are there, who can't understand a word they're saying. So he says in Chapter 13, verses 1 through 3, "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but I have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

0:14:13.7 SC: Meaning, it's just noise. If I stand up and I speak in tongues in front of everybody and put on a big show, but I don't have love, then it's nothing but a loud, difficult noise. He goes on to say, "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but I have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." This is such a powerful passage because he takes these gifts that the Corinthians have elevated, prophecy and tongues, and prophecy is a very powerful gift. It's kind of showy, it's not meant to be, but it's kind of showy because it's spectacular. When someone gives you a word of prophecy or a word of knowledge, you're like, "Oh my gosh." It is penetrating, it is powerful, and so it's a big gift. And Paul actually says that we're supposed to all ask for prophecy as a gift. I'll have to look that up for you, and I'll put it in the notes. But he says everyone should ask for it.

0:15:27.1 SC: But regardless, it's a big gift. But he says, "If you have the gift of prophecy, and even if you can speak in tongues, if you don't have love, you have nothing. You can move mountains with your faith, that's a miracle. So he's saying, You can speak in tongues, you can have the gift of prophecy, you can actually heal people, you can perform miracles, but if you have love, you gain nothing. If it's not done for love, for the other person, if it's not done for love of God, you gain nothing from it. You can use a gift and you can completely render it impotent if you don't have love. Now, the spiritual gifts operate similarly to a sacrament, I'm not saying they are sacraments, don't hear me say that. But because the Holy Spirit uses them in us, whenever we use them, they are supernaturally effective. But the degree to which they are effective for other people depends on our love. So, we must learn how to abide in His love, that means to stay plugged in. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

0:16:42.8 SC: If you abide in my love, he says elsewhere. He talks about this abiding idea all the

time, and that just means that we're constantly checking in with God, that we're sensing and we're inviting him not to participate in what we're doing, we're abiding in order that we can participate in what he wants to do. We need to ask God, What do you want to do in my parish? What do you wanna do in me? We get these half-cock that is, I'm gonna go do something for God, and that's good, but if we don't ask God first, we could be way off-base. We could think God wants one thing, but if we're not abiding, if we're not checking in, if we're not reading the scriptures every day, we're not gonna know God's heart for the world and where his heart is right now. In Evangelization, where does he want us to focus our evangelistic gifts, for instance? So it's very, very important that we have this love and we can't have love if we're not abiding in Christ. And so that is the most important thing, and that is why Paul spends an entire chapter on love. He elevates...

0:17:55.7 SC: Paul elevates the supremacy of love over every single spiritual gift, and then he describes how love should be the marinade that provides a distinct flavor in our service. Love is patient, love is kind. Listen, this is a tough passage, it is a tough passage. He talks about martyrdom. I mentioned that, but I didn't actually emphasize it and I should have. He says, "Even though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and even though I give my body to be burned, but I have not love, it profits me nothing." You can be a martyr, but if you don't do it for love, you gain nothing from it. Everything, everything... In the end, St. John of the Cross said, we will be judged on our love, because everything is fed from that love. Why? Because the Holy Spirit, God is love. So if we don't have love, we're not actually... We're not abiding, we're not moving in the power of the Holy Spirit, who is love. So, we have to abide. So you can give all your stuff away to the poor, and you can be very proud of yourself for that, but if you don't do it for love, you've gained nothing. You can be a martyr, but if you don't do it for love, you've gained nothing.

0:19:11.0 SC: Listen to what he says next, love suffers long and is kind, love does not envy, it does not parade itself, it is not puffed up, it does not behave rudely, does not seek its own. Oh my goodness and here's the big one, is not provoked. Love is not provoked. I'm just gonna let that sit there for just a second. Love is not provoked. That is a powerful statement. How often are we provoked? [laughter]

0:19:42.2 SC: See, God's love is not like our love, God's love is not conditional, it's not conditional, it's not provoked, God's love is not provoked. Now, I'll come back to this in just a moment, but I wanna finish this passage, it says, love does not rejoice in iniquity, which means crooked-ness, but it rejoices in the truth. So if you are a true seeker, you are a love seeker. Truth-seeking is love seeking. Love bears all things. Oh, my goodness, that's powerful too. That's such an indictment. It bears all things. I will bear anything for those that I love, you will too. God will bear anything for us because he loves us, love bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things, which means it just keeps you going through absolutely everything.

0:20:37.2 SC: Love never fails. Which means it never ends, love never ends. Why? Because it's eternal, because it comes from God, God Himself, but where there are prophecies, they will end, where there are tongues, they will cease, where there is knowledge, it will vanish. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect has come, or mature or complete, then that which is in part will be done away with. Meaning, we won't need prophecy, we won't need knowledge, we won't need the tongues, we won't need any of that, because we will be in the beatific vision, we will have the essence of all of those diverse things, we will have the unity of them all in that beatific vision. And in that communion with God and all the saints, then he says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I

put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face-to-face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I am known. And now abide, faith, hope, love these three, but the greatest of these is love."

0:21:53.8 SC: Greater than faith, greater than hope is love. Why? Because faith will end, we will see, hope will end, we will have grasp, we will have attained that final end. So what do we attain, what do we believe in? We believe in love, God himself who is love, the greatest of these is love. And so he sandwiches this beautiful sermon here about love and its importance between two discourses on spiritual gifts. So the context of this is in the use of our spiritual gifts. So what he's saying then is that your relationship with God is the most important thing, because it doesn't matter what... How many wonderful gifts you have, it doesn't even matter that you're using them if you don't use them out of love. So he contrasts then the ceasing of prophecy, tongues and knowledge with the never-failing aspect of love, love will never fail or never cease to exist because God himself is love.

0:22:58.5 SC: I think that ignorance related to spiritual gifts is not really our basic problem, love is our problem, because if we loved like we should, we would pursue God with all our heart and never, never, never be satisfied with anything less than knowing who he is, and knowing that love every single week, all day for two days, every week, I see people who have never sensed to God's love for them, and that absolutely breaks my heart in two. It is my best work these consultations, because I lead people into that experience and that knowledge of God. And it comes through abiding, it comes through the absolute determination to seek God's space and his love.

[music]

0:23:53.2 S?: You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that taste like cake.

0:24:01.6 S?: Did you know you can get Bible Study Evangelista radio notes and podcast delivered to your inbox every Monday morning? Redeem your Mondays, join thousands of your fellow listeners by subscribing at biblestudyevangelista.com. Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:24:36.0 SC: Alright, so now we're gonna talk about love, right? Because there are a whole lot of really bad understandings of love. [chuckle] I mean, we love ice cream and football, and we love each other when we're married for about... Till the first couple of really big fights, and then suddenly we're saying the D word, right? So what is love? Well, you probably have heard that there are basically three words for love in the New Testament, in the Greek. Those are eros from where we get the word erotic love, so that's a physical superficial kind of love. Then we have Philia, which is where we get the word Philadelphia. It's the brotherly love, the city of brotherly love, right? It comes from Philia. It's that brotherly love. Then we have the kind of love that Paul is talking about here in chapter 13. When he talks about love being the greatest gift. Now, we hear this used a lot, the word agape is often translated as charity. We are supposed to have charity for one another, it's translated charity, because the root of it is caress. Caress is sometimes translated grace and sometimes translated Love, and depending on your translation of chapter 13 of 1st Corinthians, it could say, "Though I speak with tongues of men and angels but have no charity, I have become sounding brass or clanging symbol."

0:26:08.8 SC: So sometimes it's translated as charity, sometimes it's translated as love, in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, He gave." And there you see a really good example of agape love, this charity love, it gives. Charity or agape gives to the other person, it treats people better than they deserve, when it's in their best interest. We should always treat other people better than they deserve because that is the grace that God shows us, that is the love with which He loves us, that is the best working definition of the word love in the Bible or the word charity in the Bible. It's treating people better than they deserve, but only when it's in their best interest, because you and I both know that if you're a doormat, then you treat people better than they deserve, but it's not in their best interest to do that. It's in their best interest that they have boundaries and they not being able to sin against you. We actually had a really interesting discussion on our community page about victim Souls and all of that, whether it's... Well, I don't wanna get into that here, but it was very interesting, that whole discussion because it's sort of centered around the idea of charity. If you are treating someone better than they deserve, then you can see you suffer long in all kind.

0:27:40.7 SC: You do not envy, you do not parade yourself, you're not puffed up, you don't behave rudely, you don't seek your own interest, you're not provoked, you don't think evil, you don't rejoice in iniquity or crookedness, you rejoice in the truth, right? So he gives us an outline of what this looks like, and it is so elevated. I remember asking God, reading that love is not provoked, and I just thought, I don't even know how that's possible. How's that even possible? Well, it wasn't at the time because I wasn't healed yet from my deep, deep wounded-ness. It took a long time before... Now, I can receive those kinds of darts, I can receive those kinds of attacks from other people, and it doesn't bother me, I don't react out of it. So when we're reacting out of a wound, we're not loving other people, 'cause we're not capable of it yet, but that's what we're supposed to be shooting for, is this greatest gift, love. But we have to understand what it is. So it's not The Erotic love, it's not even necessarily the brotherly love, even though that's good too, agape love which is the Greek word for charity or love in the Bible is sacrificial, it treats people better than they deserve. So how can you treat people better than they deserve today?

0:28:55.4 SC: What about the people in traffic, what about the people in the grocery store, what about the people you work with, what about the people you live with? Because oftentimes, when we have an outside job, we go home and we treat our family worse than we act at work because we don't wanna get fired, and we know our family can't fire us. So how can you treat people better than they deserve today? And I remember when... Way back when I started trying to really put this into practice, I was like... It was gorilla warfare for me, I was looking for ways to love bomb people, I was just trying to find ways to do things for other people that were better than they deserved, and it was so much fun. And that's the other thing about sacrificial love, this charity, this agape, is that it enlarges you, at the same time, it enlarges the other person. That's the beautiful thing about God's love. He treats us better than we deserve.

0:29:53.7 SC: Alright, more on this idea in a moment, but for right now, I want to spend a few minutes on a couple of things. The first is I want to shout out my friends of the show over the last couple of weeks, Jullie S, Bonny C, Elizabeth Mic, Margie Y, Laura B, Catherine A, Beth Uupes, Joana C, Aaron L, Laura E, Christine T, Alicia S, Max and Meg K, Sanya, I hope I'm saying that right. Sanya K, Monicah J, and Trina W. And as part of my thank you since... My gifts are still in a mess, my list because of that change that I tried to make in the donation software, and I'm just gonna have to... I'm just gonna confess, I'm not sure I'm gonna be able to send you... Gosh, for the last like last year, I'm not sure I'm gonna be able to have a list that I can send you a gift, and I am

sorry, I'm so deeply sorry about that. I don't even know what to say because I am so grateful to you, but I'm hoping... [chuckle] I'm still working on it, okay? I'm trying my best, but I'm also offering the monthly meet-ups, and we have decided the friends of the show, the monthly friends of the show, we have decided to embark on a study of the Book of Romans, which I love, because it leads straight into this idea of agape love and sacrificial love. And how are we supposed to do that? Well, we have to do it from our identity as Christ's brothers and sisters, as God's children, and we can't do that, we can't love the way we're supposed to love if we're still wounded and we're in sin.

0:31:36.8 SC: So the Book of Romans does a really good job of rooting us in our identity in Christ. So we're doing a monthly Bible study on the Book of Romans, and we're gonna work on it together. Our first one actually is coming up at the end of the month, and I'm really excited about that. I'm gonna print... I don't know if I'm gonna print them or if I'm gonna put them in the questions in the community. I think I'm gonna actually do that. I'm gonna put the questions in the community under its own page, it's actually already got a spot there, the Romans Bible study for the friends of the show. I'm gonna put the questions there each week, I think, 'cause I think that would be a great central place where we can actually talk about them together in that community and have that discussion. So if you're not a friend of the show, you're gonna wanna be because the only way you can get into that section on the community is to be invited, and so that's only for the Friends of the show, but we want everybody who wants too, to participate. So you can do that by becoming a monthly friend of the show.

0:32:38.0 SC: All friends of the show get access to all the premium content, so you can always go back and access the older series. I say older, but they're timeless because they're scripture, right? I also want to tell you about two pilgrimages that we have scheduled. Travel has finally opened up. I just read, yesterday or maybe it was today, that Italy has opened up fully too, to where there are no conditions on travel. And so that's not one of the trips though, I just thought it was interesting that that happened today, but I do have a healing pilgrimage to Medjugorje planned in May of next year, and then a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in April. And the details on that will be available soon, we're working on that, we have most of it put together, but just be looking for that because this healing pilgrimage in Medjugorje especially it is going to be 10 days of healing talks, prophetic teaching, healing prayer, and of course, it takes place in Medjugorje, which is known for the miracles of healing that happened there. So lots of individual prayer, lots of break-out kinds of talks, and then lots of private time for you to go on retreat.

0:34:06.2 SC: This is a very, very laid back kind of pilgrimage. There's not gonna be a whole lot going on because that's not what this area is about. It's not like the holy land where your feet hit the floor in the morning and you're going till 2 and 3 in the afternoon, sometimes later. This is a whole different feel. This is a very retreat sort of feel to this pilgrimage, and it is specifically a healing pilgrimage. So I just wanted to put that kinda in your ear, and then also the Holy Land, because the Holy Land is the fifth gospel. If you can manage to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, you absolutely should, you should. And even if it's a sacrifice, you should think about it because there's an indulgence attached to that too, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a full indulgence. A plenary indulgence, and you can't go with a better guide than me. [laughter] And we just have the best time. The Holy Land is... It is the fifth gospel, you will be absolutely transformed by going to the Holy Land, it is just fabulous. Especially if you know the gospel stories and you know the Scriptures in any depth.

0:35:19.7 SC: Because it just comes alive. You start to see where all these places... All of these

things took place. And it really makes the whole Bible come alive. So think about those two things, and then I'm still working on the master class, the healing MasterClass for you so that if you can't get in through for a private consult, you can at least do one of those.

[music]

0:35:53.1 S?: You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Bible study spinach that taste like cake.

0:36:00.4 S?: If you love having Bible Study in your pocket, you can become a friend of the show. Click on the yellow friend of the show button on biblestudyevangelista.com and become a supporter of any amount and any frequency. Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:36:33.1 SC: When we're talking about agape, or charity or sacrificial love you and I both know that human nature is more prone to tear down than it is to build up, and sometimes we'd rather keep people than labor in love with them and for them. We get jealous of their gifts, we get jealous of the things that they're doing, and we do our best, even if it's in these little bitty small ways that are fake humility to point out the error or the small criticism or the thing they could do better, we need to stop that and start using our gifts. Stop focusing on what everybody else is doing and focus on using your gifts and building other people up. When I came into the church, I came in at Easter vigil and that next... That fall, that very fall, my pastor made me the Religious Education Director at my parish, and you know my gifts, and our parish was so put out that he had done this with a former Protestant and I totally get that, I really do. I totally get it, but it was the most brutal time of my entire life because the things that some of those people put me through, on top of the things that I was already going through, my son had had a devastating accident that left him flat on his back and he was an invalid for six months, I had just had an infant and was nursing him and I was postpartum, my husband and I could not talk about the Catholic church at all without fighting, so we had a very tight, tense relationship.

0:38:18.8 SC: And my parish, I had left behind my church family and everyone that had loved me previously in my spiritual life, I had left them all, and I had come into the Catholic church on a leap of faith, and what happened to me should never happen to people. [chuckle] But it does, and I'll be honest, part of why it didn't faze me or disillusioned me at all is because I had seen the exact same thing happen in my Protestant churches. So I know how awful church people can be, I know they can. And I'm bringing this up because love is the most important thing, love is the most important thing. It doesn't matter what your gifts are, if you're a hateful person, it doesn't matter, it's just gonna fall flat. And so when we're using our gifts, when we're searching for the place to use them, we have to remember to be sacrificial in our love for other people to treat them better than they deserve when it's their best interest to do so. And so as I came into the church, and... [chuckle] I experienced more of the same as I had experienced as a Protestant. On the one hand, it didn't faze me because I knew that God had given me a job to do, he had actually told me before I came into the church in full communion, that he was gonna do that, but I didn't realize that it was gonna be in a formal role.

0:39:50.1 SC: So there was a whole lot going on there. I only was there to do what God had given me to do and to be obedient to that. So I let all of that stuff roll off like water on the ducks back and

I just kinda grind my way through it and just kept on plugging, but it was absolutely difficult. And so my point in bringing that up is, when you start looking around and you want to try to use your gifts, I'm just offering a word of warning, please keep your eyes on Christ, because you're gonna step into areas that are already occupied by people in ministry, and you want to be sensitive to the fact that they were there before you, and that they have been doing it for a long time, and they will probably resent the fact that you want to do something too, especially if you're gifted in the same areas.

0:40:42.1 SC: They're gonna find it, they're gonna feel like it's a threat, sometimes not always, because church people can also be the most wonderful people there are. It's just they're the best. Church people are the absolute best, they're the worst, but they are also the best. So I'm just offering a word of warning as you step out and you're looking for places to use your gifts, be sensitive, be sensitive to those that are already there doing the work, who have been doing the work for a long time, who have been doing it sometimes all the work, and they've been looking around for people to help and there's not been anybody to help. So on the one hand, you're gonna be welcome, and they'll probably try to put you into areas that you may or may not be gifted. So if you're not gifted in those areas, have the grace and have the courage to decline something that you know for sure is not one of your gifts because you'll be miserable and you won't be effective.

0:41:38.4 SC: So if you're not sure, then try it, try it and see, but if you can discern that it's not the area you need to be in, then please have the grace and Holy Spirit give us the courage to speak up so that we're not stuck in a role, doing something that we're not gifted for. Because the church really needs what your gifts really are. So if you are one of those people who is in an administrative or a formations sort of role, be on the look out for people who have gifts that you can use and try to find places to plug them in, and I know that anyone who has... Like a shepherding gift and apostle shepherd gift, they're doing that all the time anyway, they're constantly looking for people. But we wanna be sensitive to what people's gifts really are, and perhaps try to help them grow what those gifts are, so that they find a good fit. Because that's good for the church, and it's good for the person who's using the gift. So when you're looking around, you may see that your church does not have programs, the programs that are in your heart, or the ministry opportunities that are in your heart, or the places and the types of services that are in your heart. Perhaps you want to start a shall ministry, and you don't see anything like that in your parish, then just start it.

0:43:09.1 SC: Go to your pastor and say to him, I want to try this, I want to get a group of people together and maybe even teach them how to knit. I would love to know how to knit. I don't know how to knit, but I don't... If I could knit and it would go to someone else as a ministry, I would totally do it, but I don't know that I could sit and waste my time knitting. [laughter] 'Cause I got so much ministry stuff to do, and that's what jazzes me, right? But if you have an intercession gift and you have a craftsmanship gift... I'm sorry, I can't say that word. Craftsmanship gift, then that's gonna be a perfect fit for you. And if you don't see a place where that's already in your parish, why not start it? You don't have to wait on someone else to ask you is my point. You don't wait on someone else to ask you, just take the initiative, go to your pastor, pitch the idea, or especially if you have to like put something in the bulletin or whatever, if you need other volunteers but my point is, if you have a gift and you don't see a place in your parish that you can use it and you have a vision for some sort of service or program or something that you think would be great.

0:44:17.2 SC: When people look... This drives me nuts. I'll just confess. This absolutely drops me nuts, people who look around and go, I think our pairs should do so and so, and they whine about it,

but they don't begin it. If it's on your heart and you have been stewing over the fact that your parish doesn't offer so and so and it's one of those things that has bothered you for a long time, I'm not being critical, I promise, if... This is an absolute truth. If it has bugged you for a long time that there has been a need in your parish that has not been filled, I'm gonna ask and suggest to you that you get with the Holy Spirit and ask him if that's something he wants you to do, because that's part of how we know. We see a hole and we see a need, and we expect somebody else to go fill it. But if God shows you the need, perhaps he wants you to fill it, and that's my point. And what a beautiful thing for all of us to walk into our parishes and say, "You know what, I see a need for this group of people, and I don't see anybody filling that need, and I wanna do something about that."

0:45:27.0 SC: What on earth would our church look like in five years, if we all did that, if we all walked into our parishes and said, "I want to do this, I want to serve this group of people." What if that happened in every one of the... There are 15000 people that listen to this show every week, and if 15000 of you went into your parish next week and started something like that, our church would absolutely be transformed. It would be transformed. Please think about that, please think about perhaps stepping in and taking the initiative and doing the thing that you have seen has been lacking in your own parish, and if you're not gifted for that, perhaps your gift is assembling the people that are. Perhaps you have an administrative gift or an Apostleship gift, how can you maybe put the people together and just send them off on their own to do that thing that you saw in the Lord's heart, that need... That group that needs something that they're not getting. What if it's you? What if God is saying, please do this for me, please help me transform my church. What if that's you? I think it is, I know it is.

0:46:53.1 SC: I know that that is exactly why God asked me and placed on my heart this entire series, his heart is for the renewal of the church, and it's gonna take all of us, we have to get serious about our faith, and that means we have to take a risk, we have to stand up and begin to offer our gifts to the church for the renewal. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get so emotional, but I know that we are the answer, I know that we are the key, and I pray that this series has equipped you in just a little way to get the confidence to step out and perhaps start something in your own parish. That is my prayer for you and I'm sorry for balling. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

[music]

0:47:51.7 S?: Thank You for listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com.