

Equipped to use our spiritual gifts (part two)

Would you like to discover and develop all that God's gifted you with? Do you want to exercise the gifts of the Spirit with love and sensitivity? In part one we looked at the nature of spiritual gifts, grouping them under seven different headings. But where do we get the power to exercise our gifts and how should we use them? Let's continue...

The source of power

As we exercise our spiritual gifts, we need to do this with lives that are fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit. It's sobering to realize that, even in the process of using the gifts He's given us, we can still end up just "going through the motions" of ministry if we think we can do it on our own. Spiritual gifts are like power tools - they don't work properly unless they're plugged in.

Imagine trying to mix cake ingredients with an electric mixer that wasn't plugged in! Your mixer might be the tops in kitchen gadgets but, without the power, it won't get the job done. The same is true in exercising our spiritual gifts. In order to achieve anything of eternal value, we need to make sure we are plugged into the divine power source. How do we do it? It's as simple as A, B, C...

Appreciate the fact that power is available to you in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and that this is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead¹. The more we invite the Holy Spirit to take increasing control of the various parts of our lives, the more *His* power will flow through us.

Be aware of short-circuits that can cut off the power supply. One of these is not facing up to sin in our lives by rationalizing wrong attitudes and practices. Only when we confess specific sin to God do we open the way for the power to be restored. Another short-circuit is not submitting to God for Him to use us as He wants. Pride, self-reliance, and downright self-promotion can leave us ministering in our own strength rather than in the power of the Spirit.

Cultivate close contact and communion with Jesus Christ². This passage of Scripture shows there is a vital connection between remaining in Christ and bearing fruit. This involves adoring, praising, thanking, worshipping, talking, listening, reading, obeying, trusting, and staying in permanent close connection with Jesus. Of necessity, this means spending quantity as well as quality time with Him. We will then bear the fruit that the Spirit wants to produce in us.

The way of love

Although spiritual gifts are the tools we need for effective ministry, they should never become more important than spiritual fruit. Without the fruit of a Christ-like character, we cannot use our gifts in a God-honouring way. A fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is love. It's no coincidence that, in the middle of Paul's discussion about spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church³, there is that wonderful 'love chapter', chapter 13. This chapter shows us "the most excellent way" to use our spiritual gifts - the way of love. Love is supremely important in the area of spiritual gifts because, without it jealousy, bickering, and division will soon take over. None of the spiritual gifts were meant to divide - their purpose is to build up the body of Christ, the Church.

I mentioned last time that, when I was a child, I used to get very excited about the Christmas gifts that Frank would bring to our family. How much more exciting it is to receive spiritual gifts from God which we can use to serve Him and minister to others in His family!

¹ Eph. 1:19-20

² John 15:1-8

³ 1 Cor. 12 and 14