

Over the past few weeks, I have alluded to this series that we will begin today; a series on Spiritual gifts. This is a subject that we could spend months discussing and debating because it is a topic on which there exists many different opinions and interpretations. With that in mind, I remind you of something we covered in our message on fellowship: disagreement is okay as long as it does not lead to division and as long as your interpretation is supported by consistent hermeneutics and solid exegesis of Scripture. The first of those is easy enough to understand but the second one may need more explaining.

Hermeneutics refers to the method of interpreting the Bible. There are different genres of literature in the Bible and each of those requires a slightly different methodology. Think of it this way: you don't read and process poetry the same way you do a textbook and you interpret personal letters differently than you do a manual. A proper and consistent hermeneutic is not difficult to obtain but it does require dedication, discipline, and determination. If you have been a part of our church for any significant time, you know the first rule of proper hermeneutics: context determines meaning. A passage cannot mean what it never meant. It had to have a meaning to its original audience.

That leads us to solid exegesis. Exegesis is the practice of objectively drawing the truth out of the Bible; allowing the passage to lead you to the truth. The opposite of exegesis is eisegesis which is subjectively reading meaning or truth into the Bible; interjecting personal preference, experience, or bias to make the text say what you want it to say. Solid exegesis can be difficult because we all approach life with our own personal perspectives, experiences, and biases. Many times these obstacles aren't intentional but subconscious and their existence is yet another reason we should spend time in prayer prior to studying the Bible. We should ask the Lord to make us aware of and to remove the obstacles in our hearts and minds to his truth.

That being said, the purpose of today's message is to offer an introduction to the topic of Spiritual gifts, answering some FAQs and setting the parameters for the remainder of the upcoming series.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

I. Spiritual Gifts: An Introduction

A. Participation of the Holy Spirit

1. OT

- a. The Holy Spirit was less active in the lives of believers during the OT

- b. Joel 2:28-29 looks forward to a time when the Spirit would become more active in the lives of believers
- 2. NT
- c. Peter recognized Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and the promise of Jesus
- d. With greater activity by the Spirit came greater empowering by the Spirit manifested in part by the bestowing of Spiritual gifts

B. Points of disagreement

- 1. What is a Spiritual gift?
 - a. Broad - Any ability (James 1:17)
 - i. Some would include occupation (1 Kings 7:14), talents (Ex. 31), or even marital status (1 Cor. 7:7)
 - ii. The redeeming power of the Lord
 - b. Narrow - Only those gifts listed in the NT (and of those some no longer exist)
 - i. The giftings mentioned in the OT are one time instances for a specific purpose and can fall into a NT classification
- 2. How many Spiritual gifts are there?
 - a. This depends upon your definition of Spiritual gift
- 3. Are certain gifts required to be exhibited as a proof of salvation?
 - a. Some say that speaking in tongues is necessary to prove salvation
 - b. Those who argue against this do so by pointing to context, to the other gifts, and some even go so far as to declare that the gift of tongues no longer exists
- 4. Have some gifts ceased?
 - a. Some argue that the gifts listed in the NT are still being given and exercised
 - b. Others argue that the more "miraculous" gifts listed in the NT are no longer given based upon 1 Cor. 13:8-13

C. Parameters

- 1. What is a Spiritual gift
 - a. Any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church[1]
- 2. How many Spiritual gifts are there?
 - a. How specific do you want to be?
 - b. While the lists Paul provided are not necessarily all inclusive, they will serve as the basis for our study

3. Are certain gifts required to be exhibited as a proof of salvation?
 - a. No - Tongues is one of many gifts
4. Have some gifts ceased?
 - a. No - Some gifts may not be as prominent as they once were but they still exist because the "perfect " has yet to come

D. Practical application

1. How do I discover what my Spiritual gift is?
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Personal introspection
 - c. Participation
 - d. Press on
2. Homework
 - a. Read the following passages
 - i. Everyday - James 1:5-7
 - ii. Monday - John 14:15-18, 25-26; Acts 1:4-8; Joel 2:28-29
 - iii. Tuesday - 1 Tim. 4:14-15; 2 Tim. 1:6
 - iv. Wednesday - Rom 12
 - v. Thursday - Eph 4:1-16
 - vi. Friday - 1 Peter 4:7-11
 - vii. Saturday - 1 Cor. 12-14

I am preaching this series on Spiritual gifts because I believe the Lord wants each and every one of his children to embrace and enact their gift for the building up of the local and universal body of Christ. I cannot tell you with 100% certainty what your gift is. What I can tell you with 100% certainty is: if you are child of God, you have a gift and that gift has been graciously given to you for God's glory and the advancement of his kingdom.

If you already know or believe you know what your gift is, I pray that this series will motivate you to use it, if you are not currently doing so. If you do not know what your gift is, I pray that you will be moved to discover it and use it. Our invitation is your opportunity to join me in those prayers.

[i] Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology. (Inter-Varsity Press and Zondervan Publishing House; Leicester, England and Grand Rapids, MI. 1994). p.1016