

Chapter 14

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS 5

- I. As we continue to look at identifying and developing our gifts, we need to be aware of where real ministry (the tasks, jobs that we do) takes place. If we understand ministry in the way that God wants us to, we will see that it takes place wherever we might be; at home, at work, at the bus stop, on the tube, at church, at the Bible Training Center, wherever there are people to give ourselves to. (James 1:27)

An important key to us in developing our gifts is hospitality. The gifts that God graciously gives to us are to be used for serving and for giving. Hospitality is the practice of giving of ourselves. The scripture is clear in saying that we need to pursue or practice the practice of hospitality. We are to learn to share ourselves and what we have with those around us. (1 Kings 17:7-16; Isaiah 58:7; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 5)

Keep open house; be generous with your lives. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you. Matthew 5:16, 48 The Message

- II. There are many areas or spheres of service where we can develop the use of our gifts.
- A. Organizational (structured/ongoing) areas of service are those that occur on a regular, ongoing basis. These areas of service have been organized to meet needs within the church or organization. Within these areas of service we should be able to develop meaningful relationships and accountability. As we work in these areas of service we see our need for God's strength and grace. Our commitment and faithfulness is tested in the trenches of regular, structured service. (Doing what needs to be done.) (Proverbs 27:17)
- B. Projects or periodic short-term ministry or service is another area in which we can develop the use of our gifts. In this area of service people are brought together to work for special needs that arise and will work until the project is completed and then disband. There is sometimes a danger in keeping these short-term projects going beyond their usefulness. An availability and willingness to respond is necessary to be able to be involved in these areas of service. It will take a real servant's heart. Projects can give individual people opportunity for creative expression. Projects also can refresh and challenge us.
- C. Finally there are the promptings or the inner leading of the Holy Spirit. These opportunities many times are very spontaneous and/or personal. This particular area of service can develop our gifts in the most profound way. Because there is no structure of leadership to guide the expression of our gift it can build our confidence and trust in the Spirit's leading. A caution is that we need to be careful that we are not doing our own thing. It is a good idea to have a mature person to share with and talk to as you begin to develop in this area.
- III. It may be helpful to understand our spiritual maturity or age as we begin in faith to develop the use of our gifts. One important thing to remember is that the gifts God gives to each of us are to be tools to do the ministry He has for us and not toys to be played with.

- A. Perhaps you are at the place of seeking God and His ways. You are interested, but as yet have no personal relationship with God as your Father through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - B. As an infant newly born into the Kingdom of God, you will have the opportunity to build a proper and solid foundation in your life. You have excitement and enthusiasm in your new walk with Jesus. If you have been a Christian for a while, but are just now becoming aware of the abundant life that is available to you in Jesus, you also have the opportunity to build this foundation in your life. Take time to grow in the basic understanding of the Christian faith.
 - C. As an adolescent Christian there will a confidence in the faithfulness of God and His ability to accomplish His will in your life. You may be very teachable and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading in your life. There will be a growing stability that comes from knowing Christ, regularly worshipping with His people and being salt and light to others.
 - D. You have matured in your faith and as an adult Christian, you will be able to model for other believers a life in Christ. You will be able to lead by example and to guide others into a deeper understanding of what it means to walk personally with Jesus Christ.
- IV. What can we as individuals do to develop and be faithful with our spiritual gifts? We can begin by studying Bible passages and Bible characters that illustrate or show our spiritual gifts at work. There are also books and tapes available that can provide additional insights into ways to function effectively in our giftings. Another important idea is to look for mature models that are properly using the gifts that we desire to develop, to interact with them and question them about how they have developed and now use their gifts. We then commit ourselves to using our gifts; praying for a teachable spirit and willing heart. (1 Peter 4:10)

Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything -- encores to the end of time. Oh, yes! 1 Peter 4:10-11 The Message

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. Do you feel that a person's spiritual maturity or age can or will affect the function of our spiritual gifts? Are spiritual gifts limited to mature Christians? Can very young Christians function in spiritual gifts?
2. Why do you feel the attitude and practice of hospitality is important? Discuss how practicing hospitality can be helpful and even necessary in developing spiritual gifts.