

Chapter 17

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS 1

IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING OUR GIFTS

- I. It is important to identify our individual spiritual gifts. We need to be aware that we have been given gifts by God; to know about these gifts and to know how to use these gifts. Identifying our spiritual gifts and learning how best to use them for God is like a journey of discovery. (1 Corinthians 12:1; 1 Timothy 4:14)
 - A. Identifying and knowing our gifts will give us goals and purpose. Identifying and knowing our gifts will keep us from being side-tracked by temptation, too many ideas of things we could do, and lack of focus. A sense of satisfaction and fulfillment comes when we begin to function with the gifts that God has given us. (John 15:8)
 - B. We are all accountable to God for the use of our gifts. In the story of the stewards in Matthew 25:14-30 we see the use and misuse of a trust given to them by their master. The master intended for the stewards to use the talents that were given to them to reproduce and increase. We have all been given gifts by God. These gifts are a trust from God and we must be faithful to use them. (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10)
 - C. As we begin to identify and function in our gifts, we will strengthen the body of Christ. When we begin to see that each of us in the body of Christ has been given gifts and that the gifts are given by God to us individually, we understand that we don't have to do it all ourselves. We need each other to build the body of Christ. It will help us to be less proud and to be better able to edify and build one another up. (Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 12:15-16; Ephesians 4:11-15)
 - D. When we identify and function effectively in our gifts God will be glorified. (1 Peter 4:11)
- II. What is a spiritual gift? Just as we in our natural birth receive certain gifts or talents through heredity and our environment; so with our spiritual birth we receive spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are special abilities that are given to us by the Holy Spirit. They are given to us to equip us to do the work of God. They are tools to be used and not toys to play with. Because they are gifts, they are not earned. The gifts are given to us as God determines. Gifts are given to all believers. Everyone has a place in the body of Christ and has something to do because of the gifts that God gives to each one. (Matthew 25:15; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10)
 - A. Each of the gifts given to us is given according to God's grace. Romans 12:6 says, "*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...*" The gifts we have been given are not for ourselves but are to be used in service for the Lord. They are to be used to fulfill the will and purpose of God for our lives. (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:18, 28; Ephesians 4:11)
 - B. The gifts God gives to each of us are given first of all to build and edify the body of Christ. As we function and build the body of Christ through the use of our gifts, we are better

able to show a real God to the world around us. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 4:10)

III. We need to look at the differences between **Fruits of the Spirit** as listed in Galatians 5:22-26 and **Gifts of the Spirit** (spiritual gifts). The first difference is that the fruit of the Spirit is grown, while the spiritual gifts are given. (Galatians 5:22-26)

A. Some of the differences between fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts:

Fruit of the Spirit

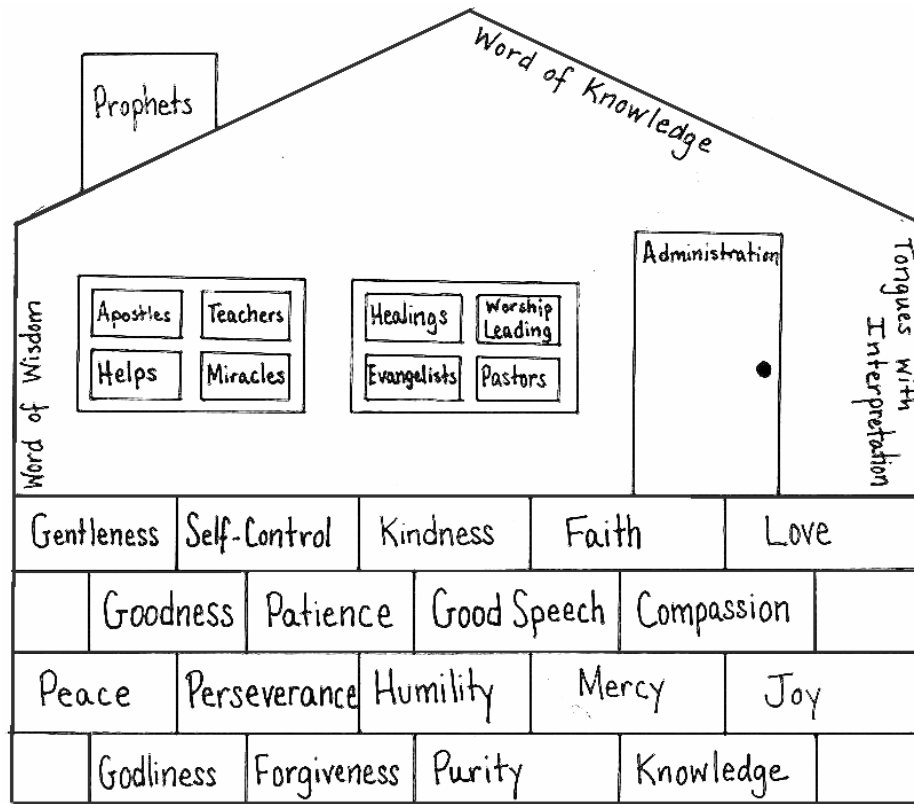
Maturity
Inward attributes
Eternal qualities
Character oriented

Gifts of the Spirit

Position
Outward actions
Temporal tasks
Task oriented

B. Both the fruits of the spirit and gifts of the spirit are to be shown in the life of every believer and are necessary for a fruitful and effective ministry of service to and for God. Our character which is built through growing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is to be the foundation. The ministry or the work that we do is the super structure that is built on the foundation.

(Romans 12:9; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2; Ephesians 4:2, 15-16)



This diagram illustrates that godly Character Qualities make up the foundation for the house and Spiritual Gifts make up the superstructure. In order for the house to stand the test of time and storm, the foundation of godly character must support the operation of gifts and skills.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. Discuss how we are sometimes unfaithful in the use of the gifts that God gives us as a stewardship. (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Peter 4:10)
2. How are the gifts God gives us like tools to be used properly rather than toys we play with?