

Small Group Study

Our Mission

To build a Christian community by making fully devoted disciples of non-religious and nominally religious people



Discussion

Your Kingdom Come: “Grace Gifts for Kingdom Works”

Scripture

Have a volunteer read the following scriptures:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV):

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT):

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. 11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

Introduction

Though it is not an exhaustive list, Paul, in the passage from 1 Corinthians, begins to list some of the spiritual gifts. Let's go through Paul's list and name the gifts he mentions in verses 8 through 11. (Definitions below are from Steve Robbins', "Spiritual Gifts and 'Phenomena,'" unless noted otherwise.)

The Message of Wisdom: “The word of wisdom gives us God's direction—to lead a group, solve a problem, discern God's plan, or to please God with an ethical course of action. God shows us what He sees so we know what to do.”

Ice Breakers

Use ONE of the questions to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What is one of the best gifts you ever received? Why was it so great?
2. Share a time when someone's words encouraged you in a significant way.
3. Share a time when someone blessed you or helped you out in a significant way.

The Message of Knowledge: “The word of knowledge gives us God’s instruction by granting us Spirit-inspired insight into previously given revelation (usually Scripture). It causes us to recognize God’s voice and acknowledge His will.”

Faith: “The gift of faith is the God-given anticipation (a mysterious surge of confidence) that God is about to act through a word or deed followed by its realization in spite of contrary circumstances.”

Gifts of Healings: The gifts of healings are “the restoring of health and/or curing of illness by divine intervention.” “Note the plural, ‘gifts of healings,’ indicating a variety of ways that God heals, e.g., through physical restoration, deliverance, restoration of relationships, etc.” (Robbins, “VLI Syllabus,” p. 3).

Miraculous Powers, or Workings of Miracles: “Workings of miracles are events in which people and things are visibly and beneficially affected in an extraordinary way by the power of God working through an individual.”

Prophecy: “The gift of prophecy declares the heart of God in the power of the Spirit directed to the need of the moment (to a gathering of believers or to an individual)—bringing conviction (convicting those in sin, convincing the unbelieving, comforting the hurting, and strengthening the resolve of those needing encouragement in their godly pursuits).”

Distinguishing between Spirits or Discernments of Spirits: “The discernments of spirits is the God-given capacity to recognize the source and significance of spiritual activity...[It is] Holy Spirit endowed recognition” of whether a source is divine (God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or an angel acting on their behalf), demonic, or merely human.

Different kinds of Tongues: “The gift of speaking in tongues is the God-given ability to praise Him in such an intimate and profound way that it exceeds our ability to do so in our own language. Thus, tongues serve as a devotional worship language that increases the worshiper’s awareness of her/his communion and intimacy with God.”

The Interpretation of Tongues: “The gift of the interpretation of tongues is the God-given ability to put into words the unintelligible tongues that is the result from upsurges in the human spirit as it is excited by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. The content of tongues speech is identified in Acts 2:11 and 10:46 as ‘praising God for His greatness and mighty deeds.’”

Questions

Please feel free to adjust this study to fit your group’s needs and to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to use all of the questions.

1. Why are the gifts of the Spirit given to the church?
2. How can we make the mistake of approaching spiritual gifts for our own purposes?

3. When have you been tempted to think God couldn't use you? How would that restrict the power and potential of God's Spirit released in your life?

4. Some Christians teach that God gives each of His children a special gift and each uses that gift exclusively. Once they discover their gifts, then folks are almost pigeonholed into certain service. While some people are used by the Lord consistently in certain ways, we also believe the Lord is sovereign over the gifts and may supply different gifts on different occasions. For example, the Spirit may give Mary a revelation that someone in the group is suffering from insomnia. Betty may reply that she is that person. Mary and Bill may ask Betty if they can pray for her. When they invite the Holy Spirit to come and lead their prayers, the Holy Spirit may give Bill a powerful anointing of a gift of healing and his prayers may bring great relief to Betty. Mary may also get a word of encouragement for Betty to share with her.

However, the next time the group meets, Bill might be the one who receives a revelation about someone with a backache while it is Betty who gets a fresh anointing from the Spirit to pray effectively for Sam's bad back. In other words, we don't want to limit the ways the Holy Spirit might anoint and use various Christians in our small groups or body.

Read John 14:11-14 (NLT):

11 *Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.*
 12 *"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.* 13 *You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father.* 14 *Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!*

What is your response to Jesus' statement in verse 12? Do you believe it?

5. If we are to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31, 1 Cor. 14:1), which of the gifts would you like to pray for? How would you know you had that gift after you prayed for it? Would you have the courage to step out in faith and use it?

Ministry Time

During ministry time, invite the Holy Spirit to manifest His presence and release gifts and/or empower your group in a fresh way to use the gifts they have received. Be sure to allow time for the Spirit to minister as He chooses. I recommend that you avoid just sharing prayer requests and then interceding for the people who asked for prayer. Instead, first wait on the Spirit to see what He wants to do in your group.

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God bless,

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How to Cultivate the Gifts of the Spirit

By Jack Deere

If our pursuit of the gifts of the Spirit is tempered with a pursuit of the character of Christ, we will receive more than we ever dreamed to ask.

Can someone really cultivate or develop a miraculous gift – like healing or prophecy – that is supernaturally empowered? Well, a teacher can grow in the gift of teaching, and an evangelist can grow in the gift of evangelism. Even though the miraculous gifts are supernaturally empowered, they are not magical or mechanical. The truth is that we can grow in every spiritual exercise and every spiritual gift.

So how do we cultivate the gifts of the Spirit in our own lives and in our church?

First, you must be convinced that the bible teaches the gifts are for today and that they are important; otherwise, you won't have faith to exercise them or to pray for them. Likewise, you must be confident that the gifts are given to all Christians (1 Pet. 4:10) rather than just a few especially deserving people

The most important thing I have done in pursuing the gifts has been to pray very specifically for the gifts I felt the Lord wanted to give me. Even though the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts to each one just as he wills (1 Cor. 12:11), Paul still encouraged the Corinthians to pray for gifts. If you have the gift of tongues, for example, Paul says that you should pray for the gift of interpretation (1 Cor. 14:13). Don't passively say, "God can give me any gift he wants to." God could also make you a great bible scholar if he wanted to, but I don't know any great bible scholars who got that way without diligently pursuing knowledge of the bible. Nor do I know any great evangelists who got that way without diligently pursuing evangelism.

Remember, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2). I pray every day specifically for the gifts of the Spirit that I want to be operative in my life. For example, healing is one of the gifts that I want to regularly experience in my ministry. I pray every day for the Lord to give me authority and power in this gift. I mention specifically the kinds of diseases and conditions that I want to see him heal when I pray for people.

Probably the second most valuable thing I have done in my pursuit of spiritual gifts is that I have attempted to use them on a regular basis. This involves some risk and, specifically, the risk of looking foolish. Almost as soon as I began to ask God to give me a healing ministry, I began to pray for sick people. Most of the sick people I prayed for at the beginning of my ministry did not get healed. When I first began to give words of knowledge in public, I also had some embarrassing moments. But there is no other way to grow in anything apart from constant practice and risk. The only good athlete you will ever see is a bad one who didn't give up. The only good disciple you will ever see is a bad one who didn't give up.

When the disciples first started out with Jesus, they were incredibly dull and not particularly promising. However, the eleven who didn't give up became the leaders of the church. Apply the parable of the talents to spiritual gifts (Matt. 25:14-30). If we don't risk, our gift will not grow, and if our gift does not grow, the Lord will not be pleased with us.

As I pray for the release of spiritual gifts, I also pray for the heart and the affections of the Lord Jesus to be released in my life. When we share his *motives*, he can trust us with his *power*.

A third thing I have found helpful is to study the gifts. The scriptures have a great deal to say about spiritual gifts, as well as numerous examples of supernatural ministry. The bible offers us many helpful principles concerning the miraculous ministry. I have read and continue to read a number of books dealing with the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit, as well as biographies of Christians who were used powerfully in supernatural ministries.

It also helps to begin practicing the gifts of the Spirit in a non-threatening atmosphere. One of the most helpful, non-threatening places to begin to learn about the gifts of the Spirit is in small informal home groups of ten to twenty people. The small size makes it possible to get to know one another relatively well and to feel a degree of security. It is much easier to attempt to give a prophetic word in front of twenty people who know you and love you, than in front of five hundred people on Sunday morning who may not know you at all. In an informal setting like a home group, it is easier to talk about the ministry that was attempted that evening and analyze it, than in a much larger and more formal setting.

I have also found conferences on spiritual gifts to be helpful. In the ideal conference, there will be a number of speakers on different subjects who have had a wide range of experience in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. There will be healing and revelatory power in that conference so that the participants can see firsthand how these gifts work. The purpose is to train the participants in the gifts of the Spirit. In these kinds of conferences, you have the opportunity to actually exercise the gifts of the Spirit, as opposed to just watching a gifted individual use his gift.

Finally, as you are learning about spiritual gifts, be patient. Don't despise the day of small beginnings. Be thankful for everything you are learning and for every answer to prayer the Lord gives you. Be thankful even for the frustration you feel when things seem to be going too slowly.

Identifying Your Gifts

Identifying our spiritual gifts is not nearly as difficult as some would imagine. There are several keys to discovering gifts. The most obvious and practical clue is your *degree of success in various attempts at ministry*. The areas in which you are most successful are likely to be those areas in which you are gifted. If you repeatedly fail in your attempts at teaching but have success in your attempts at evangelism, that may indicate you have an evangelistic gift rather than a teaching gift. Normally, you will have to minister in various areas before you can determine which gifts you have.

Our *desires* frequently indicate the gifts we have or the gifts the Lord wants to give us. When I began to desire to be used in a healing ministry, I had no evidence in my previous ministry that the Lord had gifted me in that way. As I began to pray for the Lord to use me to heal and then began to pray for people to be healed, I discovered this was one of the gifts the Lord wanted to give to me. Do not say, “The Lord can give me any gift he wants, so I will just wait for him.” That is theologically correct, but it often becomes an excuse for passivity. Paul told us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39). He also told us we could pray for spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:13). Turn your desires into prayers, and soon you will know the gifts the Lord wants to give you.

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The *counsel of others* can also be important. It is always possible for us to deceive ourselves about our gifts. I have a friend who has an amazing gift of evangelism. Yet he is ignoring that gift of evangelism and trying to become a teacher. I don’t think he has the gift of teaching, nor do others who know him well. In situations like these, the counsel of others – especially trusted friends – can save us much frustration and wasted effort.

Finally, gifts can be given through *the laying on of hands with prophetic utterance*. In the New Testament, the apostles could do this, as Paul did for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6). But apostles were not the only ones who could impart spiritual gifts. Paul exhorts Timothy, “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Tim. 4:14). Timothy had received a spiritual gift through the laying on of Paul’s hands and through the laying on of the elders’ hands.

After John Wimber prayed for me about four years ago, I noticed an immediate increase, both in words of knowledge and healings, whenever I prayed for people. I have seen this happen on numerous occasions when Paul Cain has prayed for people to receive various spiritual gifts. I do not think this is automatic. It must be done under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, or nothing will happen.

Confidence in Christ

If you really want to experience the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, perhaps the most important thing I can tell you is to put your confidence in Christ’s forgiveness, not in your own godliness or traditions. The power for miracles does not come out of our godliness; rather it was bought with the blood of God’s Son.

After Jesus had healed all the sick people in Capernaum, Matthew said, “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases” (Matt. 8:17). Matthew quoted from Isaiah 53, that great Old Testament chapter that describes Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross in the place of sinners. Matthew is teaching us that the power for healing can only be found in one place, in the cross of Christ.

Never make the mistake of thinking that when you pray for someone it is your godliness or the power of your personal holiness that will bring healing for that person. After Peter was used to heal the lame man who sat at the temple gate, he said to an astonished crowd of

onlookers, "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus" (Acts 3:12-13). Put your confidence in Christ rather than in your own goodness or the goodness of those for whom you pray.

The one who had the most supernatural ministry of all said, "I only do what I see my Father doing" (John 5:19). Jesus had to be led by his Father, and so do we.

Motives

Years ago, while I was jogging along a riverbank, I was praying for the Lord to release greater healing gifts in my ministry. As I was praying very specifically, a voice erupted inside my mind and said, "What do you want these gifts for?" I recognized that voice immediately as the voice of the Lord, and it offended me. My pursuit of the gifts of the Spirit had cost me dear friendships and even my former career. I was pursuing the gifts of the Spirit for God. Why would he ask me that? I slowly realized, however, the question had been for my sake, not to fill up gaps in God's personal knowledge of my psychology. As I began to ponder that question slowly and painfully, impure motives in my request began to emerge. I realized that there was still a great deal of carnality in my desire for the gifts of the Spirit.

You cannot repent of sin that you cannot see. When the divine light exposes our darkness, we can repent, confess, and receive his forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Without the revelatory ministry of the Holy Spirit, we cannot understand the motives of our heart (Jer. 17:9-10). All of this is extremely important in our pursuit of spiritual gifts, because our motives are a significant factor in the release of power in our lives.

Jesus did miracles to prove that he was the Son of God, to show the truth of the gospel, to bring glory to God, to display compassion for the hurting, to open doors for evangelism, and so on. As I pray for the release of spiritual gifts in my life, therefore, I also pray for the heart and the affections of the Lord Jesus to be released in my life. When we share his *motives*, he can trust us with his *power*.