

“Discovering and Using the Spirit’s Gifts” (Series #5)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, for New Horizon URC, March 19, 2017, second service

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

*Before reading:* Last week we began the topic of spiritual gifts (属灵恩赐) . We defined them as “special abilities given by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to empower believers for the ministries of the congregation.” [Repeat.

-And we distinguished the extraordinary gifts from the ordinary gifts. The ordinary gifts are for today.

I gave a list of 16 ordinary gifts. Handouts on the literature table. Listing those 16 gifts in alphabetical order (字母顺序) , starting with the gift of “administration” and ending with the gift of “wisdom.” /

Today, the *second sermon* on spiritual gifts. I’m going to give some practical way for identifying your spiritual gift. Then, secondly, how to use it. /Again, I am taking many points from a workbook written by Rev. Alvin Vander Griend. His workbook is entitled, “Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them.” [Read 1 Cor 12:12-30

*Introduction:* Imagine that your computer stops working. It just freezes up (死机了) .

Computers do that, sometimes. Now, imagine someone told you, “Well, just try to get your computer going again.” If someone said that to me, my response would be: “But I don’t know how. And I have no idea how to get it my computer going again.” Now, thankfully we have experts (专家) in computers. Some here, in the congregation. They can give us some help. Now, imagine someone gives you the list of 16 spiritual gifts. And they say to you: “OK, get going.

Find your gift. And put it to work.” Put your gift to work.” You might say: “But I don’t know where to start.” That’s probably true.

1. So let me suggest where to start. 6 ideas.

*1.A. First, become familiar the list the 16 ordinary, spiritual gifts. And be assured that you have at least one of these gifts.* [Repeat. I won’t repeat that list... also on outline.

The ascended (已升天的) Lord Jesus has given to each member of the church at least one spiritual gift.

No one is left out. No Christian is omitted from having a gift.

Some church members have 2 or 3 or 4 spiritual gifts. But everyone has at least one.

Our Catechism (教理问答) affirms this biblical truth: The answer to Q. 55 [quote] “believers, *one and all,*

share in Christ and in all his ... gifts.” You, as a believer, having trusted in Jesus, share in Jesus’ gifts. Now, of course, the greatest gift is the gift of salvation (救恩) , which includes the full forgiveness of all our sins. And it includes the gift of saving faith, enabling us to put our trust in Jesus. Everything starts there.

But, beyond basic salvation, Jesus gives you at least one spiritual gift. [Read 1 Cor 12:11.

By the Holy Spirit---“spiritual” gifts. Look over the list.... administration, creative ability, discernment (辨别力) , encouragement, evangelism (宣教) , faith, giving monetary gifts, hospitality, intercession (代求) , knowledge, leadership, mercy, / service, shepherding (牧养) , teaching, and wisdom.

As a believer, in Jesus, you have at least one of these gifts. Most of you, more than one.

*1.B. Secondly, to discover your gift, pray about it.* Ask God, specifically, *to show you which gift, or gifts, you may have.* James 1:5 says if any believer lacks wisdom, on some matter, they

should ask God. Ask God, in prayer, and, says James, He will give you wisdom generously. God will give you insight (见解, 洞察力) and understanding about your spiritual gift, when you ask Him.

Remember, in the Bible the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Spirit of wisdom. And the Spirit of understanding. So, not only does the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts, He also will give us understanding about which gift we may have. So pray.

Pray, then, for the Holy Spirit to help you discern your gift.

*I.C.* Now, the Spirit leads us, often, in very basic ways. *So another way to discover you gift is to start analyzing yourself. Use self-examination.* Godly self-examination is also about your sanctification (成圣) --where you have been growing in holiness. Where, by God's grace, you are making good progress. So, use that Spirit-led, self-examination, also about your spiritual gifts.

Among other questions, ask yourself these:

-What are my special interests, in the church? In serving the Lord Jesus in the midst of his people? Might you be more interested in, say, theology (神学), and making theological distinctions? Then, you might have the gift of "teaching," or the gift of "knowledge."

-Or might you be more interested in a project, in leading it, or administering it?

That would involve the gift of "leadership." Or, the spiritual gift of "administration."

*Explore what you are passionate about.* In the handout, taken from Rev. Vander Griend's workbook, there is a listing of characteristics (特点) about each gift. That will help you examine

yourself in relation to each gift.

So, for example, the gift of "creative ability." Among other characteristics of that gift are these:

-“I have used a particular creative ability, such as writing, artwork, music...to benefit the body of Christ, the church.” Is that true for you? If it is, you may have that gift. Or, can you say this? “People have grown in their appreciation (感恩) of God and his world through my artistic efforts.” True? Then you might have that gift of creative ability.

*I.D.* Here's a fourth way to discover your gift: *Ask other mature believers, what gifts they see in you.* As you start to narrow down (缩小) the list of gifts, for yourself.... Also other mature believers. Ask them to give you their input. / For example, you can ask: “Do you see me as being better in this, or do you think I am better in that?” Talk about your interests and passions to others

believers. They could even go through the list of 16 gifts with you, helping you to confirm some

of your thoughts. Or, redirecting you to other gifts on that list.

*I.E. Fifth, try it out. Use your gift in some practical way, in the ministry of the church.*

So, for example, the Holy Spirit may have given you the special gift of “encouragement.”

In the handout, there are suggestions about ways to try using each gift.

To practice the gift of “encouragement” try some of these things, for example:

-Try encouraging a new Christian, in their walk with the Lord

-Having caring conversations and see if people are willing to share their struggles with

you.

Then, test yourself in how you would encourage them. As they might share a discouragement in their life.

You know, sometimes, the best encouragement comes from mostly listening.

Not trying to fix anything. Just letting people know you will be praying for them.

-You can try visiting people who are sick....or shut-in....or lonely. Testing yourself...

*I.F.* Then, as a final step, go back again, *and evaluate how it went.*

After putting yourself in certain situations to test a possible gift, you should step back and ask yourself how it went. You can ask others involved in that ministry. Ask them how they think you did. /Don't give up if the first or second time you tried things didn't go so well. Illus: piano... / Try it out often enough. As they say in other things: "Practice makes perfect."

So, for example, imagine that you have tried out the gift of "evangelism."

You probably should go along with someone who more obviously has that gift. Explain to that person that you are wondering if you might have that gift. Watch them, observe them as they take you along. Listen to how they engage unbelievers in conversations.

After listening and getting some ideas, take the next step. Ask them to give you some opportunity. Maybe you start by just sharing with an unbeliever how Jesus became real to you, some years ago. Get comfortable telling your own story. Maybe write it out, at first. Or list some of the main points. Over time, if you do have that gift, you will grow in confidence.

If you indeed have the gift of evangelism, over time you will be eager to talk to more unbelievers.

-Maybe you are more hands-on, or more of a doer, than a speaker. Then, you might want to test out, for example, the gift of "hospitality." That means, concretely (具体来说), inviting people into your home. To get to know them. To develop more connection with them. Hospitality in the Bible often meant sharing a meal or a snack. Hospitality is probably one of the easier gifts to try out. Anyone can bake a cake, or, lacking that, buy one at local bakery. Anyone can ask questions to get to know someone better.

## 2. Let's close with a short list of some RIGHT ATTITUDES.

2.A. *First, our attitudes towards others* who want to use their gift. [Read vs. 21.

The apostle Paul says that the church, the congregation, is like a physical, human body.

With many different body parts, hands, feet, eyes, ears, and so on. But, one body.

All the parts have to work together. So it is with spiritual gifts, given to the various members of the church. We all have different gifts...but we are put together to work together, for the good of the whole body.

In vs. 21, Paul imagines one church member, with one gift, saying to another member, or, probably thinking: "I don't need your gift. I can get along, perfectly well, just using my gift."

That, says Paul, is a wrong attitude. But that happens sometimes in churches.

We don't value each other's gifts. And we may not be eager to let their gifts be used.

Various reasons for that. Sometimes we have a wrong idea about the church. A member might think, for example, that the church is mainly for them, their family and their close friends.

So, they minimize the gift of evangelism. They might even oppose other church members who want to reach out to unbelievers with the gospel. Why? Because, in their mind, the church is mostly about family and close friends. They aren't comfortable with new comers.

Or, say, someone is strong in the gift of leadership, heading up a program or activity. But imagine another member with the gift of wisdom suggesting another approach. Another way to accomplish the same thing. But the member testing his leadership gift might get offended:

They might think, or say: "I don't need your gift of wisdom. I am a leader."

Obviously, that's a sinful attitude. There's a wrong understanding of spiritual leadership.

That member might not have true gift of leadership...

*The right attitude is highlighted at the end of this chapter.* Paul writes in second part of vs. 31, "And now I will show you the most excellent way." What is that "way"? It is the Spirit-given fruit of "agape love." (博爱) It is self-sacrificing, caring *helpfulness* to those in need. In 13:5, we read that agape love is not "self-seeking."

So, towards others, with their gifts, we must be willing to humble ourselves. We must not push ourselves ahead of others. Or pushing our own, private agenda. We must consider the good of the whole body, the entire church. We must ask what Jesus wants His church to be and to do.

So, even if evangelism isn't my gift, I know that Jesus wants new people brought into the church. So I will encourage church members with the gift of evangelism to exercise their gift./

-Or, if I have the gift of spiritual leadership, I will always want to gain the valuable insight of members who have the gifts of wisdom and discernment. It will help me be a better leader.

Remember, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve others. So, the right attitude is to want all the members of the church to be busy serving one another, meeting the full needs of the church body. That all the gifts are used. Much more could be said, but we will stop there.

### 3.B. Then, what about toward yourself, as a church member?

The apostle Paul imagines a church member thinking this way: [Read vs. 14. Here's a member who is *minimizing* their spiritual gift. Maybe that member is somewhat shy. Or they might have a negative attitude about their gift.

Take the gift of hospitality...being friendly to other church members and newcomers. But someone might wrongly think: "Is hospitality really important? What good can that do? I think the gifts of leadership and teaching are much more important."

That's wrong. You see, sometimes a church can have plenty of teachers and leaders. But what it desperately needs are members using the gift of hospitality, including visitation of other members. Perhaps the elders and deacons (执事) are in a time of extra busyness, say, talking about future plans, or starting new ministries. The elders and deacons of the church would be overjoyed, if you stepped forward. If you asked whether you might start visiting some members who need a listening ear. Or, if you can open your home ....

Again, the right attitude is that of serving, helping, agape love. Not thinking of what you might prefer...say, to sit back, or to minimize your spiritual gift.

Ministry in the name of Jesus always involves some risk.

Some putting yourself in a new situation, trying new ways to serve in the church.

As you are filled with more agape love, the main fruit of the Holy Spirit, you know you have to be

willing to help others. Out of that same, Spirit-filled, agape love. In chapter 13:7, Paul says, agape love *always hopes and always preserves*. In love, we must be willing to take some risks.

-Brothers and sisters, each of you are gifted by His Holy Spirit. In this church, right here.

The big questions are these two: 1) Are you willing to discover your gift?

And, 2) once you discover that gift, are you willing to put it to use? LET US

PRAY.