

Bethany Bible Church; AM Bible Study; April 25, 2018
The Holy Spirit—Our Helper; Lesson 25; His Gifting

THE SPIRIT'S 'MINISTERING' GIFTS

Theme: The Holy Spirit provides for the church through 'ministering' gifts.

In our last lesson, we considered the Holy Spirit's "speaking" gifts to the church. We drew the name of this category of gifts from the first half of 1 Peter 4:11;

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen"
(1 Peter 4:11).¹

In this lesson, we will consider the gifts that are mentioned in the second half of that verse—that is, His "ministering" gifts. The gifts in that first category were distinguished by the fact that they were primarily of a 'speaking' nature. But in this second category—"ministering gifts"—we find special enablements, bestowed on believers as the Holy Spirit chooses, for the purpose of empowering those individual believers to fulfill their 'hands-on', practical, needs-meeting ministries to others within the church.²

How very grateful we should be that God provides certain members of the church body who are able to provide these services to the rest of us in Christ's name—and who are able to provide them well.

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From the information that the Bible tells us, we can define some of these 'ministering' gifts as ...

1. SERVICE.

This is the ability to identify, provide for and complete the physical tasks that the body of Christ needs to have met. The Greek word that is used for this gift is *diakonia*; and that is the word from which the name of the church office "deacon" is derived. The name of this gift in 1 Peter 4:11 is translated "service" in the *New International Version*. This may be a general word that is used to differentiate "ministering" gifts from "speaking" gifts. But most likely, it refers to specific acts of ministry—of needs-meeting service. Paul wrote,

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering ... (Romans 12:6-7).

May God raise up those to whom He has granted this gift. May they serve in His power—and who do so with a true servant's heart. And through them, may the individual needs within the church family be wonderfully met!

2. HELPS.

This speaks of the ability to enhance and enable the ministry of others in the body of Christ (who themselves may have the gift of service) by being a practical support to them in their work. In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul wrote;

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28).

The basic idea of the Greek word *antilympsis* (which is used to identify this gift) is to “take up the part” of someone else, or to “take a part in” a thing. Few people are able to embrace this gift in the humble way it needs to be embraced—that is, to be willing to provide support to someone else’s ministry without demanding to be in charge. It takes a real calling and enabling from God. What a blessing those folks are who see a need in someone else’s ministry, and willingly lend a hand and “take up a part” in it! That ministry could not succeed without them.

3. GIVING.

This speaks of the cheerful willingness, ability and resources from God to contribute materially to the work of Body, thus enabling others to fulfill their ministry and meet pressing needs. In Romans 12:8, Paul speaks of “he who gives”; and he uses the word *metadidomi*; which means “to share with” or “to impart”. And he says that such a person should do so *en aploityi*—that is, with liberality or single-hearted devotion; and this may perhaps also include the idea of sincerity (that is, without a hidden agenda). God gives to some people a material abundance; but He also gives to some particular individuals the abundance of heart to use what they have been given to faithfully support the ministry of others. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7,

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

It’s interesting to note that the Greek word that is translated “cheerful” in the above verse is *hilaros*—from which (you probably guessed) we get the English word “hilarious”. Praise God for those who he enables in the church to give with sanctified 'hilarity'!

4. LEADERSHIP.

This gift is the ability to, with diligence, discern God’s purpose for a group, set its goals, communicate its vision, and motivate its participants all the way to the completion of a task that God calls them to. In Romans 12:8, Paul wrote that “he who leads” is to do so “with diligence”. This is a gift that is easily understood; and therefore (sadly) taken on by some who are not truly gifted for it. In Romans 12:8, the word for “leading” doesn’t mean that someone holds dominance over others (see Matthew 20:25-28). Rather, it refers to the role of “management” or “maintenance”. In Titus 3:8 and 14, Paul uses this same Greek word (*proistymi*) when he writes that believers are to “maintain good works”. These are the “quality-control” servants in the church. They make sure that things are done—not in a half-baked, “good enough for church” kind of manner—but with true “diligence” or “earnestness” before God.

5. ADMINISTRATION.

This speaks of the ability to manage the resources, personnel and organization of the church family toward a certain task in such a way as to most effectively accomplish its goals. It is not a vague and general quality of mere human origin. Rather, in 1 Corinthians 12:28, we find this spoken of as a spiritual gift specifically listed with other gifts. There's a remarkable way to appreciate the true spirit of this gift—and its importance to the church family. The word in the original language (*kubernysis*) is closely related to the word *kubernytys*; and that word is translated “helmsman” in Acts 27:11 and “shipmaster” Revelation 18:17. Without those who are truly equipped by the Holy Spirit with this gift, a church can easily go off course—or run aground! True Spirit-gifted administrators are gifted 'stewards'—given by God to the church—with the ability to help the church run smoothly.

6. MERCY.

This much needed gift is the ability to compassionately listen to and understand the suffering, distress, guilt or needs of others, and to minister comfort and encouragement to them in such a way as to help meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs through Christ in a non-condemning way. Note that, in Romans 12:8, Paul stresses that the person who shows mercy is to do so with “cheerfulness” (and here, we find again that familiar word *hilaros*). Supposed ‘acts of mercy’ can feel hollow—and perhaps even become very hurtful to those in need—when done in a merely ‘dutiful’ and ‘begrudging’ attitude. Those who have this gift display an abundantly joyful heart along with an abundantly merciful hand; because they serve a God who Himself “delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18). Those who have this gift are truly ‘ambassadors of grace’ to those who receive the benefits of their ministry.

7. FAITH.

This is the ability to capture the vision of what God can do and wants done in a particular situation, to then believe confidently that God will help His people overcome all the obstacles, and to finally encourage others in the body to likewise trust Him. Paul wrote that, to some, “faith” is given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9). Now; it's true of course that all members of the body of Christ are to exercise faith. But as the Bible's words about this particular gift suggests to us, some believers are especially given the Spirit-enabled ability to trust God in remarkable ways; and to spread that faith to others within the body. We might say that the faith of such believers is ‘infectious’ in a truly beneficial way. May we always welcome—and never grudge—the gentle nudging of our faith by those who have this very necessary gift!

8. HEALING.

This speaks of the remarkable, Holy Spirit-enabled ability of some to serve as an instrument of faith through whom, in special and remarkable situations, God cures illnesses and restores others to health and soundness. To understand this gift rightly, it's important to notice that in 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 28, Paul's particular way of describing this is as “gifts” (plural) “of healings” (again, plural)—which suggests that this does not refer to an ability to heal at will in a general way, but rather to have the faith to trust God for specific acts of healing by His gracious hand. Pastor James' instructions in James 5:14-16 may help us understand this:

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith

will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:14-16).

Believers who have this gift help facilitate such organized efforts of prayer and care-giving that lead to everyone trusting God for healing. May God bless us with many within the church family who have the gift of faith to pray for—and trust God for—the healings of illnesses.

9. MIRACLES.

This last gift mentioned speaks of the ability to serve as an instrument of faith through whom God manifests His power or authenticates His message by remarkable acts. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, this is described by Paul as “the working of miracles”; but note that in verse 28, it is simply described as the giving of “miracles”—as if the miracle was a thing given in and of itself. In this respect, it is like “gifts of healings”—that is, not the ability of a single human being to perform miracles, but rather the faith of an individual to trust God for miracles that He graciously performs. This prevents anyone in the church from being viewed as a “miracle worker” (which was something Peter was careful to avoid in Acts 3:12; and also Acts 14:9-18, where Paul and Barnabas avoided the same thing), and to instead serve strictly as someone through whom specific miracles are, at times, “worked” by God according to His sovereign will.

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After having considered all of these different ways that the Holy Spirit has gifted individual believers to serve the body of Christ, doesn't it come as a great relief to know that we don't personally have to try to be all things to all people? By God's design we are only 'some things' to the church body; and other believers are equipped to be 'other things' that are needed. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7;

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ... (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

May we—each one—learn the part that the Holy Spirit has equipped us to play in the body; and may we do our particular part faithfully, skillfully, and to His glory!

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Much of the material for this study was adapted from “Your Giftedness to The Body: A Biblical Study of The Nature, Purpose, and Use of Spiritual Gifts” from Bethany Bible Church, 2005.