



feeding...gathering...carrying...leading. (Isiah 40:11)

Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday Stuart laid a basic framework for how to approach a theology of the Spiritual Gifts. We all seemed well versed in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithful, gentleness, and self-control, but much less able to identify the nine manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit. Yet as we read the book of Acts we cannot get away from the words of wisdom (6:10 – 7:53), knowledge (5:3), prophecy (11 & 21), healings (3:8, 9: 17-19), miracles (9:40), faith (27:13-38) discernment of spirits (16:16-18), tongues and interpretation of tongues (2 & 10) which are prevalent and pervasive in the early life of the church. Understanding how these gifts might manifest in our own church life today does require a common foundation for us all to stand upon.

Here is a summary of the overview Stuart presented:

PRE-EXISTENT EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

We come to the gifts of the spirit with our own pre-existing spiritual, denominational and theological experiences. For some this will be about a recovery of past negative experience, and for others it will be a discovery of non-existent experiences. Our pre-existent attitudes can deny, discredit, distort, depreciate, distance, divorce, and despise that the gifts are part of our inheritance as a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ for the service of the Body.

TWO DANGERS, WARNINGS & ENEMIES

Not all manifestations of the spirit are equal, and can be fleshly and immaturely expressed. We must not uncritically accept everything we witness. We are also in danger of an unspiritual response to the giver, the Holy Spirit, and an irreverence for His Personhood. Our responses to the manifestations of the spirit, are responses to a Person, and they are taken personally! Scripture warns us about two things with regards to the Person of the Holy Spirit, not to grieve or quench Him. We grieve the Holy Spirit by failing to recognize His Person, purpose, presence, purity, promptings and provision. While quenching Him is about our control, culture, compromise, fear and failure to test the spirits. Scripture tells us how to discern, so we do not want the fleshly to put us off to the truth of the spiritual. Lastly, in Corinthians Paul sets up two enemies of the spiritual gifts which are ignorance and arrogance (4 & 5).

FOUR PRINCIPLES

First, the Spirit's sovereignty is related to our surrender. There is always this lovely relationship between the sovereignty of the Spirit who initiates and our freedom to receive, but it requires our willing surrender to cooperate. The gifts and move of the Spirit are not void of personal, beautiful nuances of God expressed through this one and that one in our midst! It is not a colorless, tasteless domination. Second, the spirit can manifest any gift, through anyone, at any time as He wills. Where the power of God has worked in your own life there is the potential to operate in strength, with the gift of faith, for that work in somebody else's life. Nothing God does for us is just unto us, but it meant to be multiplied through us. The gifts are a corporate issue! Third, Paul lays a pastoral foundation about diversity and unity. God works equally and consistently through all regardless of difference and with equality! The last principle, refers to taking care and taking risks. We safeguard against the false and fleshly manifestations by testing if it is Christ-centered (Lordship),

scripture-based, and full of godly character. But within those safe boundary lines we must be bold to pursue, grow, and mature in the expressions of the Spirit, as Paul exhorts us.

CONTROL

This is not a matter of an individual being forced to do something, but a matter of oversight. The gifts and manifestations are directed by the Spirit, controlled by the character of Jesus, constrained by His love, and contained within scripture. The issue of control does not mean there is no enthusiasm, joy or affection, but it is regulated by the fruit of self-control.

CREED

It is about creed not confusion! In 1 Corinthians 12:3-8, Paul lays a Trinitarian theological foundation. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same **Spirit**; and there are varieties of service, but the same **Lord**; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same **God** who empowers them all in everyone." It is the reverse order than we typically expect (Father, Son, and Spirit), but Paul is modeling a vital process wherein the Spirit submits to the Son, and the Son exalts the Father. The understanding of the unity we experience as the gifts are manifest, is the unity of the Trinity, and requires our submission to the Godhead. The point is we do not begin with giftedness, we begin with the Godhead!

THREE PURPOSES

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). First, it reveals God's presence, which is what is meant by "manifestations." Second, it requires all members' participation – "to each one is given". What gifts are you praying for to be expressed in you and others? Third, the purpose is to result in the church's profit - "for the common good." You cannot privatize the gifts of the Spirit.

NEW TESTAMENT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Just for our understanding and reference there are three categories of gifts mentioned in scripture, motivation gifts (Romans 12:3-9), ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12), and manifestation gifts (1 Cor. 12). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not toys to be played with or extras that are not really needed. Nor are they trinkets, jewelry, to adorn us to make us look good. We must see the gifts of the spirit as functional, brilliant tools in the tool bag for doing the work of Jesus. If you are walking in and witnessing to the life of Christ it is nearly impossible not to move in the gifts of the Spirit.

THREE RESPONSES

So what do we do? Stir up the gifts that are in you (2 Tim. 1:6) . Do not neglect the gift that is in you (1 Tim. 4:14). Covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31)! At the end of the day it is all about His presence and His desire to be with us.

We cannot understand the gifts as simply an individual matter! The gifts of the Spirit do not have a full meaning unless they operate through and to the Body of Christ. In fact, the lack of ministration of the gifts does impact the cohesiveness and unity of the body. We must move in desire and maturity for the sake of the body, or at the expense of His very gracious influence in our lives. Christ Our Shepherd believes the gifts are normative and they are necessary, so how are we asking and seeking for this move of the Presence of the Lord in our church life?

Pursuing Him,
Monique (on behalf of Stuart)