

SEPTEMBER 18, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
SPIRIT EMPOWERED
1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-11
FALL QUARTER WEEK 2 OF 12

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. What is the most unexpected piece of advice you ever received?

When I was thinking about going into pastoral ministry one of the guys I spoke to for counsel told me to run from my desire and to then see what happened to it - did it stay or did it go? He pointed out that pastoral ministry is difficult, that you don't want to romanticize it, and that a good thing to do is to run the other way (but with open hands, thus in humility and submission). That is what I did for about four years. After it was clear that the desire wasn't going away, I pursued seminary and made a career change.

How about you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

This week's questions are going to be more about our posture, attitude, approach and response to the Person and manifestation of the Holy Spirit rather than to the specific gifts He gives and which ones we may or may not have. The general idea I hope to get across is that the greatest gift we have been given is the Holy Spirit Himself, and that our proper response is to allow Him to reveal Himself however He chooses. It seems (and correct me if I'm wrong) that the Church's general response to the Holy Spirit is to devalue Him as a Person and to perhaps overvalue the gifts He gives, gifts which we probably use more for our own glory than His. I think our approach, response and experience of the Spirit looks much different when we want His presence and ministry in our lives more than we want what He can give us to use on His behalf. (I am not saying we should value one and not the other. That's wrong. I am saying we should value one more than the other. As we do that, we find that we get both the Person and the gifts of grace that He loves to give.)

2. Ryan made the point that "The Holy Spirit is not a power to wield, but a person to be revealed." (verse 7)

- **Do you think the evangelical church in the west has tended to focus more on "a power to wield" or on "a person to be revealed"? Why?**

The point of this question is to bring to light the general reality that the church in the west tends to value power over Person. I don't think you need to spend a ton of time on this one. Just do a quick assessment of the terrain.

I think you already know my answer to this one.

There are a lot of reasons, no doubt, why this is. Here are a few I've thought of -

- The west values power (a lot).
 - In fact, we may value power above just about everything else.
 - By way of illustration, when I was in seminary we read a book on prayer that had had the title changed by the publishers to include the word *power* because books sold better to evangelicals in the west when the word *power* was in the title.

- There is some fear around knowing and experiencing the Godhead, and especially the Holy Spirit, so it would make sense to seek for the gifts rather than the Person when the Person is scary and somewhat known and unknown at the same time.
 - We are selfish and prideful.
 - We want the gifts so we can do things for God so we can feel good about ourselves.
 - We also want them so we can compare ourselves to others, and come out on the winning end of the comparison.
 - We are consumers. We consume God, religious services, and Spiritual Gifts.
 - We tend to value our worth by what we do. The Holy Spirit helps us do stuff, and this helps us feel more worth-full.
 - What else would you add?
- **When it comes to Christians and their relationship with God the Holy Spirit, how does a desire to “wield a power” look different from a desire to “reveal a Person”?**
 - **What types of postures and attitudes does each seem to require?**
 - **Why would God be more interested in “reveal” than “wield”?**

The point of this question is to discuss Ryan’s point that our mission is to reveal God to the world and that the Holy Spirit wants to manifest Himself through all of us to do that. While His goal is “reveal,” ours seems to have become “wield.” I want this question to refocus us on our primary goal - to let the Holy Spirit reveal Himself to others through us, and to have that be our life’s aim.

You can ask the main question and use the two additional ones as discussion starters or discussion deepeners, if needed.

Here are a few of my thoughts to the first question, if helpful.

- It seems that “wielding a power” could be more about my glory, my recognition and my prestige, whereas “revealing a Person” is more about me getting out of the way and letting that person shine in order to receive glory, recognition and prestige.
 - When I focus on “reveal” I don’t care if I get recognized because I’m trying to let others know Him.
 - When I focus on “wield” I probably care more about getting recognized.
- Put another way, “wielding a power” seems to be primarily about me and “revealing a Person” is all about Him.
- “Wielding a power” can contribute more to comparison and competition than “revealing a Person” will.
 - When I focus on “wielding a power” I am interested in knowing if others are doing it more or less than I am.
 - When I focus on “revealing a Person” I am interested in knowing that the Person is revealed and I’m happy whenever I see that happening.
- What else would you add to this?

3. **The point was made in the message that the church has tended to take this passage and make it about a list of spiritual gifts that a believer has or doesn’t have rather than make it about what Paul intended, which was to teach on nine of the ways the Spirit of God manifests**

Himself in the church for the good of other believers.

In my mind, this is the most important question of the bunch and so I would like to encourage you to spend more time on it than the others.

- **What might it mean for you to consider that you have been given a gift - the gift of the Holy Spirit - and that He wants to work through you for the good of others?**
 - First, it means I remind myself often that the Holy Spirit is the gift, not the gifts that He brings with Him. Focus on the Giver, not the gift. This is an age-old problem.
 - Second, it means I focus less on the gift(s) I think I might have and more on the ways I can reveal Him to others.
 - Of course the way I reveal Him to others is through the gift(s) He gives me to be able to do that.
 - I should think often about the ways I seem to be good at revealing God to others if I want to think about the gift(s) I may have been given.
 - I should focus on the ways I seem to be good at revealing Him to others and not worry too much about how I'm doing that. "Just do it!"
 - I should work to get better at the main ways I am good at revealing God to others. This is what it means to "fan into flame" the gift I was given (2 Timothy 1.6).
 - What else would you say?
- **What might it mean for you to consider that your spiritual gift(s) might not actually be found in the New Testament lists of gifts?**
 - This could be very encouraging, enlightening and life-giving.
 - This prevents me from having to crow-bar who God has made me to be into an incomplete NT list of gifts.
 - In this case, then, the standard "Spiritual Gifts Assessments" might not be all that helpful in determining our role and usefulness to the church and to the kingdom.
 - This allows me to prayerfully consider and explore the ways in which I am able to reveal God to fellow believers, and even to unbelievers, without having to be tethered to these incomplete lists.
 - I should think carefully about what I'm good at and about what I do that God seems to really bless. This is a good clue as to what my gift(s) are.
 - I don't have to feel "less than" if my gift(s) aren't necessarily contained in the lists.
 - What else would you add?
- **What might it mean for you to consider that the Holy Spirit wants to manifest Himself through you in many different ways, and not just through those main gifts you believe you have?**
 - First, since there are "varieties of service" and "varieties of activities" that means that God wants to manifest Himself through you in a variety of service and a variety of activities, which means you can't say, "I don't have to serve there because that's not my gift."
 - Second, this means that the Spirit can and will choose to manifest Himself through us when we step in and meet needs which exist. We might not be especially good at whatever it is we are doing, but that doesn't mean the Spirit

isn't showing up. It just means that we aren't serving in our area of primary giftedness.

- Third, we are not free to only serve in our areas of primary giftedness. This seriously limits the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. (But we should let people serve in their areas of primary giftedness and get out of the way so that they can.)
- Fourth, it can be just as exciting to see the Holy Spirit reveal Himself through us as we step out in faith and obedience, trusting the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself through us, even though we might not be serving in ways we are particularly good at.
- Fifth, knowing this, it might be good to seriously consider why we are sometimes unwilling to serve in areas we don't feel we are gifted for. What keeps us from it? Pride? False humility? Laziness?
- What else would you add to this?

4. Having said all that we have said, do you sense that one or more of the primary ways the Spirit manifests Himself through you is located in one of these nine areas? If so, which one(s)?

I think I am gifted in the areas of wisdom and prophecy, as Ryan defined them.

How about you?

Sent in Love

5. What is one way you can apply this passage to your life this week?

Praying about it!