

# Spiritual Gifts

## Session 2 - Ephesians 4:1-16

How did you respond to the assignment question at the conclusion of last week's session? "What is holding me back from accepting God's call to serve Him?"

### Equipping the Saints for Ministry

Why did God create you? How might you respond to this question?

#### 1. Read Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-16

What do these verses tell us about what decisions God made about us before we were born?

What difference, if any, does that make to you about your life in general and in the church?

"Spiritual gifts are not add-ons to our lives, like spiritual organ transplants. They are the empowerings of the Spirit through the whole person God has created. Thus we are not likely to discover these gifts if we do not know ourselves. *Dr. Paul Stevens*

"Your personality will affect *how* and *where* you use your spiritual gifts and abilities.... When you are forced to minister in a manner that is 'out of character' for your temperament, it creates tension and discomfort, require extra effort and energy, and produces less than the best results. ... It *feels good* to do what God made you to do."  
*Rick Warren*

Rick Warren also says, "You were shaped for serving God. ... You were put on this earth to make a contribution."

#### 2. Read Ephesians 2:10 and 2 Timothy 1:9

What do these scriptures affirm why you been created?

What does this mean for you? How are you able to help fulfill this basic reason that God gives for your life?

Regarding the 'shape' or way God has created us, Rick Warren, draws this analogy:

"Whenever God gives us an assignment, he always equips us with what we need to accomplish it. This custom combination of capabilities is called your SHAPE.

<b>Spiritual Gifts</b> - What I am gifted to do .....	1 Corinthians 7:7
<b>Heart</b> - What do I love to do .....	Philippians 2:13
<b>Abilities</b> - What natural abilities do I have? .....	1 Corinthians 12:6
<b>Personality</b> - Where does my personality best suit me to serve? .....	1 Corinthians 2:11
<b>Experience</b> - What experience have I had? .....	Ecclesiastes 2:24 "

"Your ministry will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your gifts and abilities in the area of your heart's desire in a way that best expresses your personality and experience."

Take a moment to share any initial response you might have to each of the SHAPE meanings:

So we can conclude that each person's *SHAPE*, or make-up, is unique, just like snowflakes. There are many similarities, but each human being is, nonetheless unique. For the Christian, one way this uniqueness is expressed is through spiritual gifts.

However, ministry in many churches does not always reflect the fullness of each member's abilities to serve. Consider the following concern:

Dr. Paul Stevens of Regent College, UBC, says this:

Often when we walk into a church, we are aware that there are two types of people - one called 'clergy' and the other called 'laity.' They dress differently, talk differently, work differently and sometimes even think differently. One gives ministry. The other receives ministry. Yet when we 'walk into' the New Testament we meet not two groups of people separated by titles, education and roles, but one people (called the 'people of God' in the original Greek) with leaders among them, referred to in Scripture by terms that describe their different functions in the church.

Rick Warren expresses a similar concern. He says:

Most of the time we're more interested in "*serve us*" than service. We say, "*I'm looking for a church that meets my needs, and blesses me,*" not "*I'm looking for a place to serve and be a blessing.*" We expect others to serve us, not vice versa. ... The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, "Who's going to meet *my* needs?" and starts asking, "Who's needs can I meet?"

What do you think is the reason people in the church are often content with the status quo, in effect being consumers of good sermons and uplifting worship, rather than entering into the full purpose of service for which God has created us?

How might such a situation be changed, and what would be the role of spiritual gifts in creating such a change?

## **Unity and Diversity within the Body of Christ**

### 3. Unity - Read: Ephesians 4:1-16

In reading these verses, what is Paul's main concern for the church as he calls church members, v.1, to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

What would Paul call evidence that we are walking in a worthy manner? v.2-3. How are these qualities essential to unity?

How true is this of our own lives and of our congregation? Is there anything we can do to make sure we keep walking in the ways of our Lord?

In v.4-6, specifically what is Paul saying about how the Body of Christ, the Church, can maintain its unity?

Why is this so important for the health and growth of the church?

#### 4. Diversity

"The unity of the church, far from being boringly monotonous, is exciting in its diversity. This is not just because of our different cultures, temperaments and personalities. (which, though true, is not Paul's point here), but because of the different gifts which Christ distributes for the enrichment of our common life."

John Stott

Read Ephesians 4:7-12 (again)

According to this Scripture:

- a. What is the only way we can receive the gifts of the Spirit? What does this mean for the choices of gifts available to us and our attitudes towards the gifts we are given?
- b. What is the ultimate purpose for using our gifts in ministry?
- c. In Ephesians 4:11-12, what is the purpose of those leaders in the church who bring and proclaim the Word of God?
- d. In Ephesians 4, what do verses 1-3 and 14-16 tell us about the relational importance of equipping the saints in their 'calling.'

Assignment: A question from Rick Warren to consider over the next week:

"How can I make the best use of what God has given me? " (gifts, abilities, talents).

Closing Prayer