

Small Group Study Guide

“The Spirit and Gifts” | Joyfully Spirit-Filled Series |
From Sunday October 27, 2019

Appetizer:

Question: Sometimes we receive gifts at Christmas that are addressed to the whole family. What was the best gift you ever received that wasn't for you but was for everyone?

Get someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 out loud to the group. Then choose another individual to read the passage through a second time, to allow the words to sink in. It's really helpful to hear Scripture read twice with different voices.

Like the fruit of the Spirit, most lists mentioned in the Bible are not exhaustive. Paul gets a lot of attention in naming 9 spiritual gifts, mostly due to some of the more obvious supernatural traits (healings, miracles, speaking in tongues, etc). Can you think of other spiritual gifts that you have seen or experienced, both supernatural and “natural” that either fall into this list somehow or are in addition to this list? Are there other spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible?

Main Course:

One of the primary issues with the church in Corinth was over a great division created by a culture of spiritual elitism. Spiritual experiences were seen as evidence of the Holy Spirit. Yet some of these spiritual experiences didn't look very Christian; in fact, some of the “Spiritual utterances” may have been experienced by people who had not confessed Jesus as Lord but were being given credit due to their spirituality.

Question: In the sermon, the point was made that confession is the true marker of the Christian faith. This may seem obvious to us today, but do you think that people can have a spiritual experience before they confess Jesus as Lord? Can you think of an example? And can these spiritual experiences be from the Holy Spirit without a confession in Jesus Christ?

Paul challenged the Corinthians not to place one gift above another when it comes to the Christian faith.

In the context of the letter, it looks like some people in the Corinthian church placed tongues as the most important gift. But in other areas of the letter, you could see that the Corinthians highly valued wisdom and knowledge more than other gifts (perhaps because of their Hellenistic influences. If you don't know what being Hellenistic is, take a moment to google it).

Questions: Have you ever experienced Christians who value one spiritual gift over another? Do you tend to value one spiritual gift over another? Why? And how does this bias affect the Christian community? What is the proper way to approach this bias?

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul writes, “*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*” In the sermon it was suggested that gifts of the Spirit are for the community or they are not really spiritual gifts. Do you agree or disagree with this? In what ways have you been encouraged by people using gifts of the Spirit in the church?

Dessert:

In reflecting on the passage, the speaker suggested that although gifts of the Spirit can lead to abuses and hurts, today it would seem that we have less of an abuse problem, and more of a use problem when it comes to the gifts. In other words, we don't see the gifts operating in community like we should.

Some people might feel like this is an invitation towards having more spiritual experiences. Others would suggest that this simply means people should be acting more often upon what the Spirit is prompting them to say and do for others in a loving way. What do you think this means? And what do you think a community using their gifts for building one another up could look like?

Challenge: We live in a day when people are longing more for the presence of God yet wary of Spiritual experiences that are strange or draw attention to individuals. But are we open to inviting the Holy Spirit to work in us in a naturally Supernatural way? Read 12:11 out loud again and then invite the group if they are comfortable to end the study with praying for one another, that the Holy Spirit would distribute his gifts to each one as he determines.