



A Bible Study on Spiritual Gifts

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Statement of Purpose

This Bible Study is available to assist God's people in more effectively carrying out their God given mission through the utilization of their spiritual gifts.

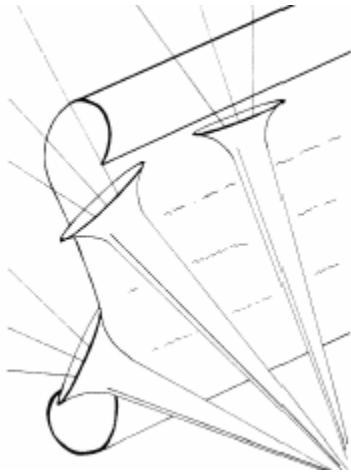
Preface

In his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed the Reformer Martin Luther clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ through the Gospel. In addition to that chief function of the third person of the Trinity, Luther goes on to explain the other functions of the Holy Spirit directed to God's Redeemed. One such function, says Luther, is that the Holy Spirit "enlightened me with His gifts." This Bible study with that title is an attempt to help God's people understand that work of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, this Bible study is designed as a tool to help people discover, identify, and put to use their spiritual gift(s). The format of each lesson is so designed that either a group or individual can use the study course. It was written with that idea in mind: to reach people desirous to study God's Word in a group setting as well as on their own. It is our prayer that use of this study will drive people into the Word of God to a study of spiritual gifts to the end that through such study spiritual growth will occur and God's people will be set into motion to labor faithfully in God's Kingdom. To that end guide and direct, O Holy Spirit.

A word of acknowledgement and thanks is due to
Mrs. David (Maureen) Albrecht
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All Scripture quotations are taken from The New International Version (NIV).

Note: Northwest District-LCMS has received permission
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Lesson 1: **Have You Heard?**

The sound of trumpets at times plays the role of announcing something or someone. Well, if you haven't heard, a lot of people in the church are talking about such things as spiritual gifts, church growth, a mobilized laity, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and charismatic gifts. Unlike the hula-hoop, spiritual gifts are not a fad type of thing, here today and gone tomorrow. Matter of fact, as we will learn in this study, spiritual gifts are as old as the church. They are not new! They are not in the ranks of here-today-gone-tomorrow, Centuries ago the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Corinth about spiritual gifts. What did he say? In the space below write out the words of I Corinthians 12:1.

The Corinthian Christians had spiritual gifts alright. And they had problems with them. However, Paul's solution was not to have them forget about spiritual gifts or ignore them. Paul says: You have a lot to learn about spiritual gifts before you get around to using them properly. I'll give you some help. They were ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. And the solution was not to ignore them but to learn properly about them, their use, and the key role they play in the church.

Now if the people in Corinth were called ignorant when it came to spiritual gifts where does that put us? At best we too are ignorant and need to learn more about spiritual gifts. This study is designed to do just that. Our guide? Our teacher? God's Word! Remember what the Apostle Paul said to young Timothy?

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Scripture is profitable says Paul. In the above passage circle the four key words which tell us what we can profit from a study of God's Word. God's Word has many purposes. Let's look at some of them.

Look up John 20:31. Why did John write this Gospel?

The Apostle Peter, addressing himself to suffering Christians, speaks of a purpose for using God's Word. Look up I Peter 2:2. What is the purpose of God's Word ("Spiritual milk") according to Peter?

Now look again at the II Timothy passage written out above. It states yet another purpose for studying God's Word. What is it? Write it out below.

In this study God's Word will be our guide. It will help remove the ignorance we might have concerning spiritual gifts. It will help equip us as God's chosen people to be workers in His Kingdom.

Why Study Spiritual Gifts?

When someone asks you to do something a reply one usually gets is - why? The child when told by a parent to put his coat on before going outside many times responds by asking - why? To ask that same question about studying the subjects of spiritual gifts is a fair one. After all, there are hundreds of worthwhile things of a spiritual nature you can study. Why this subject? Why this subject that seems quite different, quite controversial? Let's look at four reasons why people should study the subjects of spiritual gifts.

REASON 1: Spiritual Gifts Are Taught in Scripture

Spiritual gifts are mentioned in four key places in the New Testament: I Corinthians 12:1-31 ; Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 12:1-21; I Peter 4:7-11. Each one of these passages will be studied in some detail in another lesson. However, it is good from the very beginning to look at the passages. Take time to read each passage and look for one statement of truth from each passage - at this time one only - concerning spiritual gifts. Write that truth in the space provided.

I Corinthians 12

Ephesians 4

Romans 12

I Peter 4

REASON 2: Spiritual Gifts Play a Significant Role in Church Growth

If you haven't heard the term "church growth" by now, it's time you are introduced to one of the key terms in mission and evangelism work today. By definition, church growth is "all that is involved in bringing men

and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership.” (From Your Church Can Grow by C. Peter Wagner.)

Church Growth experts have determined a number of factors which are present in growing churches. They are listed below. Read each one and evaluate on the scale listed below as to what degree the church you belong to follows these church growth factors.

SCALE: 5=Definitely, 4=Most of the time, 3=Some of the time, 2=Seldom, 1=Never
Circle one for each of the following factors.

- Factor 1 - **The Pastor:** The Pastor sets the style. He wants the church to grow.
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 2 - **A well-mobilized laity:** A developed, working system in the church which involves the laity of the church in its total ministry in a significant way.
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 3 - **A large enough church:** Large enough to provide the services that the members expect from a modern church.
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 4 - **A proper balance of church functions:** Balance between celebration (worship), fellowship, cell (smaller group identification opportunities).
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 5 - **Ministry to homogeneous unit:** (A group of people who consider themselves to be “our kind of people;” People having many areas of mutual interest).
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 6 - **Effective evangelistic methods:** No one method is common among growing churches. In evaluating ask, “Is our method effective?”
5 4 3 2 1
- Factor 7 - **Properly arranged priorities:** Is the churches top priority that of bringing men and women, alienated from God by sin, into reconciliation to Him through faith in Jesus Christ?
5 4 3 2 1

REASON 3: Spiritual Gifts Help Answer the Question “How do I fit in?”

Many people in the church soon ask these questions: How do I fit in? What is my part in this church? What can I do? What should I do? What is my role in the task of “making disciples of all nations?”

In I Corinthians 12 Paul compares the church to a body having many parts. In order for the body to function well all the parts of the body are needed and must function. All are important. Write out I Corinthians 12 :27:

According to the passage what are we?

Those “parts” of the body Paul goes on to list in verses 28 and following. Those “parts” we call spiritual gifts. Everyone in the church is a part, has a spiritual gift. Therefore, to know what part (spiritual gift) you are helps you identify your activity in the work of the church.

REASON 4: Spiritual Gifts Are One of the Keys to Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual gifts are “A key” not “THE key” to spiritual maturity. In no way does the discovery and use of spiritual gifts supercede or replace the continual use of the means of grace - Word and Sacrament. It is through a use of the Word that we learn of, grow in, and use our spiritual gift(s) given us by the Holy Spirit. Put all that together - use of Word and Sacraments, functioning properly in the church through use of my spiritual gift(s) and the Christian without a doubt will mature spiritually.

SPIRITUAL GIFT

What is a spiritual gift? Well, Lesson Five will answer that question in detail. But just in case curiosity has gotten the best of you here is the definition we will use in this study course.

Spiritual Gift - *A special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the body of Christ (the church) according to God's grace to be used within the context of the body of Christ (the church) for the purposes of glorifying God and edifying the church.*

WHAT'S NEXT?

Before looking at spiritual gifts specifically it is necessary to lay a good foundation. Lesson 2 and Lesson 3 will do that as we look at the church and our role in the church. In the meantime add to your daily Bible reading these chapters on the subject of spiritual gifts: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4, and I Peter 4. Read them several times. Such reading will help tremendously when we get to Lesson 4. And pray that God the Holy Spirit, working through the means of grace, would bring to you growth and understanding on the subject of spiritual gifts.