

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### LESSON 6: SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

We have now spent some time examining the different types of gifts given by God to equip and empower the Church for the mission to which it is called. But how do all these gifts work together at a practical level in the life of the Church? This lesson examines how all these gifts can be used alongside one another.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7)

The spiritual gifts are, in fact, a very great prize, given to us by the greatest King, and yet any boasting we might do is all in the gracious goodness of the King, not ourselves.

As we read in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, the Lord gives these gifts to His people, and He empowers them in us, and He means for them to be used for the common good.

If you were given a great prize by a great king, how would that make you feel? You might be tempted to boast in the prize you were given. You might use it to exalt yourself in the estimation of others. You might use the prize to benefit yourself at the expense of others.

The receiving and using of the spiritual gifts ought to not look like that at all. The spiritual gifts are, in fact, a very great prize, given to us by the greatest King, and yet any boasting we might do is all in the gracious goodness of the King, not ourselves. The use of the gift is for serving others, not benefitting ourselves. And the only one who ought to be exalted because of the spiritual gifts is the Giver Himself! When all the members of the church view their spiritual gifts this way, the church functions harmoniously and the Lord Jesus is exalted and seen as great among the nations.

Unfortunately, we know that this is not always the case. Human pride and sinfulness so often get in the way, tainting even the most beautiful of God's intentions. As we read in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, the Lord gives these gifts to His people, and He empowers them in us, and He means for them to be used for the common good. Reading this ought to instill in our hearts a freeing humility as we see that these gifts are not about us and our abilities. The gifts are not about our skill or our deservingness. The gifts are about the glory of God and the strength of His Church.

How can we foster that perspective in ourselves and in our congregations?

First, let's remember that the world is watching. Those people who we want to reach with the Gospel of Jesus Christ are watching our interactions within the church and are making judgments about us. When we use the gifts selfishly, when we hide the gifts fearfully, when we covet the gifts jealously, when we devalue the gifts proudly, we are really making a statement about the character and value of our God, whom we claim to love and obey. He has told us that He is handing out particular gifts to specific people and that He has designs on how we use them. Are we going to argue with the Lord on that? If so, our witness with non-believers is compromised.

Second, remember that the gifts are not to be used for our own personal benefit. Certainly we are blessed when we obey and use them for His glory, but primarily the gifts serve a bigger purpose than making us feel good. We can be the hands and feet of Jesus in the lives of people who don't know Him. We can speak His life-

giving words and share His hope-filled truths to those who are lost and hurting. What a marvelous privilege! Let's not waste the gifts He's given, or hide them out of fear, when we have the great opportunity to reach the lost and to strengthen the body of Christ in His name.

Third, let the varying spiritual gifts in your congregation keep you humble. There will be some who perceive certain gifts as more glamorous than others. And, truly, Paul does instruct us to 'desire the greater gifts.' However, this does not allow for selfish ambition or jealousy. Paul reminds us that a body has – and needs! – many different parts in order to function well (1 Corinthians 12: 14-20). If all a church had was people gifted in discipling, who would they disciple? With no evangelists there would be no new believers and the gifts would go unused. Every spiritual gift serves a purpose, and the Lord intends for us to use our gifts together, in concert, so that we can all contribute to the health and strength of the body.

Fourth, overall, do everything in love. A word search for 'one another' in the scriptures gives an extensive list of how we are to treat one another, how we are to consider one another, and how we are to love one another. This is a great framework for using the precious gifts the Lord gives. When we consider the needs of individuals above our own desires, we find that the body functions at its best.

Ultimately, pray together as a church, and pray at home in private, that the Lord would unify your congregation through the use of the gifts. Pray and earnestly desire the gifts that are absent from your congregation, not praying selfishly that you would get the greater gifts, but trusting that the Lord will grant that gift to the right person for His good purpose. And then work together thinking of ways that you can best serve each other and your community with the gifts God has given. Where one person is weak, another is bound to be strong, so find the people who can complete what you are lacking and serve together.

Jesus Christ is Lord over His church. He freely gives His spiritual gifts to His children, and then He lovingly invites us to serve Him in His kingdom work. Enjoy the fellowship of the saints as you join Him in this work. The Body of Christ is a privilege to be a part of, and serving together using His gifts is an outstanding joy!

Pray and earnestly desire the gifts that are absent from your congregation, not praying selfishly that you would get the greater gifts, but trusting that the Lord will grant that gift to the right person for His good purpose.

## IN REVIEW

- The spiritual gifts are not about you. The gifts are given for ‘the common good’ of the church.
- By our misuse of the gifts, we send a negative message to the non-believers in our community about how much we trust (or don’t trust) our God.
- All of the gifts are beneficial, and yet most of them are non-functional when we try to use them in isolation. Serving as a body of believers ensures that a full complement of the spiritual gifts is represented and available for use.
- We ought to pray for the ‘greater gifts’ in such a way that God’s purposes are our priority, not for our own selfish gain.
- It truly is a joy to be a part of a local church where the gifts are used Biblically and cooperatively for His glory!

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- When you consider the use of spiritual gifts in your church would you say they are bringing unity or disunity? Pray now for the leaders of your church and for the members that the Lord would grant humility and unity among your congregation as you serve together.
  
- Think of a small group that you are a member of: how many of the spiritual gifts that we've studied are present in that group? Pray that the Lord would grant the gifts that may be missing that your group needs to maximize your service opportunities.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at [www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing).