

Leadership Principles & the Pastoral Epistles – 2015
WEEK 8: DO NOT NEGLECT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Interpretive comments on 1 Tim. 4:14 & 2 Tim. 1:6

Spiritual gifts are an important aspect of God's grace.

An amazing privilege (Eph. 4:7; Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10)

Confidence in God and joy in the Lord through using our gifts to serve

The freedom to accept limitations and appreciate one another vs. compare and compete with one another

Spiritual gifts are an important resource for the healthy growth of the church.

The New Testament authors explicitly teach that a crucial aspect of healthy church growth is every-member ministry—which includes Christians developing ministries according to their spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 Pet. 4:10,11).

- This is the main point of the “body” metaphor (Rom. 12:3-8).

- Therefore, promoting *both* ministry uniformity *and* diversity are important.

John Stott says concerning Eph. 4:11-16: “So Christ’s immediate purpose in the giving of pastors and teachers to his church is through their ministry of the Word to equip all his people for their varied ministries. And the ultimate purpose of this is to build up his body, the church. For (one) way the whole body grows is for all its members to use their God-given gifts. These gifts are so beneficial both to those who exercise their ministry faithfully and to those who receive it that the church becomes steadily more healthy and mature . . . To recapitulate, we have seen that it is the exalted Christ who bestows gifts on his church, that his gifts are very diverse in character, that the teaching gifts are primary, and that their purpose is to equip God’s people for their ministries and so build up Christ’s body.”¹

Dwight Smith: “. . . (one) task of leaders in the church is to model and create a culture in which everyone naturally expects to find their gift and use it . . . Mobilization takes place most effectively when people are using the gifts that God has given them. Members become mobilized when their internal motivations are recognized and used. This is a key element in

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (InterVarsity, 1979), p. 168.

personal transformation. Personal motivation is intimately connected to the gifts that people have within them.”²

Practical implications for home group leaders

In *home group leadership teams*, we should seek to know and affirm one another’s different gifts. “Leadership (should) reflect the gifts given to the whole body.”³

- This makes for a more effective leadership team.
- This models healthy appreciation and interdependence for the other home group members.
- We will be more effective and confident as leaders if we regularly use our gifts (see 2 Tim. 1:6,7).

In *personal discipleship*, one of our goals should be to help one another discover our gifts, to embrace them as good, and to faithfully use them to serve others.

“As we train young Christians to become disciples, one of our primary objectives should be to help them discover and develop their gifts, since every believer has gifts which God holds him accountable for developing and using for the sake of the Body. In making disciples we are not trying to produce proficient technicians who are able to reproduce themselves by a prescribed methodology; rather, we are seeking to develop men and women who are disciples diligently exercising their particular gifts and abilities . . . (Therefore) it is imperative that early in the discipling process the man begin to look for his gifts and develop them . . . Whatever else the training of a disciple should include, helping him to discover and develop his gifts must be a part of it.”⁴

- Beware of rigid “sequentialism” in ministry development.
- Be aware of gift “projection” in your discipling ministry.
- Encourage them to use their gifts *in* and *beyond* your home group.

² Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith, *Invading Secular Space* (Monarch Books, 2003), pp. 135,103,115.

³ Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith, *Invading Secular Space*, pp. 133.

⁴ Walt Hendrichsen, *Disciples Are Made-Not Born*, pp. 132,133,138.

We should urge members to use their spiritual gifts *evangelistically*. “Effective cell leaders encourage everyone in the cell to use their particular gifts so the body might be edified *and* non-Christians might be won to Christ.”⁵

The importance of service/deed gifts

Peter divides spiritual gifts into two general categories—word and service (1 Pet. 4:11). Consider the gifts listed in Rom. 12:6-8 in this light.

“Word” gifts are “first” (1 Cor. 12:28) because of the foundational importance of sound doctrine. But wise deployment of “service” gifts can help the church accomplish its mission in several ways:

- Many non-Christians are beyond the reach of “normal” outreach strategies, and service/mercy ministries can help to reach them.
- Service/mercy ministries can greatly enhance the credibility of the church and the gospel. They “adorn the gospel” (Titus 2:10; see Paul’s emphasis on “good deeds” in Titus 1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,8,14).
“Are we the kind of church of which (our city) says: ‘We don’t share a lot of their beliefs, but . . . They are such an important part of the community. They give so much! If they left we’d have to raise taxes because others won’t give of themselves like they do.’”⁶
- Service/mercy workers can provide valuable help for people *within* the church.

Therefore, while affirming the priority of “word” ministries, we should also appropriately promote “service” ministries. EXAMPLES:

- Volunteering in Xenos ministries to the poor, community volunteering, and civic organizations
- Home group community service projects

⁵ Joel Comiskey, *Cell Church Solutions*, p. 142.

⁶ Tim Keller in John Piper & Justin Taylor (general editors), *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (Crossway Books, 2007), p. 122.

- Developing service/mercy ministries that meet community needs, share the gospel, and mobilize gifted/burdened home group members to serve in these ministries

REMIND SERVICE WORKERS TO:

Thoughts on discovering spiritual gifts

The New Testament neither commands Christians to discover their spiritual gifts, nor tells them how to do this. What should we make of this?

Key ingredients of a church culture that facilitate gift discovery:

- Sound biblical instruction on the primacy of serving love, on every-member ministry, and on spiritual gifts as one important way to serve
- Members (especially leaders and “seemly” members) esteem one another’s diverse gifts (especially “unseemly” members). See 1 Cor. 12:21-25.
- Members discuss one another’s gifting, share insights into one another’s gifting, etc.
- Leaders and members help one another find ways to use their gifts in and beyond the home group.

Consider the following additional principles of gift discovery which are implied from the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts.

- A pattern of feedback from Christians who have witnessed and/or experienced the impact of our gifted service is the most reliable indicator.
- Spiritual gifts often come with their own “set of eyes.”
- Spiritual gifts often create an “itch” that demands to be “scratched.”

- Spiritual gifts often create a special attraction to more experienced Christians who are similarly gifted.

Cautions concerning spiritual gifts

Watch out for having a limited number of “labels” into which people’s gifting must fit.

Watch out for gift over-specialization as an excuse for autonomy and selfishness.

“Our lopsided teaching on gifts has resulted in a lot of overspecialization, especially in the West . . . Some people spend most of their time exercising their primary gifts. So an outstanding preacher may not spend much time visiting church members and caring for the leaders of his church. The result of such specialization is a high amount of quality output by this person. But the impact of this person may be less than hoped for. To impact people we need more than technical excellence. We need depth-producing frustration that comes out of an incarnational lifestyle lived among the people we serve. *We should use our gifts out of a lifestyle of caring for people. We should do a little of a lot of things and also try to give time to work on our areas of giftedness.*”⁷

“*Christian workers must specialize out of a generalist background. That is, while they do many different types of ministries, they also take time to exercise their special gifts. I have come to believe that if we really like about 20% of the work we do and generally find about 40% acceptable, then we can handle the 40% we do not like. But . . . the 40% that we don’t like may be vital in giving relevance and depth in our ministry. If, however, we find that in the exercise of our responsibilities, there is almost nothing that we like and feel competent at doing, perhaps we are in the wrong work.*”⁸

Watch out for “centrifugalism” or “centripedalism.”

“Centrifugalism”

“Centripedalism”

NOTE: Since the goal of a home group is to multiply itself, home group leaders will need to focus much of their ministry time and energy on this goal. They will also need to encourage other prospective home group leaders to have a similar focus.

For more on integrating spiritual gifts and home group multiplication, see Gary DeLashmutt, “Home Group Multiplication and Spiritual Gifts.”

Watch out that serving non-Christians does not replace verbal witness to non-Christians.

“The Great Commission would be meaningless if those who obeyed it did not also obey the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor. And we must continue to challenge

⁷ Ajith Fernando, *The Call To Joy & Pain* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), p. 130.

⁸ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, p. 223.

people with the dual responsibility to live the gospel in society and to take the gospel to the unreached.”⁹

Watch out for “charismania.”

⁹ Ajith Fernando “Getting Back on Course,” *Christianity Today*, November, 2007.