

V. Spiritual Gifts in Services

The church conducts services for various purposes that are open to all people. Visitors who attend come with different backgrounds, religious traditions and varied church practices. In light of this, before persons offer spiritual gifts in a public setting, it is important that they attain a certain level of community with the local church. Attending services, participating in specific classes, meeting with a Pastor all help to develop the needed trust that are a part of a caring flock. This care, initiated by leadership, is a prudent and reasonable way to build maturity among those active in spiritual gifts. Whether this is done formally or informally, expectations should be clear so that edification and unity can be achieved.

I see three threats to lasting edification and unity:

- 1) THE CORINTHIAN - This person is gifted, genuinely loves God but is also very immature. In spite of his/her sincerity, he/she makes regrettable mistakes (1 Corinthians 12:1).
- 2) THE JEZEBEL - This person appears to be gifted in spiritual things but is not submissive to ordained authority. He/she is largely domineering, claims to speak for God and answer only to him. He/she considers himself/herself above accountability at the local church level (Revelation 2:20-23).
- 3) THE FALSE PROPHET - "The Wolf in Sheep's clothing." This person is an artist at deceit who purposefully wants to mislead others for personal gain (Matthew 7:15-23).

What is the appropriate response to each of these threats?

- 1) The Corinthian needs to be CORRECTED or he/she will become susceptible to self-indulgent ministry (1 Corinthians 13:11).
- 2) The Jezebel needs to be WARNED/DISCIPLINED but not tolerated (1 Corinthians 14:36-38).
- 3) The False Prophet needs to be EXPELLED (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

Having an established format for the operation of spiritual gifts provides a context for an immature person to grow. It discourages Jezebel's from asserting themselves. And, it sends a message to healthy Christians that we take spiritual gifts seriously, that there is a fitting way to operate in the gifts, and that we hold one another accountable.

A. Definitions of Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

1. GIFTS OF EXPLANATION (Gifts that explain some purpose of the Holy Spirit's presence)

- a. WORD of KNOWLEDGE – Imparted knowledge from the Holy Spirit that testifies to God's presence in a given situation (Acts 27).
- b. WORD of WISDOM – Inspired guidance from the Holy Spirit to help solve difficult problems (Acts 6, 15).
- c. PROPHECY – The Holy Spirit's timely disclosure of the declarative or predictive Word of God or mind of God to confirm the will of God (Acts 2, 9).
- d. TONGUES – The Holy Spirit's enablement to speak a God glorifying message in an unknown language to edify the Church (1 Corinthians 12-14).
- e. INTERPRETATION – The Holy Spirit's given understanding of a God glorifying message in tongues which edifies the Church (1 Corinthians 12, 14).

2. GIFTS OF DEMONSTRATION (Gifts that demonstrate characteristics of the Holy Spirit's power)

- a. GIFTS of HEALING – Ability from the Holy Spirit to heal bodily sickness, deformity and malfunctions apart from medical, natural or other forms of healing (Acts 3, 9).
- b. MIRACLES – The power of the Spirit to work miraculous deeds for the benefit of others (Acts 5, 9, 13, 14 19). They are unique, out-of-the-ordinary, often unexplainable, and sometimes misunderstood but are not meant to be institutionalized.

3. GIFTS OF INTIMATION (Gifts that disclose the Spirit's direction on an underlying level)

- a. GIFT of FAITH – An infusion of confidence from the Holy Spirit to help people release faith in God or face, persevere in and overcome trying circumstances (Acts 8, 14, 21).
- b. DISCERNMENT – Revelation to judge an action (Acts 5), word (Acts 11, 21), person (Acts 13), or situation (Acts 15) impartially and accurately. This is not the gift of suspicion.