

3. Spiritual Gifts and Body Ministry

Training objective:

To gain an understanding of the nature and use of spiritual gifts, and to personally grow in this area.

Study:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Spiritual gifts defined

- A spiritual gift is an ability or an area of service given by God rather than man, to an individual to serve Him effectively. Spiritual gifts are given by God to build up the body of Christ, which is the Church- 1Cor 14:26.
- Spiritual gifts have a supernatural component, but are not limited to the supernatural. A spiritual gift can be a natural area of service such as administration or craftsmanship, but inspired, anointed and done in the power of God. Paul lists both types when he talks about spiritual gifts- Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 7:7; 12:8, 28; Eph 4:11. The anointing of God is the difference between a natural and a spiritual gift- 1 Samuel 16:23.
- A natural area of service should not be limited to the natural, but is an opportunity for God to breakthrough in the supernatural. In Acts 6 Stephen was chosen with 6 others for an area of service 'waiting on tables', indicating that he was gifted in administration or hospitality. However, the reason he was chosen was that he was a man full of 'faith and the Holy Spirit'. In Acts 6:8 we hear of the signs and wonders that Stephen did, and in Acts 7 we see the gift of wisdom and teaching manifesting in the address Stephen before the council. As a result of all this Stephen becomes the first martyr and the seed is sown for Paul's conversion.

What are the main purposes of spiritual gifts?

- To facilitate the church in communicating with God, and in receiving revelation from Him.
- To empower the church to serve God effectively.
- To 'build up' (to bless) the church:
- Tongues blesses the individual person
- Other gifts enable us to bless others in the church-1 Cor 12:12
- Spiritual gifts are not a reward or a sign of spirituality
- Spiritual gifts need to be stirred up

The temporary nature of present revelatory gifts (1Cor 13:8-13)

- They are a temporary way of God speaking to us until we reach heaven and then no longer need them.
- They did not cease after the time of the apostles or upon the completion of the canon of scripture. This error comes from the belief that when Paul speaks of 'perfection' he is referring to the Bible. Paul is not, however, referring to the completion of the Bible; but rather to our state in heaven. When we reach heaven we shall have no further need of spiritual gifts as we shall communicate face to face

with God. In the same way we shall 'fully know' even as we are 'fully known' - something which is not presently true of us. Now, however, it is necessary for us to have spiritual gifts because part of their function is to facilitate our communication with God.

- Love will continue in Heaven and so is the governing principle for use of the gifts now.

How many spiritual gifts are there? What are they?

- Some Christians believe there are 9 spiritual gifts because 9 are listed by Paul in 1Cor 12:8-10. However, the Bible does not seem to have a single, definitive list of all the possible spiritual gifts; but lists various gifts in different places, with some overlap- Rom 12:4-8; 1Cor 12:7-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11; 1Pet 4:9-11

Gift	1Cor 12:8-10	1Cor 12:28-30	Rom 12:6-8	Eph 4:11	1Pet 4:11	1Cor 13: 1-3	1Cor 7:7
Apostolic		Apostle		Apostle			
Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophet	Prophecy	Prophet		Prophecy	
Teaching		Teacher	Teaching	Teacher	Speaking (covers many gifts)		
Pastoring				Pastor			
Miracles	Miracles	Miracles					
Healing	Gifts of healings	Gifts of healings					
Helps		Helps	Serving (ministry)		Ministering (covers many gifts)		
Administrations		Administrations					
Tongues	Tongues	Tongues				Tongues	
Interpretation	Interpretation	Interpretation					
Encouraging			Encouraging (exhorting)				
Giving			Contributing (giving)				
Leadership			Leadership				
Mercy			Mercy			Bestow all my goods to feed the poor	
Discernment	Discerning of Spirits						
Wisdom	Wisdom					Understand all mysterries	
Knowledge	Knowledge					Understand all knowledge	
Faith	Faith					All faith	
Evangelism				Evangelist			
Celibacy							Celibacy
Martyrdom						Give my body to be burned	

- Other spiritual gifts seen in scripture:
- Music or praise that carries the anointing to set captives free, release the prophetic or crush the plans of the enemy- 1Sam 16:23; 2Chron 20:22;
- Physical strength- Samson- Judges 14:6
- Visions (as distinct from prophecy)- Acts 10:10-11; Acts 16:9-10
- Dreams -Matthew 2:13; Joel 2:28
- Interpretation of dreams- Genesis 41:15-16 (Joseph); Dan 2:19 (Daniel). If interpretation of tongues is a spiritual gift, rather than coming under the broader category of prophecy, then surely also the interpretation of dreams is a spiritual gift.
- Craftsmanship- Ex 31:1-11; Ex 35:30-35

Some thoughts on Ephesians Chapter 4

- The passage starts by emphasising our unity (v1-6), making the point that God is in each one of us. Then, in verse 7, Paul is saying that our unity does not mean that we are all the same- it is Jesus Himself who has gifted each one of us differently.
- The passage quotes Psalm 68:18 and applies it to the ascension of Christ. The point being made is that Christ's ascension accomplished the purpose of capturing captives so that He could fill them and use them. The victory of Christ's ascension is only fully realised when we do what we have been captivated to do- use our diverse gifts to build up Christ's body. Christ didn't just die to forgive a thief his crime, but to truly reform him and equip him for service- that is true victory!
- Eph 4:11 makes the point that the person who has the gift is also a gift themselves to the rest of the body of Christ
- Eph 4:12 explains the reason why God has gifted different people in different ways- to equip us to serve in order to build up the body of Christ. If we were all the same we would have no need of other's gifts, but the diversity was deliberately given by Jesus to equip us to serve one another. Many read verse 11 and say that it is the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers to prepare the saints to serve. Whilst aspects of these specific gifts have a training function, the fact that Paul has only just said in verse 7 'to EACH ONE OF US grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift' , I think that he is talking about more than these specific gifts. I believe that Paul is saying that every gift from God (not just those mentioned) is for the purpose of equipping the saints to serve. He is saying that we ALL have a measure of God's grace in the form of differing gifts. As each person uses their gift in the measure God has given them (verse 7) so, overall, there is a full measure of all the gifts in the body (verse 13) and the body is edified, mature with no weak areas for it to go off-course. He has equipped us in such a way that we need one another.
- This interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-12 also takes away the 'elite-class' that some have ascribed to the ministry examples Paul mentions here, where certain gifts are seen as having an 'office' whilst others are not. Surely all spiritual gifts can have a training/teaching element to them, not just the examples Paul gives in Ephesians 4:11.

What is the difference between an office/ministry and a gift?

- Sometimes in scripture the gift is mentioned (e.g. prophecy, teaching) and sometimes the one who operates in the gift (e.g. prophet, teacher)
- Some would make a distinction between some lists of gifts which are permanent ministry gifts (for instance an Apostle, Evangelist, Exhorter, Giver etc.) and some

lists of gifts which are spiritual gifts and temporary (prophecy, tongues, miracles etc.) I think that there is not the distinction made in scripture, as they overlap in different lists, and that all spiritual gifts are ministry gifts if they continually characterise the individual. A person who has the gift of tongues can usually speak in tongues at will, and so is it really temporary?

- I believe there is the *potential* for any Christian to operate in any gift, but that gift may not characterise them or come easily to them, so this may not be their ministry- and this is God's doing. We have faith for different things, and this makes us different. We are all called to evangelise, but we are not all evangelists. We are all called to teach others in different ways, but we are not all teachers. We are all able to hear God's voice, but we are not all prophets. An office is where a particular gift or gifts characterise a person- they have grace for, are good at, and operate frequently in that gift.

Explanation of some of the gifts

- **Read** 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
- 'Wisdom' - To have supernatural insight from God about how to perform a task or how to react in a given situation-1 Kings 3:16-28
- 'Knowledge' - Where God reveals information supernaturally to a person – John 4:17-19
- 'Faith' - An impartation from God to believe for the impossible -Romans 4:18-21
- 'Healing' - The ability to heal the sick by the power of God- Mark 16:17-18
- 'Miracles' - The ability through the power of God to do the impossible-Matthew 14:25-31
- 'Prophecy' - To speak out a message inspired by God- Acts 21:10-11
- 'Discernment' - A God-given ability to discern the spirit which is operating in a person or situation (e.g. God, demon, human nature) -Matthew 16:22-23
- 'Tongues' - A God-given ability to speak, or sing to God in a language unknown to the person (and usually unknown to others)-1 Corinthians 14:2
- 'Interpretation of tongues' - A God-given interpretation (rather than a translation) of a message spoken to God in a tongue-1 Corinthians 14:13-17

Who can have them spiritual gifts?

All believers can have them, and should seek them

- Each one of us-1 Corinthians 12:7
- The Spirit decides- 1 Corinthians 12:11
- We can desire and seek them-1 Corinthians 14:1
- Paul wanted all Christians to speak in tongues, but even more so to prophesy-1 Corinthians 14:5
- Each one of us has something from God to contribute-1 Corinthians 14:26
- There is the potential for a Christian to operate in any gift (Mk 16:17-18, John 14:12-14), but in reality certain gifts will characterise each one of us, and this is the Lord's choosing, not ours (1Cor 12:11, 29-30, Rom 12:6).

Should all Christians speak in tongues if they have been baptised in the Holy Spirit?

- Although we can seek any spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit decides which gifts we will receive. It is possible therefore to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to prophesy, but not necessarily have the gift of tongues-1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Corinthians 12:30
- However, Paul would like all Christians to be able to speak in tongues (because it is

a blessing), but would rather that they had gifts which would be beneficial to the church as a whole, rather than being unhealthily over-concerned with tongues-1 Cor 14:5

- Tongues is a common visible sign that a Christian has been filled with the Holy Spirit; but so is praise and prophecy -Acts 10:44-46; Acts 19:1-6

Does God take the person over when these gifts are being used?

- No, usually when using a spiritual gift, the person has full control over what they are doing. Paul says that if someone else has received something to share with the church whilst someone is prophesying, the first person should stop and allow the next person to continue-1 Corinthians 14:29-33
- Sometimes, because our will is not bypassed, people can neglect to use their gift -2 Timothy 1:6
- Sometimes people will have physical manifestations when they come into the presence of God, such as shaking or falling over- John 18:6; Revelation 1:17; Daniel 10:7-11
- Although these signs may happen involuntarily, the gifts usually have to be used in conjunction with the person's will.
- Despite all of the above, there may be times when the power of God is so overwhelming that even those who normally have no desire to use spiritual gifts, are compelled to use them or a person may be overcome by the sheer power of a vision- 1 Samuel 10:9-11; Daniel 10:7-9

How do you receive the gifts?

- Be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Desiring them -1Cor 13:31;14:1,12,39
- Impartation- Rom 1:11; Num 11:25-26. This can come through various means: Laying on of hands/prophetic word -1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6. Through hearing teaching or testimony- Acts 10:44-46.
- Asking God in faith for them- Matthew 7:7-11; wisdom- Jam 1:5-8; interpretation-1Cor 14:13
- Being in or near the anointing- 1Sam 10:10-11; 19:20-24
- Obedience, courage. Stepping out in faith under the prompting of the Holy Spirit- Acts 9:10-11

How do we know if a gift we have is genuine?

- Because God often uses our internal faculties, such as our thoughts and feelings to speak to us, we should be careful not to discount it when God has spoken to us by saying 'it's probably just me'.
- We will never know if we do not give out what we believe God is telling us. There will at times be something of ourselves in what we share, and we have to be prepared to make some mistakes, but we should not give way to fear.
- When using spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, everything must be tested - (i.e. does it agree with the Bible, and also what God has been saying). This means ignoring that which is just of ourselves, and holding on to that which is from God -1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 14:29

Does the same gift sometimes vary in its effectiveness depending on the person using the gift?

- Paul said that we should prophesy 'in proportion to our faith' -Romans 12:2

- This means that the person's faith in stepping out and using a gift will have a bearing on the effectiveness, or depth of the gift.
- In the same way Paul had to remind Timothy not to neglect, but to rekindle the gift he had received -1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6

Implications:

Spiritual gifts are an essential part of the church today, equipping the church to serve God effectively. Every Christian has potential to receive spiritual gifts, and we should be active in seeking them.

Practical Application:

Do you have any fears regarding spiritual gifts?

Do you have any questions about spiritual gifts?

Bring any concerns to the Lord in prayer, and speak to a mature Christian in the Church about any questions you may have

Do you have any gifts that you have neglected to use? With regard to the gifts mentioned earlier in the study what gifts:

- Do you regularly use?
- Have you used once or more?
- Are you seeking?

Becoming active in using gifts:

- Spend some time in prayer, asking God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.
- Believe that God is for you and that He desires to give you good gifts.
- Begin to ask God for any spiritual gifts that you are seeking.
- As the Holy Spirit enables you start to use the gift – e.g if you are asking for the gift of tongues you will need to actively speak - God will not do the speaking for you.
- If you are seeking for God to speak to you in visions, as a picture comes into your mind don't just assume it is your imagination but ask God if it has a meaning, and share the picture and its meaning if it is for others
- If you ask for the gift of healing, be prepared to pray for someone who is ill.
- As God prompts you in the future, be prepared to use your gift.