

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will teach from the Bible what is a disciple of Jesus Christ. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: **A DISCIPLE IS A PERSON USING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GIFTS TO SERVE**. What is a spiritual gift? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? How do Christians receive spiritual gifts? How do they know which spiritual gift they have received? What are the characteristics of the spiritual gifts? How do they relate to Christian service?

(S)      **POINT 1. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**First. What is the nature of spiritual gifts?** According to Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, a spiritual gift is *a special ability or function*, like teaching. It is the manifestation of God's power and wisdom through the Christian and shows itself in different kinds of service. According to Ephesians 4:7,11 a spiritual gift is *a measured piece of God's grace and a special office*, like for example, teacher.

**Second. What are examples of spiritual gifts in the Bible?** Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 list the spiritual gifts that should function in every church. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 lists the spiritual gifts that were manifested in the church of Corinth. No list in the Bible intends to be exhaustive. There are other spiritual gifts that are not mentioned in the Bible. For example, the musical and creative gifts. Moreover, there are different kinds of each spiritual gift. For example, there is a gift of evangelism to the masses, a gift of evangelism to small groups, a gift of evangelism by literature and a gift of evangelism by singing and acting.

**Third. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?** **One.** 1 Peter 4:10 states that the purpose of spiritual gifts is *to serve* other Christians with one's gift. **Two.** Ephesians 4:12-13 states that the purpose of spiritual gifts is *to build up* the Christian Church. **Three.** Ephesians 4:12 states that the purpose of spiritual gifts is *to equip* Christians for works of service. **Four.** 1 Peter 4:11 states that the purpose of spiritual gifts is *to glorify God*.

(T)      **POINT 2. RECEIVING AND RECOGNISING SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**First. How do Christians receive spiritual gifts?** God sovereignly and graciously gives spiritual abilities to some Christians and special functions or offices to others. Although Christians are exhorted to eagerly desire the greater spiritual gifts and to excel in those gifts that build up the Church (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1,12), it is always God the Holy Spirit who determines whether a Christian receives a spiritual gift and he determines what that gift should be. God arranges a specific place for each Christian in the Body, assigns to each Christian a specific service and gives spiritual gifts to whom he desires (1 Corinthians 12:18,28,11).

**Second. How do Christians recognize their spiritual gift?** **One.** By studying the Bible and prayer. You should understand what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts, their characteristics and their functions. Then you pray and ask God to reveal to you whether he has given you a spiritual gift or which spiritual gifts he has graciously and sovereignly given to you. **Two.** By serving in the Church. You should get involved in different kinds of Christian services, like teaching the children, leading the youth, showing mercy to the helpless, encouraging people with problems and preaching the gospel. By serving other people and building up the Church, your spiritual gift or gifts will begin to be manifested. God does not give spiritual gifts as an ornament to brag about, but as a gracious ability to serve others. Christians, who do not serve, will never discover their spiritual gift.

**Three.** By evaluating your service. You should ask yourself, "How do other Christians evaluate my service? What do other people often ask me to do? What do they I do very well? What do they say that I did that benefited them?" You should also ask yourself, "How do I myself evaluate my service? What do I enjoy doing? What things do I do well? What things do I do that build others up?" Because your spiritual gift is inseparable from serving others and building up others, the effect your service has on others is a good indication of your spiritual gift.

(S)      **POINT 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**First. The spiritual gift of apostles.** The word means *one sent with a commission*. It is used in two senses in the Bible: the apostles of Christ and the apostles of the churches.

**One. The apostles of Christ** was a unique group of people. They were personally chosen, called, equipped and sent forth by Jesus Christ in order to be his witnesses, especially of his death and resurrection. They were endowed with a special measure of the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim the gospel in the beginning of Church history and to record the truth in the Bible books they wrote. They were given special authority to establish doctrine through their teaching, to command Christians to obey their teaching, to appoint elders in the Church, and to include or exclude people from God's kingdom. They form the foundation of the historical Christian Church. They head two of the lists of the spiritual gifts and were limited to *the eleven* disciples of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul.

They have no successors, because no one would qualify according to the requirements of an apostle in Acts 1:21-26.

**Two. The apostles of the churches** are messengers or delegates of churches that are sent out to accomplish a specific task. It was used of Barnabas, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy when they were sent out with the special task to plant churches. The word may be applied to present day *missionaries* and other Christians that are sent out to accomplish a special task, like in Acts 14:1-4.

**(T) Second. The spiritual gift of prophets and prophecy.** The word means *to speak forth, openly and publicly or to proclaim* God's message. It is also used in two senses in the Bible.

**One. The Old Testament prophets as mouthpieces of God.** They were the organs of fresh revelation and spoke the very words of God himself. They revealed who God is, what God did in the past, what God was doing in the present and what God would do in the future. They sometimes proclaimed what God wanted specific persons to do. All their words were God's authoritative words. There are no more Prophets of this kind, because John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet (Matthew 11:13) and God's revelation of himself and his plan was completed in Jesus Christ and in the witness of the New Testament apostles and prophets. Their revelations have been recorded in the Bible and the list of 66 books of the Bible has been closed long since. The Old Testament prophets also have no successors! After the close of the New Testament no person in history may add more *words of God* or books to the Bible. Revelation 22:18-19 warns that God will add his plagues to any person who adds anything to the Bible. God will take away a person's share in the tree of life on the new earth if he takes anything away from the Bible!

**Two. The New Testament prophets as announcers of God's intentions in certain circumstances.** They were unique. They were an office only during the first period of the New Testament Church until the writing of the New Testament was completed. God used the apostles to reveal what the whole Church should know, believe, be and do under all circumstances (1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:11-12,16). But God used the New Testament prophets only to reveal what the early church without a Bible had to know or do in certain circumstances. For example, they spoke to strengthen, encourage and comfort Christians (1 Cor 14:3; Acts 15:30-32), to warn Christians (1 Cor 14:8; Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11) and to reveal the intention of God with regard to certain people (Acts 13:1-4). While the preaching and teaching of the apostles of Jesus were infallible and authoritative for the faith and behaviour of all Christians in every century (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim 1:13; Acts 16:4; Phil 4:9), the uttering of the New Testament prophets had to be tested and evaluated (1 Cor 14:29-33).

**Three. The prophets as inspired preachers.** These are Christians who have received the gift of prophecy or the office of a preacher. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit to explain and preach the Bible, thus building Christian character, encouraging Christians to do God's will and comforting those who experience trials, like in 1 Corinthians 14:3. Their speaking is Holy Spirit inspired speaking. They openly speak and proclaim God's already revealed message in the Bible in a very persuasive and convicting way. They bring people's thoughts, motives, attitudes, words and actions, that were previously concealed, into the light, like in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. Although a prophet as an inspired preacher gives authoritative instruction, Christians should not follow any prophet or preacher without reservation. All prophets or preachers, their teachings and their conduct, must be tested to see whether they are true or false. All prophecies or preaching must be examined by all the Christians and by the standard of the Bible to ensure that no human opinion is proclaimed as God's Word.

**(S) Third. The spiritual gift of teachers.** Teachers communicate the truth of the Bible to Christians. Their first function is to study the Bible in detail in order to validate the truth, to dig out the facts and to gather and systematise the biblical truth. Their second function is to teach the truth of the Bible with authority and without loss of meaning or original intention, in order to make the truth understandable and practical. According to Matthew 28:19, teachers direct their teaching to new Christians in order to make disciples who obey Christ's commands. According to 2 Timothy 2:2, teachers direct their teaching to Christians who are faithful and able to later teach others. According to 1 Corinthians 12:28, the preachers and the teachers in the church are the two most senior grades of ministry after the apostles. Thus, missionaries, preachers and teachers are the most important spiritual gifts or spiritual offices in the Christian Church!

**(T) Fourth. The spiritual gift of evangelists.** The word means *to proclaim the Good News*. Evangelists proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers so effectively that people are saved and the number of Christians in the world is increased.

**(S) Fifth. The spiritual gift of pastors.** The word means *to care like a shepherd*. Pastors feed, protect, care and guide Christians towards spiritual growth and spiritual well being. They especially show concern and loving care to the weak and the needy in the church.

**(T) Sixth. The spiritual gift of leadership.** There are two kinds of leadership gifts. **One.** The leadership gift in Romans 12:8 is the desire and ability *to lead by going in the front* of the Christians. 1 Timothy 3:4-5 says that they should first of all set an example of leadership in their own family. Then they set an example for all the Christians in the church to follow. 1 Timothy 5:17 says that they are called "elders" and give direction to the affairs of the local church by using the Bible to preach, teach and admonish. **Two.** The leadership gift in

1 Corinthians 12:28 is called *administrations*. It is the desire and ability to lead by steering or guiding the Christians. These leaders give proper direction to the local church by their wisdom and, like a steersman or pilot of a ship in turbulent waters, they guide the local church through difficult and problematic situations.

(S) **Seventh. The spiritual gift of serving and helping** is the desire and ability to detect and meet needs. Christians with this gift are able to observe needs quickly, are willing to bring personal sacrifices to meet those needs and are practical in their approach to meet those needs.

(T) **Eighth. The spiritual gift of encouragement** is the desire and ability to stimulate Christians to do what the Bible says. Christians with this gift counsel and guide other Christians in their growth and service.

(S) **Ninth. The spiritual gift of giving** is the desire and ability to use temporal possessions for the highest good of man and the greater glory of God. Christians with this gift plan their personal business in order to gain assets and then entrust their assets to other Christians for the furtherance of their ministry in God's kingdom.

(T) **Tenth. The spiritual gift of showing mercy** is the desire and ability to identify with other people's needs and then to comfort and help them.

(S) **Eleventh. The spiritual gift of faith** is the desire and ability to do a special ministry for God. It is the desire and ability to trust God when he calls you to do difficult things, like living in a foreign country, persevering under persecution or administering justice in an unjust world. It is the desire and ability to trust God to bring something new into existence or to do something that other people regard as impossible, like "moving mountains". Like Abraham, Moses and Paul, Christians with the gift of faith turn God's purposes into reality.

(T) **Twelfth. The spiritual gift of healing** is the desire and ability to allow God to work supernaturally through a human instrument to restore health to the body or the soul or spirit of other people.

(S) **Thirteenth. The spiritual gift of speaking in tongues** is the desire and ability to speak in other known languages of people in the world, as in Acts 2:1-13. The purpose is to proclaim the wonders of God in a language that he previously did not know, but was spoken by foreigners. Or it is the desire and ability to speak in an unknown language of angels, as in 1 Corinthians 13:1. The purpose is then to edify himself

(1 Cor.14:4). The regulation for speaking in foreign languages or strange tongues within the church meetings is taught very clearly in 1 Corinthians 14:27-28. Christians with the gift of interpretation or the gift of distinguishing between the spirits should check that those who speak in strange tongues are genuine and not counterfeit. The gift of tongues is not a proof of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and it is also not a proof of spiritual maturity (1 Cor.12:30; 1:7; 3:1)!

(T) **Fourteenth. The spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits** is the desire and ability to distinguish between what comes from God and what does not come from God, but from another source. As long as there was no written New Testament, Christians with this gift could distinguish between the divine and the demonic, the spiritual and the psychological, and the true teachings and false teachings. Christians with this gift are able "to test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and tell whether the professed spiritual gifts of Christians are really from God or merely strange, false or even diabolical.

#### (S) **POINT 4. USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO BUILD THE CHURCH**

**First. The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit.** The possession and use of spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit is not a proof of being spiritual or mature. According to 1 Corinthians 1:7 and 3:1, the Corinthian church possessed all the spiritual gifts, yet they were not spiritual or mature, but rather worldly and mere infants in Christ! And according to 1 Corinthians 13:1, the exercise of the spiritual gifts without love for other Christians is absolutely useless in God's eyes! The real proof of living by the Holy Spirit, being controlled by the Holy Spirit and being led by the Holy Spirit is not the possession of the gifts of the Spirit, but the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. And the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

**Second. The use of the spiritual gifts.** All Christian do not receive one particular spiritual gift. No Christian receives all the spiritual gifts. Moreover, all the spiritual gifts are limited. When a Christian has received a spiritual gift, he should use it for the common good (1 Cor 12:7,28-30). How should a Christian use his spiritual gift for the common good of all other Christians? For example, Christians with the gift of teaching *serve* other Christians by teaching them, *set an example* for other Christians how to teach and *equip or train* other Christians how to teach. In this way the Body of Christ is built up in the best way. Likewise, most gifts could be used to serve others, to set an example for others and to equip others in that area. Each member is needed and serves the others. And each member needs the service of the others. Serving one another with your spiritual gift is therefore one expression of loving one another!

#### (T) **POINT 5. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

**First.** Make it your goal to serve other people with your spiritual gift.

**Second.** See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc.

**Third.** Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".