

We need each other to Mature

Ephesians 4:12-16

- I. Everyone is needed and responsible – God gave spiritual gifts to leaders to equip others so that every helps build up the church (Ephesians 4:12-13).
 - A. Gifted to Equip all – The reason God gave spiritually gifted leaders to the church is to equip everyone to serve the church (4:12).
 - B. Gifted to Edify all – Edification is a process in which all are involved in helping all to become like Christ (4:13).
 1. As we serve each other we will get know and trust Christ more. (13a).
 2. As we grow together we will mature in our character, resembling Christ more and more (13b).
- II. Everyone matures when everyone's involved – The result of everyone using their spiritual gifts is that the church can mature in love under Christ (Ephesians 4:14-16).
 - A. Stability through Truth – As believers serve one another, the church will know God's Word and not be misled by false teachers (4:14).
 - B. Truth plus Love – As the church combines truth and love it will be stable and will continually mature in Christ (4:15).
 - C. Maturity from Involvement – As believers all use their spiritual gifts in an attitude of love, the whole body grows and matures (4:16).

What are spiritual gifts?

- Definition: Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities to serve. The Greek word for spiritual gift (charisma) is a form of the word “grace.” So these special abilities are privileges.
- Spiritual gifts are not ministry *positions*. Youth ministry, music ministry or nursery worker are not gifts although those ministries definitely can put to use spiritual gifts such as teaching, encouraging, serving, etc.
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as *natural talent* (music ability or mechanical aptitude, etc.) although God may often give spiritual gifts that make use of natural abilities.

How do we get spiritual gifts?

- The Giver – The Holy Spirit specifically provides these special abilities (1 Cor.12:7-11). But it is also accurate to say that they are “Christ’s gifts” to the church (Eph.4:7, 8, 10).
- The Time – We receive spiritual gifts when we trust Christ as Savior. That’s when we receive the Holy Spirit and become part of the body of Christ.
- The Recipients – Each believer has at least one but perhaps several gifts.

What are the purposes of spiritual gifts?

- Spiritual gifts accomplish spiritual ministry that God desires (See discussion below).
- Spiritual gifts equip others to minister (Eph.4:12).
- Spiritual gifts glorify God (1 Pet.4:11).

What are the different spiritual gifts?

- Temporary Gifts – Some of the gifts listed seem to have been temporary, serving to establish the early church by verifying the gospel message to people as Christianity began (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb.2:3,4). The temporary sign gifts included apostleship, healing, miracle-working, tongues, interpretation of tongues, the word of knowledge, and prophecy. These gifts were needed before the New Testament was complete and prophecy specifically was needed for the inspiration of the New Testament.
- Permanent Gifts – Gifts that doubtless exist today include teaching, serving, giving, administration, leadership, encouragement, showing mercy, evangelism, pastor (shepherding). These gifts are crucial to the ongoing function of the church throughout this age.

How do we discover and use our spiritual gift(s)?

- We should concentrate on meeting needs, not pin-pointing our gifts. Getting involved in serving is how we will discover our spiritual gift (s).
- We should allow the advice of other mature Christians to guide us into areas of service for which we are suited and away from areas for which we are not.
- We should not use spiritual gifts as an excuse to avoid certain ministries. Christians are universally told to do some types of ministry (Show mercy – James 2:13; 3:17; Evangelize – Acts 1:8; Exhort one another – Heb.3:13; 10:25; Give – 2 Cor.8:7) which are also the specific spiritual gifts of some Christians (Mercy – Rom.12:8; Evangelist – Eph.4:11; Exhortation – Rom.12:8; Giving – Rom.12:8).
- Spiritual gifts do not benefit others automatically. We must obediently put our gift(s) to use. No one benefits unless we use them (Rom.12:6-8; 1 Pet.4:10,11).
- To use our gift effectively we must be trained and diligent (1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim.1:6,7).
- We must use our gifts with proper attitudes (Rom.12:8; 1 Pet.4:11) and at appropriate times and places (1 Cor.14:9-12,22,23,40). If used in pride for example our ministry can be worthless or even harmful to God’s purposes.

Sid Litke