

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 3: Moving Into a Ministry Lifestyle
Week 3 – Loving One Another: Spiritual Gifts

**>> DETACHING MINISTRY FROM GIVING GOD’S LOVE AWAY, &/OR
DETACHING GIVING GOD’S LOVE AWAY FROM RECEIVING GOD’S
LOVE LEADS TO PROBLEMS. COVERED JUDE 1:20-23.**

Introduction

Given what we learned in Week 1 about the “love life,” how can we get started in our home groups?

Let’s consider some of the specific areas of home group ministry everyone should be involved in. Then we’ll look at unique ways you can love and serve others that are tied to your spiritual gifts.

Uniformity in Ministry (these are like "fundamentals" in sports)

The ideal is being a TEAM PLAYER who is FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND, and who also makes a special contribution in gifted areas. God has designed each of us uniquely, but also calls on our regular, consistent, and committed efforts in certain areas REGARDLESS OF OUR GIFTS, BURDENS, OR PERSONALITY TRAITS.¹

The main idea: *evangelism and discipleship in context of community.*

What are the areas of ministry uniformity (areas of ministry we have in common)? THIS WILL BE ON THE EXAM!

- *Love one another* (Jn. 13:34,35; unpacked in “one another” commands in the epistles). We will explore this in more detail next week.
- *Intercessory Prayer* (Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18)
- *Evangelism* (1 Pet. 2:9,12-3:7,15; Col. 3:17-4:1; Titus 2:7-3:8; 1 Tim. 6:1,2)
- *Missions* (Matt. 28:19 of all nations; Acts 1:8)
- *Discipleship* (Mt. 28:18-20; see also 2 Tim. 2:2)

¹ “Christian workers must specialize out of a generalist background. That is, while they do many different types of ministries, they also take time to exercise their special gifts. I have come to believe that if we really like about 20% of the work we do and generally find about 40% acceptable, then we can handle the 40% we do not like. But . . . the 40% that we don’t like may be vital in giving relevance and depth in our ministry. If, however, we find that in the exercise of our responsibilities, there is almost nothing that we like and feel competent at doing, perhaps we are in the wrong work.” Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), p. 223.

All Christians need encouragement to keep on following Christ. Every Christian should be looking for ways to build up their brothers and sisters (Eph. 4:15,16). You have taken this class and maybe several others like it. You have probably attended scores or even hundreds of Bible studies. God wants us to pass on what we have learned to someone else to build them up and help them mature in Christ.

Nothing could be more natural than to assume responsibility for helping younger Christians grow. Think in terms of a PERPETUAL DAY CARE CENTER vs. a HEALTHY FAMILY where all have responsibilities. Discipleship can occur in many settings: meeting with one person or a few, in a cell group or worker team, etc.

- *Financial giving* (Lk. 12:33,34; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17,18). As stewards of God's money and material possessions, we are all responsible to use these things to advance his kingdom, as well as your own needs.

Stay involved in these areas regardless of your ministry gifting and focus! We have to allow time for these provisions in our schedule—and sometimes in our heart. There is great value in being a ministry “generalist.” What are some of these values?

- There is tremendous spiritual power and fruitfulness when most people in a home group are truly committed to these ministries! Conversely, home groups where this is lacking will be weak and unfruitful.
- People with these fundamental ministry skills make solid workers in ministry teams outside of home groups. Conversely, MT workers who lack these skills will hurt its overall effectiveness.
- These fundamental ministry skills add depth and effectiveness to our spiritual gift ministries.
- This focus promotes a servant mentality, which is essential for Christian ministry. We do what needs to be done, even if we aren't great at it and we don't particularly like it. Conversely, a spiritual gifts-only focus promotes our culture's wrong emphasis on self-fulfillment and specialization. “Why should I serve in this way unless it fulfills me, unless I can be great at it?”²

Diversity in Ministry: Spiritual Gifts

² “We need depth-producing frustration that comes out of an incarnational lifestyle lived among the people we serve. We should use our gifts out of a lifestyle of caring for people. We should do a little of a lot of things and also try to give time to work on our areas of giftedness.” Ajith Fernando, *The Call To Joy & Pain* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), p. 130.

(1 Cor. 12:4-6) Now there are varieties of GIFTS, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of MINISTRIES, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of EFFECTS, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (See also ROM 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:8-11; Eph 4:7-16)**

Diversity of Gifts

Definition of “spiritual gifts”: God-given capabilities to serve others so that they are impacted for and/or built up spiritually in Jesus Christ.

Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift.

(1 Cor. 12:7,11) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . (11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

None of the passages concerning spiritual gifts are meant to provide an exhaustive list, but the focus is on how to use the gifts (E.G. with diligence, with love, etc.). One of your handouts includes definitions of these gifts along with distinctives to help you recognize gifts in yourself or others. The handout also provides caution-areas where sanctification is often challenged in people with that gift.

Tonight, we will not define every spiritual gift.

INCLUDE MATERIAL FROM PE CLASS & WORKSHOP—THESE ARE NOT EXHAUSTIVE; BEWARE OF RIGID DEFINITIONS; ROM. 12 MAY BE REPRESENTATIVE OF “TYPICAL” GIFTS; ETC.

Note: We should view spiritual gifts as *special areas of aptitude, and not as limits on our capability to serve* (i.e. the evangelist is not the only one to evangelize).

Diversity of Ministries

Definition of “ministry” (in 1 Cor. 12:4-6): The use of spiritual gifts to serve others.

We tend use the word ministry in two ways:

1. Ministry is *what you do*—the act of exercising your gift. For example, you may develop a hospitality ministry by helping newer people feel welcomed and part of the group and hosting events.

2. Ministry can refer to *the sphere in which you serve*, the group of people among whom you exercise your gifts in service. Examples of ministry spheres might include a junior high cell group, a home church, or a group of terminally ill patients.

Diversity of Effects

Definition of “effects”: Effects are the outcome of our ministries. We bear spiritual fruit in ministry as we impact people for Christ.

In the Body of Christ, some gifts will have a more visible, dramatic effect while others' ministry fruit may be less obvious (from our perspective, not God's). This helps us not compare ourselves with others.

It is very exciting that God has suited you and I uniquely to a role in his purpose!

Why It Is Important To Discover and Exercise Your Gifts

1. It gives you a greater sense of significance and purpose for your Christian life.

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

You will share the sense of purpose that Paul had in this passage as God progressively clarifies your unique role.

2. It provides more insight into God's will for your life.

It is God's will for you to exercise and develop your gift(s). As you do so, there will be many practical implications for decision-making in your life (WEEK 9). Generally speaking, you will need to prioritize faithful use of your gifts to make maximum impact for God's kingdom.

3. It provides additional motivation toward spiritual growth.

“Why did I turn away from the world? Because it's a rush to teach.” This is an example of what has been called the “expulsive power of a new affection.” It is much easier to resist sin when we replace it with the stimulation and joy of ministry. As this happens, you will find greater resistance to the seduction of the world (1 Jn. 2:15,16), which is only a counterfeit to the real purpose for your life.

It is difficult to maintain motivation in our sanctification unless we see the purpose for it. Gifted ministry is a key part of that purpose.

4. It lets you experience more consistently and to a greater degree the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is one of the features of gifting—the Holy Spirit often empowers you with special intensity as you serve in that area. This helps you overcome fearfulness and timidity in your service for Christ. When you serve according to your gifts, you gain confidence in God because you see Him at work in your ministry. This confidence permeates other areas of your Christian life.

(2 Timothy 1:6-9) And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which was given to you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

5. It frees you from making unhealthy comparisons to others and increases healthy interdependence within the Body of Christ.

The devil really likes to alienate us from each other by getting us to compare. The more you discover and develop the unique contribution that you have, the easier it is to be grateful for the contribution of others. This minimizes carnal competition.

(1 Corinthians 12:14-26) For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, 24 whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

As you exercise your gift, you appreciate the genius of God's design of the body of Christ: everyone has an important contribution to make. As a result, you are more likely to seek out and receive the contribution that others have been gifted to make. You realize "I can't do it all. I need others . . ."

Ways to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

The New Testament does not reveal how to discover our spiritual gifts, so we should beware of relying on tests, inventories or other tools. Instead, God emphasizes certain principles that we employ as we live in the Body of Christ. As we do this, our gifts emerge—sometimes sooner, sometimes later.

1. *Ask God to reveal your gifts.*

Remember that God has sovereignly given you the gift(s) that you have. Affirm that he has gifted you for a unique and significant role, and submit in advance to whatever role he has chosen for you. Then ask him to reveal your role to you as you step out in faith to find it.

2. *Become a servant.* Gifts are for serving others. If you're not willing to serve, why should God show you your gift(s)?

(Romans 12:4-11) ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us . . . ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Notice how Paul intentionally connects the subject of spiritual gifts to the importance of embracing a lifestyle of loving service.

(Ephesians 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . . 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

God gifts some members to equip the other members to play their roles of loving service.

As we embrace this lifestyle, our gifting is eventually manifested. Over time, you have probably become aware of different needs/ tasks in home church that are being overlooked (e.g. organizing a retreat, cleaning up after HC, encouraging a

new person, etc.). As you make various attempts to serve, some efforts will be fruitful and others won't. Through feedback from others and the result of your efforts, God will open your eyes to unique areas of gifting that you may have.

3. *Develop foundational ministry skills in your home group.*

Recall the importance of areas of ministry uniformity, including “loving one another” in the context of Christian community. We should prioritize developing ministry skills in our home group over getting involved in various ministries in the church at large. So it normally begins with home group, but eventually goes beyond. **SEEK TO BE AN EDIFYING FORCE IN YOUR HOME GROUP!**

4. *Take steps of faith to try new ministries.*

Sometimes we are pushed into a ministry by the need.

Having a gift does not mean you won't be scared to step up.

Flowing from the first four active steps, the next four steps are reflective:

5. *What kinds of ministry are you effective in (others' feedback; fruit)?*

What feedback (solicited and especially unsolicited) do you receive from others?

When a pattern emerges of people telling you that God builds them up through you in a certain area, this is a reliable indicator of gifting. On the other hand, we will experience setbacks in areas of gifting, so be careful not to give up prematurely.

Start looking at others from the perspective of how God has gifted them. Put some thought into how **THEY** might be gifted; let them know when you see them being effective with you or others. This creates an environment much more conducive to the discovery of gifts, and is an important part of healthy body-life.

6. *What kinds of ministry do you especially enjoy doing?*

In Phil. 2:13, Paul says that God is at work in you both to create the desire for and to give you the empowering for his good pleasure—that is, for his unique purpose for your life. This promise encompasses God's ministry purpose for your life as well as his moral purpose (sanctification). Therefore, it is appropriate to ask yourself, "What areas of ministry are especially appealing to me? What would I like to do for the Lord if I could do anything for him?"

Remember the variety of gifts that God has given. Resist the tendency to assume that you must be gifted like “so and so” in order to be significant, or that if you really would like to minister in a certain area, it must not be God's will.

7. What kinds of ministry needs do you consistently notice?

Gift-giving often affects our perception of ministry needs. Ask God to open your eyes to the needs that exist around you. Look especially within your own home group, but also look beyond it to the fellowship as a whole and the local and global community. Are there certain kinds of needs that you tend to consistently see?

Aptitude often affects our perception of a situation; we tend to be most aware of those needs that we are most suited to meet.

8. What kinds of ministry do you experience consistent empowering for?

“I consistently sense God working through me when I . . .” Gift-giving is spiritual empowerment, which is partially experiential.

Summary & Conclusion

Embrace a serving lifestyle, trusting in God’s love (WEEK 1). Become sound in ministry “fundamentals” in the context of your home group. Seek increasing clarity on your spiritual gifts, and faithfully use those gifts as an important part of your stewardship in the church. This will result in a meaningful and fulfilling way of life that glorifies God!

Memory Verses

(1 Cor. 12:4-6) Now there are varieties of GIFTS, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of MINISTRIES, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of EFFECTS, but the same God who works all things in all persons.**

Assignment

Read Rom. 12-15. Identify and record all “one another” or “each other” phrases in these chapters. For each phrase, give an example of when you did this for someone else or when someone else did this for you.