

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN GIFTS: THE BODY

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

September 15, 2013

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise the Spirit for the good gifts with which He has empowered you and empowers other Christ-followers around you. Thank Him for purposefully giving you gifts with which you in turn build up the Body. Pray we will all utilize our spiritual gifts with an attitude of humility. Ask the Spirit for guidance as we seek His gifts and continue to develop a proper understanding of them. Pray for God to reveal to you where He desires you to utilize your gifts as you actively strive to practice them. Pray for ways to affirm gifts in the lives of those around you.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week, as we remember the events of 50 years ago when four girls died in the bombing of 16th Street, let us allow the memory of this event to become a catalyst in our lives to pursue the unity that Jesus prayed for us in John 17, for the sake of His mission.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termers, Taylor and Julia J. serving in East Asia. Taylor and Julia are studying language in East Asia*

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and serving with a field partner to engage university students with the gospel. They have been able to strengthen the long-term work of the field partner and build deep relationships with students. Join us this week as we pray for Taylor and Julia as they continue to serve in East Asia.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Spiritual gifts are the supernatural ways God's Spirit works through God's children to make God's Son look right (1 Corinthians 12).

The tension of desiring, discovering, and developing spiritual gifts...

- Jesus' body works right when its members avoid self-deprecation. (1 Corinthians 12:14-20)
 - Do I think, "*They don't need me!*"? (1 Corinthians 12:14-17)
 - Do I think the sovereignty of God is actually an error? (1 Corinthians 12:18)
 - Do I think unity and diversity are mutually exclusive? (1 Corinthians 12:19-20)
- Jesus body works right when its members avoid self-exaltation. (1 Corinthians 12:21-31)
 - Do I think, "*They can't do without me!*"? (1 Corinthians 12:21)
 - Do I desire to be sensational or beneficial? (1 Corinthians 12:22-24,31)
 - Do I foster factions more than fellowship? (1 Corinthians 12:25-26)
 - Do I prefer independence over dependence? (1 Corinthians 12:27-30; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7,11,18; 1 Peter 4:10)
 - Do I want the Spirit's gifts more than His fruit? (1 Corinthians 12:31; cf. Galatians 5:16-26)

The task of desiring, discovering and developing spiritual gifts:

1. Ask God's Spirit to guide you on your journey.
2. Stop being concerned with labels and definitions.
3. Explore how God's wired you to build faith in others. (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-10)

Passions – What lights you up?

Reputation – What do others see in you?

Interests – What intrigues you?

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Experience – What have you done?

Success – What have you done fruitfully?

Talents – What abilities do you have?

4. Look for general themes that keep showing up.
5. Do some trial-and-error with related ministries.

Message Summary

This sermon serves as part two in the study of 1 Corinthians 12 and the topic of spiritual gifts, and it gives specific attention to body of Christ. Having been given gifts from the Spirit for the purpose of fostering unity and care for each other in order to accurately demonstrate Christ to the world, believers can misrepresent Christ and harm each other either by thinking too highly of their gifts or by thinking that they are useless. As we go about the task of desiring, discovering, and developing their spiritual gifts, we should give greater attention to growing in love for God and for others because love enables us to utilize our gifts effectively for Christ's glory.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Begin by reviewing last week's discussion in small group. Part one of the two sermons on spiritual gifts focuses on the Spirit's role in giving gifts to proclaim Jesus' glory and to benefit the church, and part two highlights the body, particularly the tendency of believers to air on either self-deprecation or self-exaltation with regard to spiritual gifts. For those who know what their spiritual gifts are, ask them to consider why the Spirit gave *them* their particular gifts. With the one or two people sitting next to them, invite the group to share ways that the Holy Spirit has provided for them to exercise their gifts for His glory and how they have seen the purpose in being given their specific gifts.

Question the group to consider whether they lean towards self-deprecation or self-exaltation in their attitude towards spiritual gifts. As a group, describe each of these two tendencies. Process together the dangers of these two extremes and how they can negatively affect a faith family. Discuss how our spiritual gifts can either be used in our flesh or in the Spirit. How do we address these tendencies (i.e., self-deprecation and self-exaltation) in ourselves in order to avoid sin? Address the thinking behind self-deprecation and self-exaltation. What truths from Scripture do individuals need to continuously remind themselves of in order to have right thinking about the gifts God has given to them? Give attention to the motivations behind why we use or do not use our gifts. What sin(s) need to be confessed?

In 1 Corinthians 12:22-24, the Apostle Paul gives attention to the gifts that "seem" to be weaker, less honorable, and unrepresentable, which refers to gifts that are more behind the scenes and are not "platform gifts" such as teaching, tongues, or prophecy. Paul emphasizes that all gifts are equal; there is not one gift more important than another. All are necessary to the proper functioning of the faith community and to "make God's Son look right." Unlike the world which honors the honorable and praises the popular, the church is to bestow honor on the seemingly weak and unknown. If all are equal, why does Paul promote over-compensation for those with the less sensational gifts? What does it look like to "bestow honor" to such individuals in the small group or in the church as a whole?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:24-26. Verse 25 presents the purpose for why God composed the church body as He has: to promote unity in the body and to empower believers to care for each other. As we tend to our physical bodies when we are ill, we should tend to the members of our church body when they are suffering, and we

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should rejoice with each other when one is honored. As a group, evaluate the fellowship and the sacrificial care demonstrated towards each other. How can the group grow in this area and foster greater care for each other? How can each person in the group utilize their gifts for the good of those in the small group and those in the church body as a whole? Ask each person in the group to consider one thing they can do this next week to cultivate community in the group and to care for someone in the group or in the church. This might be helping meet the physical needs of a widow, single parent, foster family, new mom, or a senior citizen. It might be diligently praying for someone or writing a note of encouragement or voicing appreciation for them. Is there anything the group can do together to care for someone outside of the group who may or may not be a Christ-follower?

In the sermon, Dr. Shaddix asked, “Do you want the Spirit’s gifts more than His fruit?” Discuss the difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit (see Gal. 5:16-26 for more about the fruit of the Spirit). How are the two different? More important than desiring gifts of the Spirit is exercising the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:31). Discuss the significance of this statement, why it is true, and the danger of putting gifts ahead of fruit (doing in front of being). The fruit of the Spirit – such as love – enable us to use our gifts effectively. How do we cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our life?

For those who do not know how the Spirit has gifted them or who are still trying to learn how to use their gifts in the body, direct them to process through the six questions provided in the sermon.

- **Passions** – What lights you up? What kinds of serving opportunities give you special joy? What do you enjoy doing? Is there any particular demographic or age group that you stirs your heart?
- **Reputation** – What do others see in you? Ask believers who know you well to give input on what you do that blesses them/others and strengthens the faith of fellow believers.
- **Interests** – What intrigues you? Even if you have no experience in it, is there anything that you’ve seen or heard about and thought that you would like to try?
- **Experience** – What have you done? Whether things went poorly or went well, what are things you have attempted to do? What efforts have you been involved in that were developed or intended for the purpose of benefiting others?
- **Success** – What have you done fruitfully? How have you seen God use such experiences for His glory? In what service efforts have you been involved in that went well or where people were truly helped?
- **Talents** – What abilities do you have? What skills – natural or learned - do you have that might possibly be used to benefit others? (Discuss how talents are different than spiritual gifts.)

Depending on the group, you may consider different ways of processing these questions together as a small group. For example, those in the group could comment on how they have seen the Spirit work through each of the individuals in the group as they have served in various capacities. Or the group could have a “homework assignment” that involves processing each of these six questions individually then coming back to discuss them as a group at the beginning of the next small group session. Encourage the group to ask for the Holy Spirit to provide discernment in identifying gifts and how to best use them to serve others. For those at The Church at Brook Hills who would like to try serving in different capacities in order to either discover or use their gifts, they can visit brookhills.org/localmissions for opportunities to serve in the Birmingham community and brookhills.org/serving for serving opportunities within the Brook Hills faith family.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God’s Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

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- What is the tension in desiring, discovering, and developing spiritual gifts? How do you navigate the tension between thinking too highly of your role in the church and not thinking enough of it?
- What is self-deprecation? How have you seen this tendency play out within the church in an ungodly manner? If you gravitate towards this tendency with regard to spiritual gifts, what should be your response? What truths do you need to continuously remind yourself of?
- An indicator of self-deprecation includes thinking that the church body does not need you. Why is this a lie? Why does the enemy want believers to believe this? How does God's Word respond to this lie?
- How does God's sovereignty play into spiritual gifts and who gets what gifts? How have you seen His sovereignty at work in the specific gifts He has given to you? Consider the purpose(s) for which He gave you the gifts that He has. Praise God for allowing us to join Him in His work.
- Discuss how unity and diversity are *not* mutually exclusive when it comes to spiritual gifts.
- How does the sin of self-exaltation with regard to spiritual gifts affect the church body? For those whose tendency is self-exaltation, how can you keep your motivations and your attitude in check when exercising your gifts? What truths do you need to remember from Scripture?
- In the context of your small group and in the church body, how can you foster fellowship with your gifts? How could your gifts be used to foster factions in the body? What thoughts and actions do you need to avoid in order to prevent your involvement in causing disunity in the body?
- Read 1 Corinthians 12:24-26. In the body, what does healthy dependence on each other look like? Describe what *unhealthy* dependence looks like in body life. How do we guard against unhealthy dependence? What expectations do group members have for what fellowship and caring for each other looks like with the people in the small group? How would the group describe this dynamic of group life? In what ways could the group improve in depending on and caring for each other? Why is independence in the body a problem?
- Delve into the differences between the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts (see Gal. 5:16-26; 1 Cor. 12:31). How do spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit connect to each other? How can you nurture the fruit of the Spirit in your life?
- How are talents different from spiritual gifts?