

Elder Training Series

Session 11 - Spiritual Gifts - Introduction (NIV based)

(Repeating) NOTE: Perhaps it would be prudent for you to mark or highlight the items in this document that you suspect you need to study further, or accept, or correct, or develop, or work on, or improve in your life.

INTRODUCTION:

- - In order to do ministry functioning that is excellent and very productive, elders, overseers, pastors, and ministry leaders need to be fully using the '**spiritual gifts**' that God has individually endowed each of them with.
- - To facilitate this need, these next several sessions of this 'Elder Training Series' will present teaching on each of the spiritual gifts that are genuinely active during our time, which should assist leaders of ministry (and other believers) in better identifying, comprehending, and using their spiritual gifts.
- - And an important note here is that in previous sessions of this 'Elder Training Series', there have been cited in the Scriptures several instances in which elders, overseers, pastors, and ministry leaders are required and commanded by God to do ministry functioning that would necessarily involve the exercising of several of the spiritual gifts.
- - Furthermore, leaders of ministry (like Timothy) are mandated in 2 Timothy 1:6 "**to fan into flame the gift of God...**", in other words, fully develop and fully utilize the spiritual gift(s) that God has given you elders, overseers, pastors, and ministry leaders.
- As an additional benefit of this next 'Elder Training Series' teaching on spiritual gifts, leaders of ministry will consequently be able to assist other believers in identifying, developing, and fully using the spiritual gifts that God has given each of those believers.
- - - - Can you imagine how energized and invigorated the functioning, and extraordinarily effective the results would be if every one of the believers and workers in your ministry was operating from a state of exercising all of their spiritual gifts appropriately and to the fullest extent, as empowered by God?
- - So, take a few moments right now to pray and ask God to herein comprehensively enlighten your mind about spiritual gifts.

DEFINITION:

- - A basic list containing the current and the ceased spiritual gifts can be obtained by listing and combining those gifts cited in: Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; and 1 Peter 4:10-11.
- - From studying these listings in the context of their containing verses, 'spiritual gifts' can be defined as fundamentally "grace-gifts" in that higher-than-ordinary empowerment, or "extraordinary powers", or "supernatural talents" are graciously bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon individual believers, enabling them to serve the Body of Christ. (Putman 1212; Faricy 549; Unger 475)
- - Spiritual gifts are the vehicle or channel through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers to the Church and to other people. (MacArthur 51)
- A significant distinction exists between a spiritual gift and a natural talent:

- - - a spiritual gift is a "capacity for service" in spiritual situations that is directly given by and actively empowered by the Holy Spirit who indwells that believer, but "usually the spiritual gift must be developed" (Gangel 9),

----- in other words, that believer must learn how to fully access and draw upon that empowering of the Holy Spirit in order to implement that spiritual gift in the precise manner for spiritual purposes that the Holy Spirit desires;

- - - - whereas a natural talent is a "ready-made ability to perform", which the person implements according to his/her own will, purposes, and abilities, being apart from or without necessarily the active empowering, direction, and spiritual purposes of the Holy Spirit (Gangel 9).

- - - - Yet, a spiritual gift may be constructed upon natural talents (Faricy 549).

CONTEXT:

-- Of particular importance to understanding the usage and function of spiritual gifts is the context in which the gifts are listed in the Scriptures. For examples:

- - - - Preceding Romans chapter 12, the context has been the describing of aspects of God's mercy to believers. In view of God's mercy, Romans 12:1-3 declares that the believer should humbly live a consecrated and yielded life to the Lord. And then, Romans 12:4-6 expounds that with this type of pleasing life to God comes empowering to serve Him and the interconnected body of believers through the implementing of spiritual gifts.

- - - - In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, the foundation for the usage of gifts is laid by comparing them to how the parts of the human body function in relation to each other (Baker 269). Specifically emphasized is the concept that the "exercise of gifts and the ongoing total ministry of the church are inseparably related" and that each believer is to exercise his gift(s) accordingly (Gangel 10, Romans 12:4-6a).

PURPOSES:

- - The main purpose of spiritual gifts is to infuse ordinary believers with beyond-normal specific ministering abilities from God, so that those believers more-appropriately and more-effectively minister in a manner that God orchestrates. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

- - Spiritual gifts are to serve other people, through the ministry of the Church. (1 Peter 4:10; Gangel 116, 10)

- - They are for edification or building up of the whole Church body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 14:12). They are not intended merely for the enjoyment or enrichment of the individual members who possess them (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:5,12).

- - Through the ministry of the Church, spiritual gifts are also to be utilized for assisting in the conviction and conversion of unbelievers. (1 Corinthians 14:21-25, Putnam 1212)

- - True churches, those whose members have personally placed their faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning death on the cross to save them from the eternal punishment for their **own** sins, already have within their members all of the spiritual gifts that are needed to function and minister properly and effectively as a true church. (Romans 3:20-25a; 1 Corinthians 1:1-7)

- - Of utmost importance, spiritual gifts are always to glorify Christ. (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-11, **14**)

- - If the exercise of spiritual gifts does not make for the Lordship of Christ, then that which is manifesting does not have its source from God. (1 Corinthians 12:1,3)

- - Therefore, if the intention of the exercise of a spiritual gift is to bring glory to the person effectuating the gift, then that exercise is not from God.

- - Spiritual gifts are given to unify believers, not divide them or set them against each other. (1 Corinthians 12:25)

- - The Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes particular gifts of the various spiritual gifts to whom He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

- - Each believer is given at least one spiritual gift at the moment of salvation. (1 Corinthians 7:7; 12:11)

- - No believer has all the gifts, nor is any one of the gifts bestowed on all believers. (1 Corinthians 12:14,21, 28-30)

- - No believer has a choice as to which spiritual gifts he/she receives. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

- - A reasonable assumption is that the gift(s) each believer has been given are the best suited to his/her temperament and character, in accordance to God's evaluation and purposes for that believer.

- - Therefore, believers must not expect everyone to perform their spiritual gift(s) with the same success in each area.

- - Although not equally conspicuous, all gifts are important and they are not to be set over against one another as though their possessors are rivals. (1 Corinthians 12:22-26,18-21)

- - Because they are sovereignly given by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11), possession or lack of a particular spiritual gift is no cause for pride, regret, or discouragement. (1 Corinthians 12:18, 22-27; 1:7; 7:7)

- - Each believer should be happy with his/her own gift(s) and use them.

- - Those who have particular spiritual gifts are to cooperate with others in working out the Lord's divine purpose. (1 Corinthians 12:22-30)

- - Spiritual gifts should always be used in an orderly fashion with an attitude of love, humility, harmony, and unity - to edify, encourage, and serve others (Romans 12:3-5,10, Gangel 116).

- - The Lord holds each believer responsible to discover his/her spiritual gift(s) and then to develop them. (2 Timothy 1:6a)

- - Yet, one's particular gift(s) should determine where the majority of one's time, energy, and resources are to be expended. (1 Corinthians 12:17-20)

- - However, there are some areas, such as 'faith', 'giving', and 'evangelism' for examples, in which all believers should engage in the activity even though they may not possess the spiritual gift. ('faith' - see 2 Corinthians 5:7 in the NAS or KJV; 'giving' - 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 'evangelism' - 2 Timothy 4:5)

HINDRANCES TO EXPOSING SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

- - The spiritual gifts can be difficult to expose and identify as being present in a believer. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

- - And most believers are unable to identify their own spiritual gifts and thereby exercise them.

- - But God desires that believers "**not...be ignorant... about spiritual gifts**". (1 Corinthians 12:1)

-- Logically, there are several probable reasons why spiritual gifts are not readily observable among believers:

- - - The person may in fact not be a true believer. Non-believers do not possess any of the genuine spiritual gifts, nor are they capable of using them appropriately in a spiritual manner (1 Corinthians 2:14). However, it should be noted that as a non-believer, they may have a natural talent that has many secular characteristics that appear to align with an actual spiritual gift, for examples - teaching secular content, or serving in a secular environment.

- - - Many believers are not aware that spiritual gifts exist or what spiritual gifts are, nor that they have one or more of the gifts, so they do not pursue discovering and using their gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

- - - A sad reality is that many believers do not consider it a priority that they discover and utilize any spiritual gift(s) they may have, because they are too comfortable operating in their form of living as a 'good Christian' but producing very little fruit for God's kingdom. (1 Corinthians 14:1a; 15:58c; John 15:8)

- - - Many believers are operating in a state of frequent or substantial sinning even though they are a true believer. Their engaging in sinfulness hinders, dampens, quenches, and suffocates the presence and their usage of their spiritual gift(s), which comes by means of empowering from God. (Romans 8:5-8; see 'rocky' soil (vv.5-6,20-21), and soil of 'thorns' (vv.7,22) in Matthew 13:3-9,18-23)

- - - God is not being in control of the believer's life - God is not being given fertile conducive conditions in that believer's life to bring out and let shine their spiritual gifts. (see 'good' soil (vv.8,23) in Matthew 13:3-9,18-23)

- - - Very little, if any, opportunity is allow in churches and ministries to experiment on whether a believer has a particular spiritual gift or not. Essentially, the leadership fails to prioritize this aspect of equipping ordinary believers to do the work of the ministry. (Matthew 28:19-20)

----- When an opportunity does arise, that experimenting believer does not receive any affirming accurate feedback from anyone who rightly has detected and identified the presence of a particular spiritual gift in that experimenter's life - most likely because even leaders of ministry are not detecting and identifying the presence of a particular spiritual gift in that experimenter.

- - - In some denominations, many believers are in error seeking only the long-ago-ceased spiritual gifts that produce supernatural phenomena and that would greatly enhance their own status, and essentially they are not interested in the still-active spiritual gifts that do not produce supernatural phenomena. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; 1:7; in v.13:10 "when perfection comes" is referring to the completion of the writing and forming of the New Testament)

- - - Some believers are caught up in the considerable confusion and deviation today regarding the identity, purpose, and usage of spiritual gifts. This may be due to a general lack or outright rejection of proper Biblical training, knowledge, and understanding about spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

APPLICATIONS:

- - Do you accept the training in this document about spiritual gifts in general?
- - Do you grasp the importance to your ministry leadership functioning of having thorough training in spiritual gifts in general and in individually? If so, would it be wise

for you to **not skip** attending (or studying) any of the next-coming 'elder training' sessions on spiritual gifts?

- - Out of curiosity in advance of the next-coming 'elder training' sessions on spiritual gifts, do you know what are all of the spiritual gifts that you have? Or merely some of them? Or only a few of them? Or perhaps even none of them?

- - Also out of advance curiosity, is it possible that you have some deviation from proper scripturally-aligned understanding and usage of spiritual gifts?

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File name: eldertraining-session11.____ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

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