

DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

(INTRODUCTION)

I. WHY A STUDY ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

- A. First of all believers are exhorted concerning spiritual gifts not to be ignorant about them (I Cor. 12:1) and not to neglect them (I Tim. 4:14) but to stir them up (II Tim. 1:6).
- B. The N.T. deals particularly with this subject in detail (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4).
- C. The N.T. Church learned very early the blessing of recognizing and using spiritually - gifted men (I Cor. 6:1-7).
- D. When the subject of spiritual gifts is taught and believers discover their gifts and begin to utilize them it leads to a new sense of spiritual purpose and fulfillment in their lives.
- E. Believers need to know the answers to the following questions:

II. WHERE CAN WE FIND A LIST OF THE DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

A. This can be found in the Scriptural passages mentioned
(Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4).

B. Notice the following chart:

III. WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

- A. A spiritual gift is a Spirit-given ability for christian service. It is granted by the Holy Spirit to every believer to empower him to serve within the body of Christ (Church) for its edification.

- B. Notice there are three things involved in this definition:
 - 1. First we see the source of a spiritual gift - it is something that the Holy Spirit Himself sovereignly and graciously bestows upon believers (I Cor. 12:11).

 - 2. Secondly we notice the nature of a spiritual gift - it is a divinely ordained spiritual ability or enablement (I Pet. 4:11). It is God's power enabling a person to do a certain thing.

 - 3. Thirdly we see the purpose for which spiritual gifts are given - they are for serving or ministering to the saints for their edification (I Pet. 4:10).

 - 4. The N.T. word for spiritual gifts is charisma and means gift of grace from the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 12:6).

IV. TO WHOM ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS GIVEN AND WHEN ARE THEY RECEIVED?

- A. Every believer is given at least one spiritual gift (Eph. 4:7; I Cor. 12:7, 11, 27). It may be a while before a child of God recognizes it or he may never use it as

God intends, but there are no exceptions.

- B. Notice every believer is given his spiritual gift or gifts at the time he is saved (I Cor. 12:13). This explains how from the very beginning of the early church there were those who were qualified for the position of pastor or deacon. The men who served in Acts 6 had the gift of helps and wisdom (Acts 6:3).
- C. It should be understood also that manytimes believers are endowed with several different gifts. Paul for example had a variety of spiritual gifts. But notice this was by divine dealing and we should be content to use what the Lord has given to us (I Cor. 12:18). We are not responsible for the exercise of what we do not have but rather for that which we do have.

V. WHY WERE SPIRITUAL GIFTS GIVEN?

- A. Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of others. For this reason they are not for individuals to boast about or to selfishly glory in (Eph. 4:12).
- B. Notice since the spiritual gifts are given for the benefit and blessing of the body of Christ to build others up, this rules out any personal and private use of them. Some try to propagate that the gift of tongues is for private devotional use in our day.
- C. We should also note since the purpose of spiritual gifts is to edify others it follows that only by faithful attendance in services and fellowship with other believers can this purpose be realized. This is why folks can't serve God properly when they allow other things to take them away from the services and ministries of a local church.

VI. HOW ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS CATEGORIZED?

- A. Spiritual gifts may be categorized in a threefold way- the speaking gifts, the serving gifts and the sign gifts.

B. It should be noted that none of the sign gifts are mentioned in the epistles except the letter to the Corinthians. They were mentioned there to deal with the problem which they had with one of the sign gifts (tongues). It should also be noted that the sign gifts authenticated the message of those who were sent by the Lord and they served to confirm what they said (I Cor. 1:22; Jn. 6:30; Mk 16:17,18; II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3,4; I Cor. 14:22).
Notice the chart below:



VII. HOW DO THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS DIFFER FROM OTHER THINGS?

A. Spiritual gifts are not the same things as talents that we may possess.

1. A talent depends upon a natural ability that we have and these are possessed by the unsaved as well. But a spiritual gift depends upon a God-given spiritual ability.
2. Notice talents can relate to anyone and display themselves on a natural level. Spiritual gifts however relate only to the edification of the body of Christ. When these are demonstrated they are supernatural and above anything on the human level. Also when these are exercised they build others up in the faith.
3. Talents differ also in their source. They are natural abilities apart from any spiritual birth and may be passed down through heredity. Spiritual gifts on the other hand are bestowed by the Holy Spirit.
4. Talents are also present from birth; gifts are present only from the time of the new birth. Talents then are natural abilities while spiritual gifts are spiritual abilities.
5. Notice there's a difference in the purpose of talents and spiritual gifts. Talents may entertain or inspire others but these do so on a natural level without respect to spiritual results. Gifts however are for the spiritual growth and nurture of the body of Christ.
6. While talents do differ from spiritual gifts a christian should try to develop his talents as a means by which the Holy Spirit may allow him to exercise his gifts. We may also conclude that singing, playing an instrument, writing, speaking, or painting and the like are talents which must not be confused with spiritual gifts or substituted for them. God has given us spiritual gifts to accomplish what talents could never do. Note the chart below:

B. Spiritual gifts are not the same things as God-called and God-appointed persons to certain offices.

1. Spiritual gifts are divine enablements to do specific service. God-appointed persons to certain offices are positions through which they may exercise their spiritual gifts. Note Eph. 4:11,12, such individuals are gifts to the local church.
2. Spiritual gifts may be bestowed upon a believer, however that believer may not necessarily be called and appointed to a specific office in a local church. Problems always arise when individuals are placed in certain offices and do not possess the particular gift to be exercised through that office.

C. Spiritual gifts are not the same things as ministries.

1. A ministry is the sphere or area in which a spiritual gift is exercised. For example the gift of teaching may be used in a ministry to a class, on visitation or in one's home (Titus 2:4).
2. A ministry may change from locale but spiritual gifts do not change. Paul for example had a ministry to the Jews through which he exercised his gift of preaching

(Acts 18:4,5,6). Then he conducted a ministry to the Gentiles.

An example of these things being confused is evidenced by itinerant singers who look upon their singing as a ministry for the Lord. Ex: man who wanted to sing gospel bluegrass.

D. Spiritual gifts are not the same things as the fruit of the Spirit.

1. Every spiritual gift is not given to every individual but every individual ought to have the whole cluster of the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Spiritual gifts are what believers have; the fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of what believers are.
3. Gifts have to do with christian service; the fruit of the Spirit has to do with christian character.

E. Spiritual gifts are not the same thing as spiritual maturity or godliness of life.

1. A believer may possess several gifts and yet be very ungodly. The Corinthian believers had all the gifts (I Cor. 1:7) but they were not spiritual (I Cor. 3:1,2,3).
2. A believer may possess spiritual gifts and never grow to the place where he will exercise his gift. This is all too often the case with many who get saved but

never serve.

VIII. HOW DO SPIRITUAL GIFTS FULFILL THEIR PURPOSES AND MEET THE VARIOUS NEEDS IN THE CHURCH?

- A. First of all for reaching the lost, some have been given the gift of evangelism.
- B. For instructing and leading, God has given the gift of shepherding to the pastor.
- C. For protection of the body there is the gift of discernment.
- D. For encouragement there is the gift of exhortation.
- E. For financial support there is the gift of giving.
- F. To help others and show kindness there is the gift of showing mercy. All the rest have their own particular purpose which we will consider later in this study.

XI. HOW DO SPIRITUAL GIFTS RELATE TO THE LORD'S COMMANDS?

- A. Spiritual gifts are often exercised in obedience to scriptural commands. For example an individual with the gift of giving will be exercising his gift as he obeys the Lord's command in giving.
- B. Obedience to the Lord's commands is not always limited only to those with particular gifts. Every christian is commanded to be a witness. Every christian is also commanded to give. Every christian is commanded to do good to others. Just because we lack certain gifts this does not relieve us of the responsibility to obey the Lord's commands.

X. HOW CAN SPIRITUAL GIFTS BE RECOGNIZED BY THOSE WHO HAVE THEM?

- A. Spiritual gifts may be recognized first of all by a detailed study through the Word of God as we see how certain individuals were used to do certain things. This we purpose to do in succeeding studies.
- B. Spiritual gifts may also be recognized as we obey the Lord's commands and involve ourselves in His service. This is usually the way folks discover their gifts. An individual often discovers as he attempts to aid those with certain problems that he himself has the gift of showing mercy. Some folks fail to discover their gifts simply because they do not obey the Lord's command to serve.
- C. Certain spiritual gifts may also be recognized by a call from the Lord as an individual is involved in faithful service. An individual with the gift of pastoring will be called by the Lord to be a pastor. An individual with the gift of evangelism will be called to be an evangelist. Philip who had the gift of wisdom and used it in serving (Acts 6:3,5), also had the gift of evangelism and was called by the Lord to be evangelist (Acts 8). Paul for example had the gift of teaching and as he exercised this gift in the church at Antioch the Lord called him to exercise some of his other gifts in other areas (Acts 13:1,2).

XI. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO DISCOVER AND TO DEVELOP OUR GIFTS.

A. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are?

B. What are you doing with them?