

Chapter 18

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS 2

"MUTUALLY DEPENDENT"

For our introduction to the understanding of being "mutually dependent" in regards to our spiritual gifts we will need to look at Romans 12:1-21.

First, we see in verses 1 and 2 that we need to give ourselves to God and His purpose for us and for His church, the body of Christ. We are to present our bodies (our whole being) to God being careful that we no longer conform to the pattern of this world. Rather we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We will then be able to test and approve God's will for our lives. (Romans 12:1-2)

Next, we need to give ourselves and our gifts to each other; being careful that we do not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We need the understanding that we belong to one another, that we need each other, and that we are dependent on each other in the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ made up of many different and various parts with many and various functions.

Finally, we need to give out from what we have been given to those around us. We need to learn to give of ourselves, our time, and our financial and material resources. We should be devoted to one another in love; honoring others above ourselves. As we do this we will learn to share and bless others and to be at peace with those around us.

- I. We need to learn the importance of being "mutually dependent." (Romans 12:4-5; Romans 12:10, 15-16)
 - A. Within the body of Christ there are many parts with many functions, but each of the parts are mutually dependent on one another. We are to love one another as members of one family; learning to share with and bless each other.
 - B. *"...so that there should be no division in the body..."* We must have a mutual interest in one another; the same care one for one another; and equal concern for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
 - C. We build each other up in love as each part of the body of Christ does its work. We can learn to respect each other (each part of the body) and rejoice to see God in each function. (Ephesians 4:16)
- II. We have not been created to only please ourselves; but to show forth God to a dying world. (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:9)
 - A. All ministry (practical ministry) that results from using the gifts God gives to each of us is not to show ourselves off but to show God and who He is to a dying world. We can't claim the gift that has been given to us for ourselves, to boast or to show off. It is given to build up the body and to show God to the world.
 - B. There can be abuses in the expression of each of the spiritual gifts. Here are a few

general abuses that need to be guarded against:

1. **Projection:** Projecting your spiritual gift upon others and expecting them to serve as effectively as you do with similar results.
2. **Glorification:** Holding your gift as “more special” and expecting to be treated as an exception rather than an example.
3. **Isolation:** Using your gift for personal satisfaction or gain and not seeking to serve others for the common good of the body of Christ.
4. **Suppression:** Doubting the validity, need, or impact of your spiritual gift so that you suppress its expression. Just as the unfaithful steward buried his talent, we can bury the gifts that God has given us because of fear, doubt, low self-esteem or low self-respect.

C. These, as well as other abuses, hinder God's design for the church. All of them stem from either a **misunderstanding** of the truth about spiritual gifts, or willful **disobedience** to the truth. An abuse rooted in either source fails to serve people, honor God, or fulfill our calling.

D. To overcome these abuses, we need a teachable spirit to take our misunderstandings to the Word of God in order to (re-)discover truth. Our disobedience to the truth needs a humbled heart, confession, and a refocusing upon God's call for our lives.

III. Love is the binding that will hold us together as we function together in the body of Christ with the gifts that God has given to each of us. We learn to walk in love by esteeming and delighting in one another. (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:14)

A. As we “*love our neighbor as ourselves*,” without trying to put ourselves forward or make ourselves look good, we will begin to esteem and delight in them. (Philippians 2:3-4)

B. Without love our gifts and ministries become religious exaltation machines (“See who I am, see what I can do, I do more than you; better than you.”)

C. If we can settle the fact that God created us each individually, with our own part to play, it will be easier to put love into practical experience.

D. If we can avoid looking at others with either envying or judging but rather look to God for our measure of faith and understand that it also is God's gift to the body, we will be better able to love and esteem one another. (Romans 15:7)

E. Love is true affection for God and man growing out of God's love for and in us. (1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 4:8)

IV. We can see how love should work in our lives as we begin to identify and function in our gifts by looking at 1 Corinthians 13.

- A. Love endures long and is patient and kind.
 - ❖ When the other parts of the body of Christ are learning how to function.
 - ❖ When another part of the body of Christ becomes discouraged, ill, unable to function at full capacity.
 - ❖ When mistakes are made.
 - ❖ When someone needs to share their hurts, disappointments.
- B. Love is never envious; never boils over with jealousy.
 - ❖ Even when another part of the body of Christ gets the function (position) we wanted or thought we deserved.
 - ❖ Even when the vocal gifts get more attention than the serving gifts.
- C. Love does not insist on its own rights or its own way; for it is not self-seeking.
 - ❖ Does not always have to be first.
 - ❖ Does not always have to be recognized.
 - ❖ Is willing to let another idea be used instead of our idea and will even work to make that idea successful.
- D. Love does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness.
 - ❖ Even if they deserve it.
 - ❖ Even if it makes us look better; more righteous.
- E. Love is ever ready to believe the best of every person. Loyalty is a quality that needs to be developed and practiced as we function together in the body of Christ. (Proverbs 20:6)
- F. Love never fails. It will not fade out or become obsolete or come to an end. (1 Corinthians 13:8)
- G. We should eagerly pursue or seek to acquire this love and earnestly desire and cultivate spiritual endowments. Remember our gifts are for giving of ourselves to God and to each other in the body of Christ and in the world we live in.
- V. Where should ministry (the job that we do with the gifts that God gives us) take place? Wherever there are people to give ourselves to, whether at home, at work, at the bus stop, on the tube, at church, at the Bible Training Center, we need to use the gifts (tools) God has given us to serve others. (James 1:27)
- VI. Hospitality is a **key** to the effective use of our gifts. It teaches us to love others and to serve them in practical ways. It is also a very good way for us to practice the giving of ourselves to others around us. *"Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!" (2 Corinthians 6:13, The Message)*
 - A. Romans 12:13 in the Amplified version tells us that we are to pursue or practice the practice (the doing) of hospitality. Pursue means to follow in order to overtake, go after,

work toward, or to want it. One of the qualifications for leadership that the Bible lists is being hospitable. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

- B. Many times God will use our offering of hospitality as the key to the next step of His plan for our lives. (Hebrews 13:2; Genesis 18:1-7; James 2:25)

VII. *"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."* (1 Peter 4:9) As we learn to grow in offering ourselves and what we have been given to others and to do it without grumbling we will be better able to function with our gifts in the body of Christ as God intended for us to do.

- A. We need to learn to share what we do have and not to wait until we have everything perfect or until we think we are more perfect. (1 Kings 17:7-15)
- B. What are some of things we do have and what are some things that we can do now? We do the things we like to do and want to do. We can decide to serve God, to use the gifts He has given us and to function so that we are a blessing in the body of Christ and to those in the world around us. Within the church there are to be no spectators, bench warmers, or "gift impaired" people. We have all been given gifts and can all begin to function in them.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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- 1. Discuss being "mutually dependent." How does this affect our relationships within the body of Christ?
- 2. It is not always easy to understand and then to practice love as it is described in 1 Corinthians 13. What are some practical ways we can more effectively practice showing and receiving love in the body of Christ?