

Series: "INFLUENCE"

For Message: Luke 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; Romans 12:7-8; Luke 6:38

Message Title: "Activate My Gifts"

Introduction: Good Morning BMZ! I'm so glad you are with us today as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called "INFLUENCE"! We are looking at WHAT INFLUENCE IS and HOW to USE IT as a FOLLOWER of JESUS! I'm glad you are here!

Quick HOUSEKEEPING – BMZ Regional Church Charge Conference at 6pm (Dinner), November 12th at Boscobel Campus.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled programming ... In this series, we've been looking at HOW ONE LIFE can have an IMPACT on the world around it. And the VISUAL we've been using is TOPPLING DOMINOES. They remind us that just like ONE DOMINO has the potential to TOPPLE THOUSANDS of DOMINOES, one PERSON has the POTENTIAL to make a DIFFERENCE in MANY LIVES around them.

Last week we talked about PHYSICS ... POTENTIAL and KINETIC ENERGIES. God placed IN EACH of US POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ... it's up to US to ACTIVATE IT! And, the FIRST thing we need to do to ACTIVATE our INFLUENCE is to gain GODLY VISION about our FUTURES. God DESIRES for us to SEE the FUTURE the way HE SEES IT! We need to see GOD'S PREFERRED FUTURE for OUR LIVES ... and it's PERSONAL!

When we DON'T take time to ENVISION God's Future for us, the Bible tells us that is a BIG MISTAKE ... Proverbs 29:18a = "***When people do NOT accept DIVINE GUIDANCE, they RUN WILD!***" THEREFORE, we need to take STEPS to SEEK DIVINE GUIDANCE!

So, we talked about setting GODLY GOALS in different areas of our LIVES that will HELP US SEEK Divine Guidance ... in our PERSONAL LIVES, our LIFE'S WORK, our COMMUNITY and in our FAITH. How are you DOING on THOSE?

Today, we're going to SPEND TIME discovering how GOD MADE US for CERTAIN INFLUENCES...

If you have your Bible with you, turn to **LUKE 11**. If you don't have your Bible with you, no worries. We will put up all the Scriptures on the screen and it's also printed in your program. ... *If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your 3-HOLE PUNCHED MESSAGE NOTES and CONNECTION card. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... Please take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, drop off your CONNECTION CARD and take your MESSAGE NOTES home. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you watching on-line, you can hit the button for notes and for CONNECTION CARD and stick with us. If you are watching/listening later, or IPODing; you can download the outline off our website, so you too can take notes. LET'S PRAY (turn off marked lights during prayer)!*

Have you EVER FELT like you were MADE for SOMETHING? Like, "*When I DO this or that ... it's just RIGHT!*" Is there something you get to DO that gives you ENERGY? Is there something you feel like a "NATURAL" at? Well, there MIGHT be a REASON...

Now, our KEY VERSE for this SERIES shows up in MORE than ONE place. We've read this verse from Matthew 5, but it's also in The Gospel of LUKE and The Gospel of MARK. Considering it shows up that MANY TIMES, it might be IMPORTANT! Here it is from Luke ...

Luke 11:33 = ³³ “No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.”¹

God created EACH of us to be LIGHT in this world! Jesus said our lives are MADE to SHINE our LIGHT BOLDLY! And, ONE of the WAYS we GIVE LIGHT is to INFLUENCE others by ACTIVATING our GIFTS!

Here’s what you need to know about your LIFE’S LIGHT: It STARTS DEEP DOWN in your SOUL BEFORE it begins to SHINE PUBLICLY! This LIGHT that Jesus talks about that we are CREATED to SHINE BEGINS deeper INSIDE of you than you may think. And, that LIGHT begins to SHINE WHEN we CHOOSE to use our GIFTS and TALENTS to make a POSITIVE DIFFERENCE in the world!

To do that, we need to LEARN HOW to USE our TALENTS and GIFTS. I should START with DEFINING Talents and Gifts. EVERYONE has a NATURAL TALENT. There is NO such thing as a “ZERO TALENT PERSON”. Some people have ONE Talent and others have MANY Talents, but we ALL HAVE THEM.

NOW, the word “GIFTS” is what we’re talking about TODAY ... When we talk about GIFTS, it’s about what GOD UNLOCKS in us as FOLLOWERS of JESUS! And, I understand, sometimes it feels like TALENTS and GIFTS OVERLAP and that’s TRUE. BUT, when we SURRENDER our lives to JESUS; ask FORGIVENESS and allow JESUS to LEAD our lives, those SPIRITUAL GIFTS GO LIVE (Video Game)! Hard to explain... but, I’ll try.

So, why look at this at all? WHAT do Spiritual Gifts have to do with “INFLUENCE”? Look at what Paul says in ... 1 Corinthians 12:7 = ⁷ *A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*² A NATURAL TALENT can be used HOWEVER you WANT. Most of you use your NATURAL TALENTS every day ... in your JOB to make a LIVING. You use your Natural Talents to make MONEY. You all have them.

Paul tells us SPIRITUAL GIFTS have a SPECIFIC PURPOSE ... to HELP OTHERS inside and outside the CHURCH, THROUGH the CHURCH! You’ve heard me talk about the CHURCH being a MOVEMENT of people, and NOT a BLDG. We’re given SPIRITUAL GIFTS to USE as part of the MOVEMENT in this WORLD to SPREAD the GOOD NEWS! We are EACH to have POSITIVE INFLUENCE and our Spiritual Gifts play a BIG ROLE!

So, here is a BIBLICAL / GODLY Principle about INFLUENCE: **“Positive Public Influence is Preceded by Positive Private Influence”**. (Repeat) Say WHAT?!? Right! IOW – Your ability to use your POSITIVE INFLUENCE in a PUBLIC way is preceded by using your POSITIVE INFLUENCE in a PRIVATE way ... often in a CHURCH! Your Positive Influence STARTS by using your Spiritual Gifts in a Church!

A couple of EXAMPLES: Martin Luther King, Jr. (PICTURE) = Most people FORGET he was Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.! He was a PASTOR of a Local Church in Atlanta. He first used his INFLUENCE PRIVATELY in that Church. That’s where he DEVELOPED his SPEAKING STYLE and CONTENT BEFORE he went toward PUBLIC INFLUENCE!

Mother Theresa (PICTURE) = One of the most INFLUENTIAL people in HISTORY! But, long before she was world-renowned, she was taking care of some of the most IMPOVERISHED people in the most IMPOVERISHED parts of an IMPOVERISHED City! There were NO LIGHTS or CAMERAS or PHOTOS or INTERVIEWS. She was SERVING people in NEED the way GOD CALLED her to! She was exerting POSITIVE, PRIVATE INFLUENCE.

If EITHER of these people had been JERKS in PRIVATE, they would have NEVER been given a PUBLIC Stage for POSITIVE INFLUENCE!

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 11:33). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Co 12:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Do you KNOW what that MEANS? How you LIVE and operate HERE with other people in our CHURCHES is a great INDICATOR of how much PUBLIC INFLUENCE God will GIVE you in the WORLD! And, the PRIMARY WAY God says we can start to LIVE OUT our INFLUENCE PRIVATELY is to learn to ACTIVATE our GIFTS. Here we go...

STEPS TO ACTIVATING MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

The first one is ...

I Must Acknowledge that GOD GIVES ME SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Just like there is no such thing as a person with ZERO Talent; there is no such thing as a CHRISTIAN who doesn't have a SPIRITUAL GIFT. We all have them. God CREATED us WITH THEM. We are a PACKAGE DEAL as God's Creation. BUT, those Spiritual GIFTS are only UNLOCKED / ACTIVATED when we become FOLLOWERS of Jesus.

This is hard for us to grasp, so would you TURN to your neighbor and say, "*YOU have SPIRITUAL GIFTS!*" God gives them to EVERY PERSON! BUT, HOW do we USE THEM? Well, we USE THEM to do GOOD THINGS that God planned BEFORE we were BORN! Turn over in your notes ... This is our Memory Verse. Let's say it together... Ephesians 2:10 = ¹⁰ *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* ³

God's PLAN was that we, as HIS MASTERPIECE, were CREATED to do GOOD THINGS ... to have POSITIVE INFLUENCE! But, we ONLY become that person/masterpiece when we BECOME FOLLOWERS of JESUS. Otherwise, we MISS OUT!

If we are HONEST, how many of us would say, "I really don't want ALL that God has for me ... I would like my life to be UNSATISFACTORY and UNFULFILLING ... I want my life to LACK MEANING and PURPOSE!" NO! I believe we WANT to LIVE the life God planned for us ... a life that is BETTER than what WE can PLAN!

God wants us to make a POSITIVE DIFFERENCE in this world and a significant PATH to having that INFLUENCE God wants us to have is through our GOD-GIVEN Spiritual Gifts! But, it's UP to US to ACTIVATE them!! Paul again ... 2 Timothy 1:6 = ⁶ *This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.* ⁴

That's interesting. Your life is like a CANDLE and we need to add OXYGEN to the flames ... FAN the FLAMES of your Spiritual Gifts. So, HOW do you DO that? Next step:

I Must Explore MY UNIQUE GIFTS

Every person who is a Follower of Jesus has Spiritual Gifts and we need to acknowledge that. We also should RECOGNIZE our need to EXPLORE our SPECIFIC / UNIQUE GIFTS!

Now, there are OVER 30 Spiritual Gifts NAMED in the Bible. But, that is probably NOT an exhaustive list. There could be even more... Here's what we KNOW: We need to EXPLORE what our GIFT / GIFTS / GIFT MIX is/are! We need to KNOW, so we do NOT NEGLECT THEM ... 1 Timothy 4:14a = ¹⁴ *Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received* ⁵ SEE?!

Now, here is what I did for TODAY. I listed FOURTEEN (14) COMMON Biblical Spiritual Gifts. I have found that about 95% of Christians have ONE or MORE of these Gifts ACTIVATED in their LIVES.

Here's what else I know ... About 90% of the time, just LOOKING at this LIST and SELECTING your Spiritual Gifts is as ACCURATE as spending 2-3 Hours or 20-30 Minutes TAKING a SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST. If you'd like some suggestions for those, let me know, BUT, for TODAY, here's what I'd LIKE YOU to DO...

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Eph 2:10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Ti 1:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Ti 4:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

YOU SELECT the Spiritual Gifts you THINK you have; TALK with 2-3 FRIENDS to see if they AFFIRM it and MOST LIKELY you will have an ACCURATE ASSESSMENT of your SPIRITUAL GIFT MIX! **SWEET SPOT?**

Common Spiritual Gifts:

Okay, let me just walk you down through these COMMON Spiritual Gifts... #1 =

1. Administration – You are good at ORGANIZING things. You not only have FILES, you have LABELS on your FILES! You were ON TIME to WORSHIP today. That might be YOU! If people are already POINTING at you, this might be you... #2 =
2. Discernment – IF you have the Spiritual Gift of Discernment, you probably have people come to you and ask, “What do YOU think I should do?” And, when you answer, your ANSWER is usually a GOOD THING for that person. Listen, everyone has an OPINION, but someone with the Gift of Discernment usually has a TRACK RECORD of making GOOD DECISIONS. You give good advice. #3 =
3. Encouragement – This is a common Spiritual Gift that many Followers of Jesus have. Sometimes Spiritual Gifts OVERLAP with things all Christians SHOULD do! One of the ways EACH of us can EXPAND our Influence is having an ENCOURAGING personality. BUT, if you have the Gift of Encouragement, you would love to spend the rest of your life just ENCOURAGING OTHERS and then TEACHING others to be ENCOURAGING. Something you can’t help or STOP DOING! #4 =
4. Giving – Again, ALL Christians are CALLED to GIVE. It’s Biblical and it’s about Obedience. We are ALL supposed to Tithe to our Local Church, BUT, some people feel like they are in their SWEET SPOT when they GIVE! They give ABOVE the Tithe and look for ways to help OTHER PEOPLE learn to TITHE, etc.
5. Leadership – This is a little easier to determine. Just ask, “*IS ANYONE FOLLOWING ME?*” If you are “leading” and no one is following, you are just out for a walk! Be honest with yourself ... in all of these.
6. Shepherding – People sometimes misunderstand this word. It simply means to CARE! As Christians, we should ALL CARE, but this person goes ABOVE and BEYOND. You pull together other people to CARE. You rally people to send flowers and cards and set up visits when other people are hurting or in the hospital. It’s in your heart and BLOOD and you cannot HELP but CARE!
7. Teaching – Many think this is about speaking publicly. But, no. It’s more about STUDYING in private. If you have the gift of TEACHING, you like to PREPARE well, dig in and learn, BEFORE you SPEAK.
8. Pioneer New Works – Some people like to START new THINGS. You hear about a new ministry in our church and you want to get involved. And, once it’s up and running, you are ready for the NEXT NEW THING...
9. Evangelism – We’ve talked about this. ALL Follower of Jesus are called to SHARE their FAITH. But, this person is always thinking of CREATIVE WAYS to improve their evangelism PERSONALLY as well as through the CHURCH. These are the people who keep INVITING PEOPLE. They get EXCITED about Invitation Cards and Big Days!
10. Faith – Again, ALL Christians are called to have faith, but this person has a very HIGH TRUST in God. They THINK BIG. They challenge other people to TRUST God MORE. They can’t help but TRUST GOD ... Good or Bad times.

11. Hospitality – Listen, this has nothing to do with hospitals. This is the person who LOVES to WELCOME other people into a GROUP. Maybe you love to HOST PARITES. You love to introduce people. After worship, if you see someone off by themselves, you go and try to include them...
12. Mercy – This one really isn't me, but some of you have it. If someone trips and falls, you DON'T point and laugh ... you stop and help them up! You are the person somebody comes to when something is BROKEN, like a dream or a relationship. They know you will offer them MERCY and not just advice!
13. Serving and Helping – You are the one who sees someone drop their Connection Card as their coming in and you pick it up for them and find them and hand it back. You are the person who is always looking for something to do to help out, help clean up or set up around here...
14. Wisdom or Counseling – If you have this one in your GIFT MIX, people come to you for advice. You have a UNIQUE way of looking at things that CUTS through the CLUTTER of the situation. You see the IMPORTANT PIECES and offer some WISDOM. Like Discernment, you have a good TRACK RECORD of helping people see more CLEARLY their situation.

Okay, so here's what we're going to do. I want to give you about 30 seconds to mark the ONE, TWO or THREE Spiritual Gifts you THINK you SEE in yourself ... here we go.

(JEAPARDY MUSIC) Don't copy off your neighbor's paper.

After worship, take this PAPER to a FRIEND and see if they agree. THEN, once you think you have it; you should TEST IT! You SHOULD TRY some things ... places of SERVICE here in the CHURCH to SEE if you really have those GIFTS.

Listen, there is NO SUCH THING as a 100% Accurate test. Get involved and find out! That leads us to our NEXT STEP ... Over to the next page in your notes:

I Must Exercise MY GIFTS REGULARLY

SEE?!? Again, this means you MUST TAKE the INITIATIVE to TRY 2 or 3 different things! You MIGHT be GIFTED in an area you have NEVER TRIED. You have NOT SERVED there because it's a bit OUT of your COMFORT Zone.

Let me ask, have you ENJOYED seeing OTHER PEOPLE SERVE around here, but NEVER thought that was YOU? Maybe it IS! If you've ENJOYED being SERVED here ... GREETED ... enjoyed the WORDS going up on the SCREEN ... enjoyed having a PROGRAM put together and READY for YOU ... enjoyed having your KIDS CARED FOR and TAUGHT about JESUS ... MAYBE it's YOUR TURN! The Bible tells us we are CREATED to SERVE. What if you are MISSING out on something GREAT GOD has for you? The Bible tells us:

Romans 12:7-8? = ⁷ *If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well.* ⁸ *If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.* ⁶ Paul was writing to the CHURCH in ROME. He understood JESUS wanted the WORLD to CHANGE and that JESUS would do that through His CHURCH (Matt. 16:18 ... I will build my Church...). And, we are to SERVE in our CHURCH.

Listen, if you're wondering HOW you might get PLUGGED in to SERVE, check out our WEBSITE at: www.bmzchurch.org. Go to the DROP DOWN that says, "**GO DEEPER**" and hit the "**SERVE**" link. You will find different ways you might SERVE. TRY IT!

If you do NOT have INTERNET ACCESS, call the BMZ Office and we'll help...

Remember, when we SERVE and BLESS others, God BLESSES US! It's how God works! Sometimes God blesses you in TANGIBLE ways and sometimes God blesses in INTANGIBLE ways ... like EXPANDING your INFLUENCE. Here's how JESUS addressed it: Luke 6:38 = ³⁸ *Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.*”⁷

It's SIMPLE. If you REFUSE to GIVE and SERVE, God will NOT GIVE to you. You will MISS out on God's Plan for your life. BUT, if you decide to GET INVOLVED and GIVE and SERVE, you just OPENED up the CONNECTION with GOD for God to UNLEASH HIS BLESSING! So, EXERCISE your GIFTS REGULARLY ... Finally:

I Must Surrender MY ENTIRE LIFE TO GOD

Listen, when God LOOKS at you, He sees more than a PACKAGE of TALENTS and GIFTS. Certainly, God wants you to GIVE you GIFTS and TALENTS back to Him to USE in this world, BUT, HE WANTS MORE THAN THAT! Jesus wants ALL of YOU!

IN Luke 11, when Jesus talked about LETTING your LIGHT SHINE, he got VERY PERSONAL. He said it's not just about allowing your God-Given GIFTS to SHINE before others, it's ALSO ABOUT LOOKING INSIDE your HEART. Every LIFE has a LIGHT and that LIGHT does NOT begin when you SERVE OTHERS. IT BEGINS DEEP DOWN within your SOUL. Follow along ... I'm going to make some comments along the way ... Jesus speaking: Luke 11:33-36 = ³³ *“No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house. For your LIFE to have LIGHT, it must be LIT by an EXTERNAL SOURCE ... GOD! When you turn your LIFE over to GOD, He lights your LAMP of INFLUENCE in a POSITIVE way.* ³⁴ *“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy, your body is filled with darkness. IOW – The light that comes OUT of you is in DIRECT PROPORTION to the LIGHT you let IN. If you are NOT ALLOWING God into ALL areas of your life, then the LIGHT coming OUT is NOT as bright as it could be ...* ³⁵ *Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness.* ³⁶ *If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”*⁸ So, have you allowed God to be the LIGHT to LIGHT your LIFE? Have you ever SURRENDERED to GOD? If not, TODAY is your DAY ...

Are you putting anything in the way to BLOCK God's LIGHT? If you are a FOLLOWER of JESUS, what sin are you allowing to BRING DARKNESS into your life? What are you REFUSING to REMOVE from your life that is NOT PLEASING to GOD?

Or, maybe you're being COMPLACENT. You REFUSE to get involved and use your GOD-GIVEN GIFTEDNESS and it's BLOCKING some LIGHT. Why not make the DECISION today (God will never force you ... it's up to you!) to GIVE GOD your WHOLE LIFE?

Let's PRAY!

Next Steps: *I will memorize Ephesians 2:10*
I will Read 1st Timothy 1-6
I'm a Member of BMZ. Sign me up for Class 201.
I will attend the INFLUENCE Series in November

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 6:38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁸ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 11:33-36). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.