

St Paul's Dorking Small Groups - Sunday 26th June 2016

Intentional Discipleship - Our Gifts Romans 1: 7-14

We continue our series on intentional discipleship; we are looking to see how discipleship can be more purposeful and practical. Our study this week is based around 3 key questions:-



1) How do we view and understand the nature of spiritual gifts?

- 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 - The use and abuse of gifts
- Romans 12:1-12 - The role of the gifts in building up of the body of Christ
- Ephesians 4:12-16 - All have a part to play, and gifts develop into ministries
- 1 Peter 4:10 - We are to faithfully administer God's grace gift in its various forms

Commenting on all these passages, David Watson highlighted 5 themes:-

- **A Variety** of gift: The lists are not complete but are representative of God's variety. From prophecy to administration, from words of knowledge to hospitality, these passages indicate the huge variety of ways that God enables us to bring a touch of grace to others.
- **"Charisma"** means that all gifts are *"Loving expressions of God's Grace."*
- All gifting relies on our **dependency and sensitivity** to the work of the Spirit.
- All gifts are part of **Christ's work among us** - "Living movements of Christ's body."
- **Common good:** All expressions of God's gifting are to bring blessing, encouragement, healing, restoration, unity, renewal and strength.

So how does gifting work? How are so-called natural gifts, talents or capabilities and so-called spiritual gifts related?

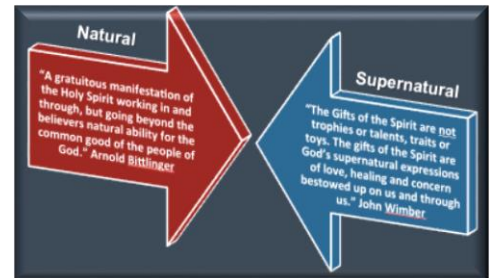
One viewpoint suggests that God takes hold of our *"natural abilities"* and ignites them for his service (Bittlinger): another emphasises the supernatural and sees the gifts as *"Passing touches of the Spirit"* (John Wimber). In reality, **"God can take hold of both our natural gifts and inclinations (given by Him!) and He can bestow new, fresh and extraordinary abilities."** The key is not so much the way in which He brings to fruition his gifting but the way in which they are used: in love, in recognition of his power and grace, in humility, and for the building up of others

The Sacred and the Secular

"Are these gifts to be seen as gifts for use exclusively within the church, or are we to see them as part of our daily lives?" Certainly the oft quoted passages of **1 Cor 12 and Ephesians 4** suggest that the gifts are most certainly to be used for the building up the body of believers. But the whole of scripture does not create such a divide between the sacred and the secular. **Exodus 35:30 – 36:1** demonstrates that **ALL OUR GIFTS AND CAPABILITIES** are from God, they can be used day by day in our daily work environment and they can be used to build the church...in this case quite literally! **".... so every skilled person to whom the Lord has given ability set to work to build the sanctuary."** Exodus: 35:35 – 36:1

2) How do I get to see some of this activity in my life? Ways God uses to activate our gifts:

- An impression or **"calling"** of what God wants to do in your life.
- An **unexpected opportunity** or extraordinary touch of God. God puts us into circumstances that we least expect and he steps in to make the difference.
- A **faithful service that is brought to life** by God's new touch.
- A **talent given over** to God's use, e.g. the Gift of Hospitality.
- A **natural enthusiasm that is set apart** and dedicated to God, e.g. Music
- A **small start** leading to a growing ministry.
- A **word of encouragement** from someone else.



In short, **"It's much easier to steer a moving bus."** If we provide the willingness, openness and get up and go, God will steer us!

3) How might we be more intentional in our use of God's gifts?

- God wants people with **availability not ability:** people who make themselves available to Him: cf. Wedding vows 'All I am I give to you.'
- God wants **Speculators not Spectators:** people who use what little they have, to make more! " 'All I have I share with you.'
- God wants us to seek after the **Giver not the Gift** - they are not an end in themselves, they are not trophies or badges of spirituality – they are born out of a spirit of servanthood. Giftings are like muscles – the more you use them, the more they grow.
- **God wants to surprise us!** For some of us, our gifts lay dormant, gathering dust, for others we have become despondent. (*"None of this stuff ever seems to happen to me"*). For others we shun this and set this aside as something that's just not for us. God wants to surprise us! "See I am doing a new thing says the Lord." Let us approach this with a new vitality and openness and allow God to surprise us.

To conclude:

The use of God's gifts is all about the **intentional giving of ourselves to bless others:** taking what we have, and offering it to others to bless and build them up! Paul longed to be a channel of blessing as he made plans to see his friends. Let us adopt this attitude as we meet our friends, colleagues, and neighbours. This week let us consider - How might I impart some touch of grace to bless and build up those that I am with? How might I make myself available for God to be a channel for his blessing? How might God surprise me this week?

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. How do you view spiritual gifts? What has your experience of them been?
2. Do we under-value our so-called "natural talents?" Have we seen them as God given? Can we share examples of how these have been ignited by God and used to bring blessing to others?
3. John Wimber described spiritual gifts as **'passing touches of the Spirit'**. Have we experienced this enabling? How might we move more in this spontaneous, extra-ordinary type of blessing others?
4. **Sacred or secular?** God has made us, and given us all sorts of talents, capabilities and gifts. Are these primarily for use within the church, or are they to be seen as His enabling for life? (See Exodus 35:30 – 36:1)
5. How can we be more intentional in our use of our gifts? Do we feel despondent? Do we feel out of our depth? What steps can we take to be a more open and fruitful channel of God's blessing to others?
6. Pray that God would surprise you this week ... that you impart some touch of grace to those you meet.