

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #16

1 Pet. 4:10-11 / Eph. 4:4-16 / Rom. 12:3-8 / 1 Cor. 12:12-31

EMPLOYING YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFT IN SERVING OTHERS

Living your life for OTHERS is the appropriate context for studying the special gifting that God has given to every Christian.

¹⁰ *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* — 1 Pet. 4:10

There are no private gifts. Spiritual gifts (charismata) are the abilities and motivations that God has created in each believer, with the goal that they be used to benefit OTHERS.

⁶ *So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly.* — Rom. 12:6

Furthermore, we are to work with each other, recognizing that our abilities and motivations are different.

¹⁶ *The whole body, working together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.* — Eph 4:16

Do you know what your God-given gifting is? If not, how can you do what God is asking of you? To employ your gift in serving others in the body you must know something of what it is. It is also very helpful, since we are to work together and our gifts differ, as noted above, to know how others are gifted and motivated.

Spiritual gifts are so important that false teaching about them abounds. However, it is possible to understand and organize these special capacities, abilities, and motivations given to each believer, so that we can serve one another and be useful in the work of making disciples and building Christ's church.

If you are saved, you are gifted and you are needed. God has chosen to include you in building His church and unless you “employ your gift in serving” where “God has placed you, as a member” the whole church where you should be “properly working” will suffer, just like a human body that is missing a hand or a leg. Please reread the verses above and note these truths. In addition, please notice **our interdependence with one another** as Paul again addresses spiritual gifts in this passage:

²⁰ But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, ²⁴ whereas our seemly members have no need of it.

But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, ²⁵ that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

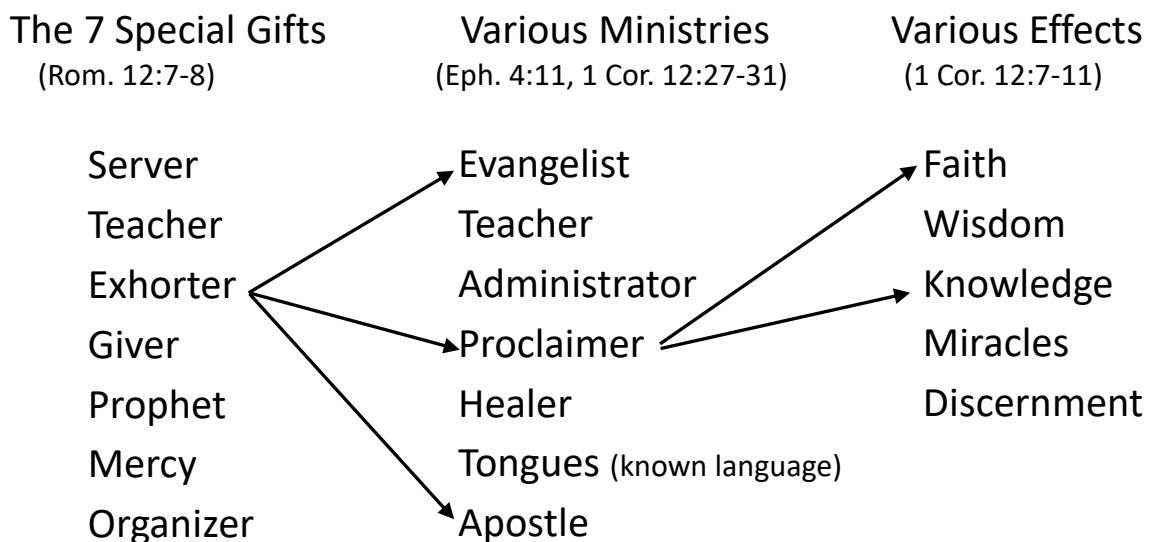
²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.— 1 Cor 12:20-27

Using the diagram below, the gifts are organized and explained in this study according to Paul's identification of them in 1 Cor. 12:4-7 and Rom. 12:7-8. Notice how our gifts can be employed in different ministry areas, and through these ministries have various effects on others as God works:

⁴ Now there are **varieties of gifts**, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are **varieties of ministries**, and the same Lord. ⁶ And there are **varieties of effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
— 1 Cor 12:4-7

⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us exercise them accordingly: If PROPHECY, according to the proportion of his faith, ⁷ if SERVICE, in his serving, or he who TEACHES, in his teaching, ⁸ or he who EXHORTS, in his exhortation; he who GIVES, with liberality, he who LEADS, with diligence; he who shows MERCY, with cheerfulness.
— Rom. 12:6-8



Are you perhaps, an **EXHORTER**? Are you motivated like the Apostle Paul to see people grow in their faith and commitment to the Lord's will and ways? You like to exhort. It is necessary.

Or - perhaps you are a gifted **TEACHER** like Luke. You are motivated to ensure that the truth is taught accurately and thoroughly. The details are important to you.

Or – perhaps you are able to sense when a person is hurting and are motivated to comfort and console him like John did at the last supper. He was full of **MERCY** and helped hurting people.

Or – perhaps you are a gifted **ORGANIZER** and can lead a group of people to work together to achieve a common goal. You can see what needs to be done, how to do it, and, if asked, can coordinate things quite efficiently. Like Nehemiah. Wow. In 53 days.

Or – perhaps you are a gifted speaker who hates “sin”, things that are not right, and wants them corrected, sooner rather than later, like Peter. You are also pretty good at communicating and making your point. You are a **PROCLAIMER** of truth, a prophet.

Or – perhaps you are motivated to meet practical needs like Timothy seemed to be. He was a wonderful **SERVER** to Paul and many, many others. He loved doing this, it appears, rather than to organize new churches, teach, exhort, or even preach. (see Paul's exhortations to him to also do these important things in 1 and 2 Tim.)

Or – perhaps you get great delight in being a **GIVER**, usually anonymously, to help meet the financial needs of God's work. Matthew seems to have this gifting, with the discernment in wise investments and encouragement to motivate others to give, as found in the Gospel he recorded.

So...using 1) the meaning of the word used to describe each of these 7 gifts and the brief exhortation associated with each in Rom. 12:6-8, and 2) a person in Scripture who seems to exhibit each gift, let us note the major characteristics and weaknesses of each gift.

The Gift Of Exhortation (Paul)

1. Its Primary Characteristics

- Is motivated to stimulate others to grow in their faith and obedience
- Is able to discern a person's spiritual maturity, and give good counsel
- Is able to give precise steps of action and reasons why they should be taken

2. Its Major Weaknesses

- Not patient with slow progress
- Gives counsel before discernment
- Can be “pushy”

The Gift Of Teaching (Luke)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to search out, validate, and clarify the truth
 - Delights in research and emphasizes accuracy
 - Likes to present truth in a systematic sequence
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Concentrating on the details rather than the principles of life
 - Being less concerned with application and response than with research
 - Pride

The Gift Of Mercy (John)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to comfort those who are hurting
 - Can sense when others are in distress and acts to give them aid
 - Are strong where prophets are weak
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Sympathizing with those who are violating God's ways
 - Making emotional decisions rather than objective ones

The Gift Of Organization (Nehemiah)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to coordinate the activities of others to achieve goals
 - Is able to discern what is needed and how to complete a project
 - Is able to inspire and encourage others toward achieving the goal
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Goals and projects becoming more important than people
 - Taking on projects without God's direction

The Gift Of Prophecy (Peter)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to expose wrong actions and motives by presenting biblical truth.
 - Is persuasive in speech
 - Despises what is wrong, sinful, and evil
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Impulsive and lacks caution in expressing their opinions
 - Demands a positive response to a harsh confrontation
 - Tends to expose rather than restore

The Gift Of Serving (Timothy)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to demonstrate love by meeting practical needs
 - Overlooks personal needs to serve others
 - Desires to be with others
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Personal desire to meet needs leads to excluding others from helping
 - Wearing themselves out physically
 - Overemphasizing practical needs to the neglect of spiritual needs

The Gift Of Giving (Matthew)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
 - Is motivated to give personal assets for the furtherance of God's work
 - Is able to organize personal business to gain assets
 - Is frugal and content with basic necessities
2. Its Major Weaknesses
 - Tendency to control people and ministries by gifts
 - Investing in people or ministries without God's direction

Here is **an illustration** that has helped many see how the different gifts respond to life situations.

One evening 7 Christians, each with a different gifting were sitting around the dinner table after the meal waiting for dessert to be served. The hostess came in with dessert on a large plate, but as she was about to set it on the table she dropped it on the floor breaking the plate and ruining the dessert. Here is how everyone responded:

The Server: "Here, let me help you clean this up!"

The Mercy: "It's ok honey, it could have happened to anyone!"

The Teacher: "The reason that fell is because it was too heavy on one side!"

The Prophet: "That's what you get when you are in a hurry!"

The Giver: "It's ok honey, I'll buy you another dessert!"

The Exhorter: "Let's serve the dessert with the meal next time, and avoid this!"

The Organizer: "Frank, will you clean this up, Sally, can you sweep the floor, and Jerry, will you go to the kitchen and get another dessert!"

UNIT 16 STUDY SESSION #1

Evaluating How I Am Using My Gifts In Serving The Body

1. However I am gifted, I am committed and trying to serve others for the Lord, especially in my church.
Yes, as a first priority in my life _____
Not really, not much _____ Not at all _____
2. My involvement in the lives of others at church is:
Significant _____ A little _____ Insignificant _____
3. I know, based on the 7 gifts of Rom 12:6-8, what my primary gifting is. Yes ___ No ___
I am not sure _____
I have the characteristics of: A Prophet ___ An Exhorter ___ A Teacher ___ A Server ___
A Mercy ___ An Organizer ___ A Giver ___

4. Weaknesses are often helpful in discerning our gifting. My weaknesses, when pursuing my personal motivations and ministries are: _____

Discussion Questions for Unit 16 Study Session #1

1. Why, according to our study passages has God given us gifts?
2. The diagram used in the study organizes gifts, ministries, and effects using 1 Cor. 12:4-7, and then uses Rom. 12:4-8 in saying that there are 7 basic gifts, one of which every Christian has been given. What questions do you have regarding this understanding and interpretation of the gifts of the Spirit to the church?
3. Peter divides the primary gifting of all Christians into only two categories of 1) speaking gifts and 2) serving gifts. (See 1 Pet. 4:10-11) How does this relate to the 7 categories of gifts given by Paul?
4. What can strong gifting in a believer, with its abilities and strong motivations, look like in the possession of an immature Christian? What can strong gifting in a church look like when it is not well balanced with the other gifts?
5. Some gifts are “up front” and some are “behind the scenes”. What does Paul say about which are more important? (see 1 Cor. 12:20-27)

Prayer Together

UNIT 16 STUDY SESSION #2

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for Session 2 consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it.

1. If you are not sure what your gift is, ask three people who know you this question: "I am trying to learn how God has gifted me, so I can begin to serve others for Him. Of the seven gifts listed in Romans 12, which one would you say describes me best?"
2. Using the individual(s) in Scripture mentioned in the study, that you believe have your gifting, review the accounts of their actions, ministries, and conduct. Look for and write out the weaknesses that seem to come with their gifting. Compare yourself regarding these weaknesses and, as appropriate, set goals for yourself regarding them.
3. Understanding others and their motivations in serving the Lord are very important for the unity God wants in our working together. Using the basic motivations of each gift, think through some of the conflicts that you have observed between sincere believers:
 - in ministry _____
 - in marriage _____
 - among children _____
4. Barnabas and Paul, two very gifted men, actively involved in serving others for the Lord, had a conflict over John Mark and could no longer work together. Think through this conflict from the standpoint of their probable gifts and write out your thoughts and applications. _____

Discussion Questions for Unit 16 Study Session #2

If you were able to pursue one of the projects can you share with us what you have learned?

Prayer Together