

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 23, 2023

There's More: Discovering, Developing and Utilizing Spiritual Gifts

by Dan Trygg

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think beyond what it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ But we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us...” Romans 12:3-6

“As each one received a gift, be serving it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

The farther we go in this series about developing the skills of being an active follower, or apprentice, of Jesus Christ, the more ridiculous the idea that all we have to do is “accept Jesus and go to church” appears! **There is so much more that God desires for us to discover, learn and implement in our walk with Jesus!** That’s why it is so important to understand that Jesus is asking us to “develop disciples”, not just “get converts”. Think again of Jesus’ final instructions in Matthew 28:18-20: “Going about, *make disciples of* (lit. ‘disciplize’) all nations, baptizing them..., and teaching them *to keep all that I commanded you...*”. We are to do or implement the same things that Jesus taught His apostles to do. **A disciple is a doer, a practitioner, an experiential-learner, an imitator, one being trained to learn, develop and utilize skills with effectiveness. Coming to faith is entering a door of discovery of growing in Christ.**

This entire series, entitled “There’s More”, is an attempt to clarify what it means to follow Jesus. What are we to be pursuing? What are we to be learning? What skills are we to be discovering and developing? What are we to be accomplishing? **What does the infusion of the Holy Spirit produce in a human life, if we learn to partner with Him?** If the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are completely His (2 Chron. 16:9), **what are the possibilities for my life? What could He do in and with me?**

The next discipleship skill we are to consider is *discovering, developing and utilizing our spiritual gifts.* Many churchgoers do not even realize that they have a spiritual gift, ...or even what spiritual gifts are. So many people go to church all their lives and are never really exposed to this aspect of the spiritual life. I was raised in a church like that. We danced around Bible stories, and the basic message of the gospel, emphasizing Jesus’ death on the cross, His resurrection and the forgiveness of sins that is available in Him. We were never systematically taught about what being a disciple was, ...and we certainly were not taught to believe that God had given us spiritual gifts. How sad! Again, **here is another tool that God has given to us to reveal His kingdom power and life, and to help one another grow,** but it is often ignored, or only given a surface treatment. **It is meant to be a key part of our lives and ministry!**

What are spiritual gifts? A spiritual gift is a unique ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Each one of us in Christ has at least one spiritual gift, and we may have more. **This special empowerment is given by the Holy Spirit to reveal the presence of God in a special way. It is given to build up other believers in Christ, or to reveal the power of God to others.** We each have at least one gift that seems to be wrapped up in our normative function in the body of Christ, or our ministry to the world (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; 14:1-40). Then, there also seem to be temporary giftings that the Holy Spirit may give to us to meet a need in a particular circumstance (1 Cor. 12:4-11). **The spiritual giftings make us to be like different parts in the body of Christ.** Each part is needed, and significant. **In order for the body to be at its best, each part needs to be able to function, and to be healthy.** The grace of God is meant to be mediated to one another by the ministry of the Spirit of God through the various gifts of the body. **When the parts of the body are not functioning as they should, we all suffer as a result.** It is the way God has designed the community of believers to operate. From this, you can see that this is a very important aspect of discipleship. You can also see that the way that most church meetings are designed in 21st century America leaves little or no room for the operations of the Spirit to be expressed to one another when we gather.

In Romans 12:3-8, we are told that we are to think realistically about ourselves and our function in the body of Christ. We are not to “think beyond what is necessary to think, but to think with sound judgment” about our spiritual gift. Paul refers to it as a “measure of faith” being apportioned to us (vs. 3). This is referring to our spiritual gift as a normative, consistent functional ability which has been granted to us by God. We are not to have an inflated opinion about ourselves, nor a minimizing perspective about our role in the body. We are to come to see ourselves as God intends us to function. **We have been given a portion of grace (vs. 6) which is combined with a measure of faith that enables us to operate in the empowerment of the Spirit in the area of our unique giftedness** in the body of Christ. Note that there is a partnership involved in this. God sovereignly distributes His grace of empowerment along with an endowment of faith to produce a unique expression of His Spirit through *your* life. In order for that gift to come to expression, that faith must be exercised. **We have to trust what God is doing inside of us, or respond to what He is**

making us aware of in our surroundings, so that we engage with and act in accordance with what He is doing.

We discover and develop our gifts as we begin to perceive things we had not perceived before, and we act on them.

This is actually the context leading into these verses. In Romans 12:1, we present ourselves to God to serve Him. We offer ourselves to Him for His purposes. Then (vs. 2), we are told to not continue to conform ourselves to this present age, but to be transformed by the “renewal of your mind”, a new and different perception of things. The purpose of this is to “test-by-experimentation-to-discover the will or desire of God, that which is beneficial, well-pleasing and mature.” **We discover and hone our spiritual gifts by engaging with what we perceive to be the stirring of God’s Spirit. We learn by doing.** This is clearly an experiential learning process, ...a hands-on, take-a-risk, give-it-a-try kind of learning, ...the kind of learning that you would expect a “disciple-apprentice” to have to do. **Four important steps: (1.) Present yourself to God; (2.) Pray for His leading; (3.) Perceive what He is stirring or doing; and (4.) Partner with Him** by getting involved in accordance with what you perceive that He is doing. **This is very personal, but it is meant to be transactional, meaning that you are to somehow bring the inworking grace into an outward expression of word or deed.** It is meant to build up, encourage, or edify others. **You will experience a flow of the Spirit, ...a joy, freedom or empowerment..., as you do this, and others may recognize that this is the hand of God at work.** This feedback is a very important piece. We need to know when we are successfully engaging with the Spirit of God, so we can be encouraged to do it again. **When you see or recognize that God used someone in a significant way, please give them that positive feedback.** It will build their confidence and their faith.

There are some twenty gifts mentioned in the lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; 14:1-40). There have been many attempts to categorize, describe and define them, but since we only have names, and incidental accounts of their use, such descriptions are limited, at best. **We have “word gifts”** (Eph. 4:11): **apostles** (‘sent-out ones’ who bring the gospel to new places, and often start new faith communities); **prophets** (people who receive direct messages from God to declare to people); **evangelists** (‘good-news-ers’ who are especially motivated and effective at sharing the good news with others who don’t know Christ); **shepherds** (people especially gifted to care for and feed believers in groups; ‘pastors’); **teachers** (people especially gifted at instructing others in the word of God). **Then there are “revelatory gifts”** (1 Cor. 12:8-10): **a word of wisdom** (a revealed message that brings practical solution to a problem); **a word of knowledge** (revealed information given by the Spirit that would not otherwise be known); **discernings of spirits** (revelation about the presence of demonic spirits, or the condition of human spirits); **tongues** (the received ability to speak in languages otherwise unknown to the speaker); **the interpretation of tongues** (a revelation about the meaning of an utterance in an unknown language or tongue); **the inworking of miracles** (the inner working of the Spirit that results in a miraculous act); **gifts of healings** (Spirit-induced prompting and ability to heal); **faith** (an unusual ability to see and believe in something God intends to do, and it comes to pass). **There are “pragmatic gifts”** of assisting others (Rom 12:7,8; 1 Cor. 12:28): **service** (an unusual prompting, initiative and ability to render hands-on, practical assistance to others with effectiveness); **helps** (a ready willingness to join in with others in projects or to meet needs); **giving** (an unusual heart and capacity to give money and resources to others); and **mercy** (a Spirit-empowered compassion or mercy that results in practical action to help others). **Finally, there are other “relational gifts”:** **coming-alongside** (a Spirit-prompted initiative and ability to engage with others to offer comfort, counsel, or exhortation -- Rom. 12:8; cf. Acts 4:36; 11:23); **steering** (an unusual ability to “guide” and “direct” others effectively; 1 Cor. 12: 28 -- Often translated as “administration”, the word was most commonly used for a navigator or steersman in a boat. Instead of standing in front, he had a unique perspective to steer the ship from the back of the boat. This gift may describe a “mentor” or “life-navigator”, ...or it may refer to a person who can skillfully organize and direct a community without being the most visible leader.); and a gift of **standing-before** (a Spirit-enabled ability to take initiative and lead, or to take responsibility to meet a need. Rom. 12:8; cf. 1 Thess. 5:12; Tit. 3:8,14, ‘engage’). The thing about these “relational gifts” is that they do not have to rely on positions of hierarchy. They take initiative because the Spirit is working through them. They are effective because of relationship skill, example and wisdom.

As you read through some of these giftings, possibly you could relate to some more than others, ...or, you could immediately think of people who exemplify these gifts. Romans 12 tells us that we are to truthfully and accurately examine our lives in order to recognize what our gifting may be. The purpose for this is not simply to satisfy our curiosity, or to have a “label” we can share with others. The purpose is so that we might learn to more clearly recognize the promptings of God, and learn to more responsively engage with what He is doing in our lives.

Peter breaks the spiritual gifts down into two general categories: things to speak, and ways to serve. He says that as each one of us has received a special gift, we are responsible to utilize our ability as stewards of God’s grace. We are to take this seriously. **We have received a spiritual gift** (or gifts). God put that capacity, that grace-ability, in us. **Now He wants us to be responsible to discover what that is, and to learn to utilize it.** So, **how do we do that? We present ourselves to Him**, as ready servants. **We pray and pay attention** for what He stirs up within us, or what He brings across our path (Eph. 2:10). Then, as we recognize what He seems to bring to us, or prompt within us, **we participate. We take a risk.** We step into the opportunity, or we respond to the prompting, and we see what we can learn. **God will teach us as we step out in faith, and test-out-by-experimentation.**