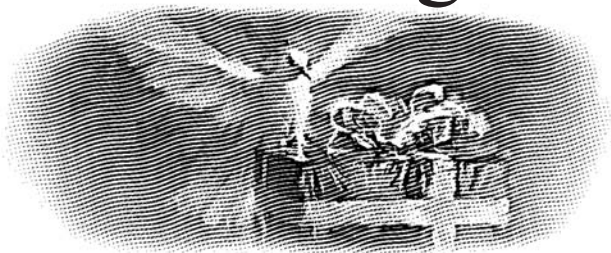


Spiritual Gifts *for* Evangelism *and* Witnessing



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Pet. 4:10; John 16:8, 13; 1 Cor. 12:28–31; Acts 2:40–47; 13:4, 5.*

Memory Text: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (*Ephesians 4:11, 12, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Spiritual gifts are special attributes given to each member to be used for God's glory and for the saving of souls.

As a church we have rightly emphasized the spiritual gift of prophecy, but we have not always stressed the importance of other spiritual gifts for ministry. Yet, it's important that we do so. It's a clear biblical doctrine; thus, as a church, we need to take these gifts seriously in order that members can become comfortable with receiving and exercising those gifts.

It is unfortunate that many church members do not take advantage of the gifts they have been given. There are many reasons for this lack. Sometimes the fault lies with the members themselves. Sometimes, perhaps, more could be done to encourage members to discover their gifts and then use these gifts in ministry and outreach under the direction of the Holy Spirit. What a waste to have a gift and never use it for that which it was intended.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 21.*

Gifted Believers

If you asked the members of your church, many of them would have to think long and hard before they could conclude that they had any spiritual gift that the Bible lists, even though many of these people have probably already been exercising a spiritual gift. They have just not consciously recognized it as such. A number of people who have not formally sought to discover their giftedness do expert ministry in areas to which they feel called, and their church affirms them. Very often a spiritual gifts discovery seminar simply confirms the gifts already manifested in a ministry. It is clearly possible, therefore, that people can exercise a spiritual gift under the leadership of the Holy Spirit without formally discovering and naming that gift. At the other end of the spectrum there are those who find it difficult to become involved anywhere in the church because they don't consider themselves gifted in any way. It is important to encourage them to discover their giftedness and intentionally seek to work within it.

Read 1 Peter 4:10. What does this verse say about everyone who is committed to the Lord having some gift?

We have already seen that every believer has a ministry, so it should come as no surprise that God will equip us to perform it. Therefore, everyone who takes the great gospel commission as a personal evangelistic mandate from God will be equipped by the Spirit to become involved. Regarding the church's soul-saving work, God knows what is needed in what place and at what time.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:11. It reveals that the bestowal of spiritual gifts to believers is a part of the Holy Spirit's work of equipping the saints for every good work (*see Eph. 2:10*). Not only does the Holy Spirit distribute spiritual gifts among believers but, also, as Acts 1:8 reveals, He empowers us to use our gifts.

None of the Bible passages that list spiritual gifts are identical. This suggests that the lists of gifts given are not complete; that is, there might be other gifts as well that could be added to the list.

Think about the word *gift* or *gifts*. What does the word imply? What does it tell you about your responsibility to use that which has been freely given you for the work of the Lord (as opposed to only for some other purpose)?

The Spirit and His Gifts

To a certain extent a person's spiritual gifts define his or her place in the local church. In other words, to discover spiritual gifts is to discover where the Lord wants you to function in the body. Have you ever been asked to be involved in an area for which you just had no passion or interest? Do you know people who have accepted church positions only to resign partway through the church year because they feel that they are the wrong person for the job? Most likely in these situations, people have been asked to undertake, and in some instances have tried to become involved in, a church ministry that they are neither called to nor gifted for. Though this does happen, it doesn't have to be the norm.

Read Acts 13:1–3. **What happened here, and what does it tell us about the importance of being called to a ministry?**

It is significant that the Holy Spirit is the one who calls us to minister for God. Barnabas and Saul were called and equipped by the same Spirit. Verse 2 gives us some important information. It reveals that Barnabas and Saul were already involved in ministering for the Lord before they were called for a specific ministry. We know that it was a specific ministry because Simeon and Manaen were not called at this time.

Just before Jesus left the earth, He promised that the Holy Spirit would come to be our Helper. Part of the Spirit's work is to equip us to spread the gospel. If, therefore, He gives us gifts to accomplish the evangelistic task, then they are surely important, and we need to exercise them.

What do the following texts reveal about the Spirit's interaction with us? *John 16:8, 13; Acts 13:4; Rom. 8:11; Acts 1:8.*

When we understand why the Spirit gives spiritual gifts, we see how vital they are to the salvation of those we are to reach for Christ. Through the Holy Spirit's calling and gifting, each believer is involved to varying degrees, and in diverse ways, in the great work of spreading the gospel.

Although we may designate some gifts as important or special, in reality all gifts are crucial to the life and mission of the church. While we sometimes place a gifted evangelist, preacher, or teacher on a pedestal, those with gifts that nurture and disciple are just as crucial.

Discovering Our Gifts

Discovering our gifts is not difficult. You will be able to recognize quickly the gifted ministry areas of your pastor and other key leaders in your church. All you have to do is observe what they are doing and notice how people respond to their ministry. However, it is another matter when it comes to considering what one's own spiritual gifts might be.

The process of discovering an individual's spiritual gifts has sometimes been presented as rather simplistic: fill out an inventory, apply a formula, and your gift is discovered. Many church members have attempted to discover their spiritual gifts through this avenue but have been disappointed when their local church does not place them in positions where they can exercise their gifts within the body.

An appropriate spiritual gifts seminar is perhaps the easiest way to begin to discover your spiritual gifts. However, it is wise to consider the seminar as only the beginning of the search, as, indeed, most prepared seminars point out.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:28–31. What is Paul telling us in these verses about spiritual gifts?

These verses are not directing us all to desire one or two gifts that are commonly thought to be the best. In this passage Paul shows that spiritual gifts are distributed according to the needs of particular situations facing any church in any place at any time. The best gifts would be those that would empower members of the local church.

When seriously considering your possible gifts, don't underestimate what other church members say. When members sit on the nominating committee to choose the various leaders and support teams for the coming church year, they look for people who have already exhibited an interest and ability in certain ministries. Even though the committee may not understand or intentionally consider spiritual gifts, they are in fact looking for people gifted in specific areas of ministry.

When someone shares his or her belief that you would be really effective in a certain ministry position, it may well be a confirmation of your gifts. It would be wise to listen and pray about it.

The results of a spiritual gifts seminar—coupled with the affirmation of fellow believers and the results of a trial period in a particular ministry field—would be a clear indication of what the Lord has called and gifted you for.

What do you think your own gifts are, and why?

Other Gifts

When we think of spiritual gifts and witnessing and evangelism, we tend mostly to focus on the gifts of evangelism, preaching, and teaching. Though not all gifts are overtly evangelistic, if ministered within the church body they will have varying degrees of impact upon the church's evangelistic mission.

Read Acts 6:1–4 again. People were given similar responsibilities to those we would expect of deacons today. What reasons did the disciples give for not wanting to do this work? How are we to understand the principle that is revealed here?

The newly elected deacons were contributing to the overall evangelistic program of the early church by freeing up the disciples to be engaged full time in evangelism and preaching. So while we may not consider the actions of the deacons as gifts that would equip them for the evangelistic front line, they did have evangelistic impact behind the scenes. Of course, it is quite possible that the deacons' ministry of distributing aid to needy widows rendered people more ready to listen to the gospel when it was preached. God alone knows the good these people did in their roles.

For a church to function, leaders and administrators are necessary in the areas of organization, finances, and so forth. Those who serve their Lord in these varied capacities must understand that they are part of a team and that their contribution is essential to the church's overall evangelistic thrust.

Read Acts 2:40–47. What spiritual gifts were being manifested here, and what was the result, not only in witnessing but in discipleship? What important lessons can we take from this for ourselves?

The word *added* in Acts 2:47 is used in the sense of incorporation into a society. While the new converts were certainly added to the church, they were also brought into fellowship and cared for. Therefore, we can conclude that spiritual gifts in the areas of administration, leadership, hospitality, pastoral ministry, and service would be among those present. This is a good example of the exercising of individual spiritual gifts to benefit the whole church through supporting the evangelistic ministry of others.

Think of your own part, your own role, your own ministry in the church. Where does it fit in with the mission of the church as a whole?

Gifts and Christian Responsibility

Spiritual gifts are not discovered just to satisfy our curiosity but rather to indicate that which the Lord would have us do and to show where we fit into the church body. This, of course, brings great responsibility as we seek to fulfill that for which God has especially equipped us.

Compare Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12, and Ephesians 4:16. What do these verses say about spiritual gifts and the body?

It is significant that the three main chapters that list spiritual gifts all do so in the context of the church body. This shows that although an individual may be involved in a witnessing or evangelism event on a personal level, as with Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer (*Acts 8*), we each have the responsibility to exercise our gifts through the church.

As we have seen already, whatever the church does, it must do under the authority and direction of the Holy Spirit. It is our responsibility to seek the will of God and to work in harmony with that which the Spirit reveals. We must not fall into the trap of making plans and then seeking divine approval. Often we ask, “What can our church do for God?” We would do better to discover and get involved with what God is already doing among His people.

What do Matthew 10:19, 20; Acts 13:4, 5; 16:6, 7 tell us about how the disciples were directed by the Holy Spirit?

The disciples allowed the all-knowing Holy Spirit to direct their ministry. Sometimes they tried to enter a field of labor and were prevented by the Holy Spirit. Most probably Paul received a vision in which the Holy Spirit gave him specific instructions as to where the disciples were to work (*see Acts 16:9, 10*).

Spiritual gifts must be used responsibly, and the best way to ensure this is for the receiver of a gift to maintain an open communication channel with the Spirit. We have a responsibility to maintain the unity of the church. If we are Spirit-led, there will be the desired unity. The Spirit directs individuals, and He directs the church. The direction He gives to one member, He gives to the whole church. The Spirit does not lead individuals away from the body.

When we have committed ourselves to the service of Christ, we can expect great things to happen as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. The key is for us, as individuals and as a church, to be ready to receive that which the Spirit gives.

Further Study: Discover or Organize Local Training Opportunities.

If you have decided upon an area of witnessing and evangelism and have discussed it with your pastor and evangelism leaders, it is time to consider your readiness for the task. You will want the best possible chance of influencing people for Jesus; thus, training is important. Remember, working as a team rather than individually will ensure encouragement, support, and success. The following are this week's key areas of focus:

1. In consultation with your pastor and evangelism leader, discuss what, if any, training events and processes can be undertaken. All training does not have to be at the local church. Explore the possibility of attending regional training or being sponsored to attend some training seminars, if available.
2. Another training option is to request that your pastor or other trainers provide local witnessing and evangelism training. If costs are prohibitive and there are only a few people wishing to be trained at your church, why not advertise regionally and make it a regional training event based at your place?
3. While you are undergoing training for your chosen area of witnessing and evangelism, consider what resources are available. Becoming familiar with resources, and how to use them, forms an important part of preparation for your ministry.
4. Crucial to your outreach and evangelism ministry is personal spiritual preparation. You will become increasingly aware of your personal spiritual needs as you begin to serve God. As you then request and receive a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit, you will be empowered for greater service. Pray for the Holy Spirit to direct and use you.

Discussion Questions:

1 “God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper places, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ’s soon coming.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 481. Consider to what extent spiritual gifts are emphasized in your local church. What can you do to raise their profiles?

2 “All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327. How can we encourage all church members to discover, develop, and use their spiritual gifts? Why is it important that we do so?

A Home of Hope

Eddah watched the activity in the Masai camp nervously. It seemed that the whole clan had come to help her mother prepare for her wedding feast. But Eddah didn't want to marry; she wanted to continue her studies. She is a bright girl and had completed several years of primary school several miles from her home. Then one day she was attacked and raped on her way to school. Even after Eddah realized that she was pregnant, she continued her studies, stopping only to have her baby.

Eddah wanted to return to school, but her father found a man who would marry her and take her baby. He already had several wives. The wedding would take place the next day; Eddah's only hope was to run away to a school she'd heard about, Kajiado Adventist Education and Rehabilitation Center near Nairobi, Kenya, a self-supporting school operated by Seventh-day Adventist lay men and women.

When the women went to buy supplies for the wedding, Eddah wrapped her 4-month-old son in a blanket and set off to find the school. She walked more than 25 miles through bush country to the school.

Eddah and her baby arrived sunburned and dehydrated after their long walk. The matron fed them and listened as Eddah told her story. The matron agreed to take Eddah, but they had no facilities for her infant son. However, there was an orphanage not far away.

Eddah's family learned where she had gone. Her father was angry that she had run away, but he is proud that she is at the top of her class. Eddah will soon graduate from high school. "I want to study law," Eddah says. "I want to fight for the rights of other girls to study and have a brighter future."

Eddah's family, like many Masai families, is learning that education is a better investment for their daughters than an early marriage.

Kajiado Adventist Education and Rehabilitation Center must find sponsors for more than 100 Masai girls whose families cannot or will not pay their tuition. The girls learn responsibility by sharing chores and caring for their personal needs. And while they study they learn to love and obey Jesus.

The work at Kajiado has changed the lives of dozens of Masai boys and girls over the past several years. Global Mission pioneers are being sent into the area to reach the Masai with God's message of love. Your mission offerings help support this work in the farthest corners of the world.

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