

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Lesson 20

Spiritual Gifts

Lesson outline:

- I. Understanding the Spiritual Gifts
- II. Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts
- III. Investing Your Spiritual Gifts

I. Understanding Spiritual Gifts

What every Christian needs to know about Spiritual Gifts...

- What are they?
- Who gets them?
- When do you receive them?
- Do we all share the same gifts?
- Why are they given?
- How many does each person get?
- What is the proper way to use them? Improper way?
- Controversial issues surrounding Spiritual Gifts (SGs)

What is the most common passage of scripture used in weddings?

Rarely do you attend a wedding without hearing I Corinthians 13 read. It is often referred to as the "Love" chapter. When you study scripture in context (always a good idea!), you will notice that chapter 13 is sandwiched between two chapters that are describing the gifts of the Spirit or spiritual gifts. Challenge your class to study chapter 13 in context to see what they can learn this week as we answer the questions listed above.

There are three main scriptures that deal with spiritual gifts that we will look at in this lesson and will help us answer these foundational questions that every Christian should know.

1. I Corinthians 12-14- We will focus on chapter 12 in class.
2. Romans 12:3-8
3. Ephesians 4:1-16

Read I Cor 12:1-7

v. 1 – our goal for today and for all believers- we do not want Christians to be unaware or ignorant about spiritual gifts. Most people in churches today have no idea what spiritual gifts are, do not know what gifts they have nor how to use them!

v. 4 – There are a variety of gifts. There will be a lot more on this when Paul uses the body analogy to describe the gifts later in the chapter.

v. 7 – The “manifestation of the Spirit” is a Christian’s spiritual gift. We are given this for the “common good”. The Spirit is referred to 6 times in vv 7-11. The purpose of the Spirit providing SGs is for the common good. The common good is the benefit of the church- the building up of the body of Christ. SGs are not given for personal advancement, professional success, or even to benefit your family. They are given to be used to build God’s church. Your gifts may be used in the family or professional world but that is not the purpose of why the Spirit equipped you in that area!

Quick Review of our initial questions with answers.

1. Who gives SGs? Holy Spirit, “as He determines” v.11
2. Why are they given? For the common good of the church.

I Cor 12:12-26 – The Body Analogy

Paul compares the distribution, the usefulness and the attitude of SGs to a body. The body (church) requires many parts (areas of giftedness). In one church, the people are blessed with a variety of gifts. Not every member will have the same gift (speaking in tongues or teaching or...). A variety is needed for functionality. The major theme in this passage is the need for those many parts to work together as a functioning unit. Everyone does his/her part with the proper attitude (not jealous because they are not gifted in another area) in perfect unity...for the glory and growth of the body.

Illustration – [TEACHERS: Give a personal example of when you have had something wrong with a part of your body. A limb in a cast, crutches, organs not functioning, etc. Tell how one thing can throw off the entire progress of the body]. I blew out my ACL (knee ligament) in college and had to have reconstructive surgery. In a couple of weeks my entire leg suffered extreme atrophy. Leg muscles that took years to build were shrinking. Stress to the class the importance of everyone using the Spirit given gift to keep the body/church functioning. Don’t allow atrophy to happen in your class/church because you are not exercising your gift.

Reviewing the chapter, several of the SGs are listed. Here are the ones presented in I Corinthians 12:

Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Apostleship, Teaching, Helps, Administration

Romans 12:3-8 – Paul restates briefly what was presented in I Cor 12. He also adds Service, Encouragement, Giving, Leadership and Mercy to the list of biblical SGs.

In Paul's transitional chapter from theology (Romans 1-11) and application (ch 12-15), he presents a three part outline of how to live. Part one – How to personally live for Christ (vv 1-2). Part two – How to function in the church among other believers (vv. 3-13). Part three – how to live for Christ in a hostile world. In part two, Paul spend over half of the verses stressing the importance of the SGs.

In Ephesians 4:1-16 (Don't get bogged down chasing the rabbit in vv 8-10), we add Evangelism and Pastor/Shepherd to the SGs listed in scripture. It also adds an exclamation point to the purpose of SGs: "To Equip the Saints (believers) for service, to build up the body of Christ." Paul also continues the theme of unity. We work to grow the church in maturity(vv13-14) and unity (vv3, 13, 16).

II. Discovering Your Spiritual Gift(s)

Class question - How many people took a career aptitude test in high school that gave you direction in what type of job to pursue? How many of you are occupied in that field today?

Spiritual Gift Inventories are ok at giving someone a little direction but are not perfect at distinguishing what areas the Spirit has gifted you. Here are three steps to discovering your SGs:

1. Make sure that you are familiar with the SGs listed in scripture and have an understanding of how each gift is used to build up the body of Christ. Ask yourself: what areas get me excited? In what areas can I make a positive impact on my church? What tasks come natural to you? Someone who is gifted in the area of Administration is energized by tasks of administration. Someone without that SG can accomplish the same task but it will be draining and not come naturally. I have watched people who do NOT have the SG of teaching give great lessons but it required much labor, struggle and energy.

* You need to explain that SGs are NOT excuses to omit things from the spiritual disciplines that scripture outlines and requires ALL believers to practice. Giving, evangelism, compassion, faith, wisdom, service are examples of things that we are ***all*** called to do/practice. Just because the Holy Spirit has not gifted you in the area of giving, doesn't

mean you do not give. That area will require more labor and more discipline and you will not receive as much enjoyment as someone who is gifted.

A great example of this is evangelism – we are all called to share our faith. For someone who is not gifted in that area it requires much effort. They sweat, they dread, they plan, they practice...and then they obediently share the gospel with someone. When it is finished, they are relieved. Someone who has the SG of evangelism can be sitting at a coffee shop one minute and sharing the gospel one minute later and never think about it. It comes naturally; it is the area of their giftedness.

Make sure your class knows that they do not get a free pass just because they are not gifted in a certain area.

2. Ask those who know you best. If there is an area that you think you may be gifted in, ask people who know you what they think. Make sure you enlist friends who will be honest!

3. Trial and Error – Pick an area, begin serving, and evaluate. I repeat: jump in and begin serving! Remember, that the area needs to be built up as part of the body of Christ. After doing it, ask yourself these questions:

- Did I enjoy it?
- Was it draining or energizing?
- Did others enjoy me doing it?
- What feedback did I receive? Did I get feedback from my family/friends or from Simon, Paula and Randy?(from *American Idol*) I am always amazed at how bad some singers are that tryout for American Idol and how their family cannot stop talking about how great they sound. You need a Simon to speak truth and give honest feedback!
- Did others benefit from me doing it?
- Did my gift promote unity?
- Did I live out Matthew 5:16 or did I absorb the glory?

III. Using your spiritual gifts

We have been cautioned in I Corinthians 12-14 to be humble when using the SGs. We also learned that they are to bring order and not frustration/disorder to the church. We are told to not compare our gift to others (to covet or to boast).

I believe one of the most fitting passages in scripture that explains the use of SGs is Jesus' parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In this parable the talents left with the servants can be used to describe what we do with our SGs that the Holy Spirit has given us.

Read that parable and answer these questions:

1. How were the talents distributed? (not evenly- and no one complained that it wasn't fair!)
2. What was expected from the master? (invest)
3. What happened when the servants invested their talents? (gained more for the master)
4. What was the response of the Master to the servants who invested?
5. What happened to the talent that was buried? (taken from him)

Application:

- When we invest the SGs, God entrusts us with more gifts.
- If you don't use it, you can lose it.
- It's not our job to look around and see how many gifts people have. It is our job to invest our gift(s) in ways that will reap eternal returns...for the benefit and glory of the Master.

Review the main questions:

- What are they? Supernatural, Spirit given abilities
- Who gets them? Every believer
- When do you receive them? When you receive Christ (upon receiving the Holy Spirit)
- Do we all share the same gifts? No – there is a variety
- Why are they given? Build/edify the church
- How many does each person get? at least one and many times more than one.
- What is the proper way to use them? Bring glory to God by building up the church. The SGs should promote unity in the church.
- Improper way? For selfish gain/ comparing to others/dividing the body of Christ.

Controversy surrounding the SGs:

1. Is there a category of gifts listed in scripture that are “dead” or “dormant”?

People who adhere to this school of thought believe that I Cor 13:10 is referring to scripture. The “perfect” means the closed canon of scripture. They argue that the “extraordinary” gifts (healing, tongues, interpretation, etc) were given to validate the authors writing God’s word. When God’s word was complete (perfect), the need for these gifts became unnecessary – “the partial will be done away”.

The other side of the argument says that I Cor 13:10 is referring to the return of Christ. When perfection appears is the glory of Christ’s return.

Whatever side you are on, please teach that this is a NON-essential belief. We are all going to agree on John 14:6 (Jesus is the only way to heaven), the inerrancy of scripture, the second coming of Christ, the virgin birth, etc- those are Essential beliefs. This debate falls under the non-essential beliefs. We can find unity in disagreement.

2. Are the gifts listed in scripture exclusive or are there true SGs that are not listed in the New Testament?

There is a fine line between abilities, talents and Spiritual gifts. Talents and abilities are given at birth and developed through your environment. Spiritual gifts are given upon conversion. Are they exclusive? Please refer to my paragraph on non-essential beliefs! I can say with certainty that the Spirit does give the gifts listed in the NT. Whether or not you believe that there are more, please make sure that all beliefs are based on scripture and not experience. Good homework for your class- can they find any scriptural evidence that promotes that the list of SGs in an ongoing work?