

Core Study #6

Spiritual Gifts

Passage: 1 Corinthians 12-14

Theme: Spiritual gifts

Summary:

Chapters 12 - 14 tells us of another problem in the Corinthian church. Paul instructs the Christians about spiritual gifts and the importance of unity in the church/Body of Christ. Ch. 13 talks about the importance of love, a Christian characteristic lacking in the Corinthian Church. The members of the church had stressed the importance of the gifts of the Spirit, but had forgotten something just as important, LOVE for one another. Ch. 14 then describes the gifts of prophesy and public tongues. They are meant to encourage the church/the whole body not only to edify individual believers.

As your Core reads these 3 chapters note these important points:

- It was important to Paul that the Corinthians understand and correctly used the gifts of the Spirit (12:1). He does not want them to be ignorant of the spiritual gifts.
- The gifts are given to build up a. the individual believer, but more importantly b. to build up the whole body (chapter 12 & 14) other believers.
- Every member of the Body, each believer, has or can have a spiritual gift and we need to use that gift for the Body of Christ to function properly (12:11-31).
- Love is the rudder that steers how the gifts are to be used (13:1-1-3).

These 3 chapters tell us a lot about the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The wrong way the gifts were being used in the Corinthian church was one of the reasons for the letter.

Paul uses the illustration of a body to explain that we are all an important part of the body (1Cor 12:12; also note: Rom. 12:5, Eph.1:22, Col 1:18,24). We are one and yet we are all different. Like the human body, some parts (gifts) are more visible than others. But this does not necessarily make them more important. In the human body, those parts that are not visible are still very important, and are often even given special care and attention. So too with those members in the church who may not have the more visible gifts of prophesy or healing.

We are to desire the gifts not for selfish reasons but for the good of the Church. Without love, the gifts have no benefit. The Corinthians had lots of gifts but many lacked real love. Rather than build up the church they were destroying it through division.

Another problem in Corinth was the lack of order in worship services (14:40). Don't prevent people from speaking in tongues (14:39), but at the same time public worship must be orderly (14:33).

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How do we do this? We do not want to 'quench the Spirit', but we are told in 1 Cor 14:32 that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit can be controlled by the person who has a gift. For this reason Paul advises the Corinthians in 14:28 to keep quiet if no one is able to interpret.

It is difficult for us to understand how God, the Holy Spirit allows the use of His gifts to be subject to our control. But clearly He does. Perhaps if there is no one to interpret what the Spirit is saying through us, what is being said is meant only for our own ears. Important questions we should ask ourselves when we feel prompted to speak a word of knowledge or prophesy or tongue during a worship service or to someone else:

- 1) Is this word really from God or only from myself?
- 2) Is this for the whole church or is meant only for me?

Leader's Preparation:

To prepare to lead this study you as the Core leader should read all of chapters 12, 13 & 14 before Core, noting what you feel might be the main points of the passage and keeping in mind our main theme for all of these studies ***'growing as a believer and as a UCM community' in line with John 15:8 'This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.'***

Using your UCM Leader's Guide (pp. 22-23 or pp. 27-33), ask some observation questions:

- Ask the who, why, what, where questions if appropriate.
- Who are the main characters in these verses?
- What is going on in these verses?
- Key words or phrases: Are there any words, history or cultural issues that you don't understand but may be important to the overall understanding of the passage?

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Introduction Question:

- What is your understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Because there is so much to read in these 3 chapters we suggest as a Core you only read the following passages together:

-Ch. 12 (1,4-13, 27-30)

-Ch. 13 (1- 3)

-Ch. 14:26-33(a)

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

- Why do you think Paul does not want the Corinthian believers to be ignorant of spiritual gifts?
- What are the gifts listed in 12:8-11 & 27-28? Do you recognize any of these gifts in your fellow Core members?

Having the gift of a message of wisdom can be having supernatural wisdom that provides wise counsel to fellow believers; the gift of faith is regularly having faith that God will act or answer prayer beyond the faith of most Christians; the gift of healing is regularly seeing people healed as a result of your prayers; distinguishing between spirits is the ability to discern whether something is of God or not; tongues can be private between the speaker and God or public. It is praise from Christians to God in an unknown language. Prophecy is speaking a message from God to His people.

- Paul uses an illustration of the human body to explain the interconnectedness Christians have to one another and to explain why we are given spiritual gifts. Do you feel well connected to the larger UCM community? Why or why not? (12:12-13)
- What could you possibly do to strengthen your connection to the broader UCM community?
- In chapter 14:1 Paul instructs Christians to eagerly desire all the spiritual gifts? What might this look like in your own life?
- What gifts of the Holy Spirit do you feel God may have given you to encourage others in UCM? Are you using these gifts? Why or why not?

Note: If you have not yet recognized those gift(s) God has given you, you are not alone. Some people can clearly recognize their God given gifts, while others of us are still uncertain. The best way to discover gifts is to exercise the gifts. Encourage your brother and sister in Christ. Pray for their healing when they are

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sick. Look for ways to serve the UCM community. As you do this your gift may become clearer to you and to others.

Response:

- This week we want to emphasize prayer within core. Prayer is an important way we can encourage Christian unity and build one another up.
 - Take time as a Core to pray for one another and the larger UCM community.
 - Pray for a genuine desire for the spiritual gifts (14:1) amongst students involved in UCM.
 - Pray that fellow students will exercise those gifts they feel the Holy Spirit has given them so that your Core and the larger UCM community will be mutually encouraged and built up.