

Topics in Practical Theology – Lesson 5 – Spiritual Gifts

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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Discussion Question:

1. Do you serve the body at VBC? How? Why/Why not?

Review:

1. Overview and Spirit-filled life: A walk in the Spirit is a moment by moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; to yield our will to God's word; and to allow the word to richly dwell in us.
2. Spiritual Warfare: The believer is in a war – a war for our minds. We are being attacked by the devil, his world system, and the flesh. Yet, God has given us everything we need to be victorious in the battle: the word and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. Worship: Worship is a continual action of ascribing worth to God as we meditate on His majesty, placing the worship of Him before everything, and worshiping Him with our entire being with correct understanding from and in a manner consistent with His word.
4. God's Will and Decision Making: The decision making process is 1) obedience to God's word in moral decisions, 2) freedom to make spiritually expedient non-moral decisions with the responsibility to use wisdom, and 3) humble submission to God's sovereign.

Spiritual Gifts

There has been much discussion on the subject of spiritual gifts in recent years, particularly on the topic of cessation versus non-cessation of the sign gifts. The key passages regarding spiritual gifts are Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:11; and 1 Pet 4:10. The Scriptures present clear teachings on spiritual gifts that are important for us to understand if we are to function properly within the body of Christ, the church.

Definition of Spiritual Gifts

The primary Greek word used in relation to spiritual gifts is *charisma* meaning a free and undeserved gift, unmerited favor. Spiritual gifts are not natural talents, but are special Spirit empowered abilities for service to the body of Christ.

Talents are abilities that God has given each person as a result of general grace poured out on humanity (c.f. Matt 5:45). Talents may or may not be used to serve the body, but are not Spirit empowered. Ryrie in *Basic Theology* compares talents and spiritual gifts.

Talents	Spiritual Gifts
Given by God through our parents	Given by God independent of parents
Given at birth	Given at spiritual birth
To benefit mankind generally	To benefit the body (church)

A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers to the body. For example, I have the spiritual gift of teaching (or preaching). I minister to you as the Spirit of God energizes me. This is something that I can't do humanly, but something the Spirit of God must do through me. Your spiritual gift is not cooking -- there are good cooks who don't even know God. It is a human ability. Your gift is not being a violin virtuoso. It is a terrific ability, but not a spiritual gift energized by the Holy Spirit. Your spiritual gift is a unique capacity to minister to the body of Christ through the channel of the Spirit of God, who supernaturally touches the lives of other people. *Spiritual Gifts – The Source of Spiritual Gifts* by John MacArthur, Tape GC 1850

A spiritual gift, then, is any ability and accompanying spiritual ministry and effect that God, through Christ, enables a believer to use, or motivates him to use, for His glory, in the body of Christ, through the energizing work of the Spirit. Spiritual Gifts: Definitions and Kinds by James F. Stitzinger, TMSJ 14/2 (Fall 2003) 143-176

Distribution of Spiritual Gifts

Only believers have spiritual gifts.

⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Rom 8:9

We each receive our spiritual gifts at the time of salvation.

¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. ¹²For even as the body is one and {yet} has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Cor 12: 11-13

God distributes spiritual gifts sovereignly according to His own will.

¹¹But one and the same **Spirit** works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

⁴**God** also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. Heb 2:4

⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of **Christ's** gift. ⁸Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." ... ¹¹And **He** gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; Eph 4:7-8, 11-12

Spiritual gifts are a New Testament phenomenon. They have been given to each believer since Pentecost (see Eph 4:7-8) and are not related to Spirit empowerment for a specific task in the Old Testament (see for example Ex 35:30-36:2).

Each believer has been given at least one spiritual gift which they are commanded to use to serve other believers.

⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. 1 Cor 12:7

¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 1 Cor 12:12

¹⁰As each one has received a {special} gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pet 4:10

The gift(s) are permanent, God never takes it back or we can never lose it.

²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Rom 11:29

There are a variety of spiritual gifts among the body that God uses to build His church. God has designed the body so that each individual is vital to its growth – no believer is more significant than another. There is strength in diversity.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all {persons.} ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Cor 12:4-7

¹²So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual {gifts,} seek to abound for the edification of the church. 1 Cor 14:12

⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, {each of us is to exercise them accordingly:} if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; Rom 12:4-6

¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 1 Cor 12:14-18

Details of the Spiritual Gifts

Paul says that there are varieties of gifts (1 Cor 12:4) and goes on in 1 Cor 12 (also Rom 12 and Eph 4) to give some examples of these varieties. There are two general groups of spiritual gifts: temporary (or sign) gifts and permanent (or edifying) gifts. Our goal for this study is not to study the Scriptural basis for the cessation of the sign gifts. We simply state that temporary gifts were given during the apostolic era in order to confirm the apostle's message. With the New Testament complete there was no need to confirm the message that was once and all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

³how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, ⁴God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. Heb 2:3-4

¹²The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. 2 Cor 12:12

The temporary sign gifts were:

- healing (1 Cor 12:9): the ability to directly and immediately heal with touch or word as Jesus, the apostles, and those closely related to the apostles did.
- miracles/powers (1 Cor 12:10): the ability to intrude into the natural world in a supernatural way outside of natural laws.
- tongues/languages (1 Cor 12:10): the ability to speak in a language that has not been learned.
- interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:10): the ability to understand a language that has not been learned.
- revelatory prophecy (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11): the ability to speak directly the utterances of God as new revelation.

Among the permanent edifying gifts there appears to be two categories: speaking gifts and serving gifts.

¹⁰As each one has received a {special} gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹Whoever speaks, {is to do so} as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves {is to do} {so} as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet 4:10-11

Speaking Gifts

- non-revelatory prophecy (1 Cor 12:10) **: the ability to proclaim clearly and effectively the testimony of Christ (Rev 19:10).
- word of wisdom (1 Cor 12:8) *: the ability to make skillful and practical application of Biblical truth to life's situations.
- word of knowledge (1 Cor 12:8) *: the ability to study, discover, and interpret, and explain the truths of Scripture.
- teacher (Rom 12:7) **: the ability to pass on truth in a manner that allows it to be receive and implanted in the hearer.
- exhortation/encouragement (Rom 12:8) **: the ability to provide comfort, courage, help, and strength to someone who needs; the ability to get alongside someone who has a problem, and build them, encourage them, strengthen them, and bear their load.

Serving Gifts

- administration/governing/leading (Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 12:28) **: the ability to make decisions and determine direction, to mobilize a group to reach an objective.
- ministry/helps/service (Rom 12:7) **: the ability to take lovingly support someone, to take a burden off of someone else and place it on yourself.
- giving (Rom 12:8) **: the ability to super give – beyond the normal.
- showing mercy (Rom 12:8) **: is the ability to sympathize with a suffering person – to come alongside the poor, the sick, the destitute, the orphan, the widowed, and those in prison, and minister.
- faith (1 Cor 12:9) *: an intense ability to trust God in difficult and demanding ways, often expressed through prayer.
- discerning of spirits (1 Cor 12:10) *: the ability to recognize lying spirits.
- evangelist (Eph 4:11): the ability to proclaim the gospel in a powerful way to those that have not heard before.
- pastors-teachers (Eph 4:11): the ability to shepherd (protect and feed) the people of God.

* the definition is from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Corinthians*

** the definition is from *Spiritual Gifts Study Guide* by John MacArthur

The Discovery of Spiritual Gifts

The way to discover our spiritual gift(s) is to be Spirit filled (Eph 5:18+) since it is the Spirit who energizes the use of spiritual gifts and to obey and serve (1 Pet 4:10).