

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Today's teaching is: SERVING ACCORDING TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS. We will teach the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts, how you discover your own spiritual gift and how to serve other people with your spiritual gift.

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

**First. What is a spiritual gift?**

A spiritual gift is a *special ability or a function or office* that God gives by his grace and by sovereign determination. It is *both the ordinary as well as extraordinary activity of the Holy Spirit in a Christian*. It is not the product of the Christian's skill or ingenuity. It is always *an expression of God's grace* in a variety of forms through the stewardship of Christians.

(T) **Second. What are the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible?**

The New Testament lists about 25 different spiritual gifts and offices. An example of a spiritual ability is teaching. An example of a spiritual office is a teacher. In Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 *the spiritual gifts* are considered in their relationship to *the officers of the Church*. It is not true that the church in the first period was governed by the Spirit apart from the church officers. The very first church at Jerusalem had elders and deacons and the apostles functioned as elders in the local church. The various services in the church may be performed through the means of the ordinary spiritual gifts, like teaching and showing mercy. They may be performed by the extraordinary spiritual gifts, like healing and doing great deeds by faith. But they may also be performed without a special spiritual gift, because every Christian is required to teach others and show mercy to others! The point that the apostle Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 12 is not that all the services or tasks in the church require a special spiritual gift, but rather that there is *a great diversity* of services or tasks in the church! The lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible are not exhaustive. The letter to the Corinthians mentions the spiritual gifts common in only that particular local church at that particular time. The letter to the Romans mentions *the spiritual gifts that should be given a place in every local church*. Some spiritual gifts are not listed among the spiritual gifts. For example, the creative, artistic and musical gifts in Exodus 31:1-6 and Psalm 33:2-3. Moreover, each of the spiritual gifts has a variety of different ways of expressing itself. For example, there are different kinds of teaching gifts, like the gift to teach by means of words or drawings or drama, and the gift to teach a different group of people like adults or children or the handicapped. Each of these teaching gifts may or may not include certain extraordinary abilities. Moreover, each of these teaching gifts is limited in extent.

(S) **Third. What are more important than spiritual gifts?**

Grace, love and to be spiritual are more important than the spiritual gifts.

One. Grace is more important than possessing a spiritual gift. Ephesians 4:7 says that "to each single Christian" grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This means that God's grace is much more than just the spiritual gifts. Each Christian has received grace, but each Christian has not necessarily received a spiritual gift. *Each single Christian has received a measure of the exceptional effects produced by God's grace*, which for example may be divine *skill* to tell the gospel, divine *love* to show mercy or divine *power* to do some great task. God's grace may also express itself in one or another spiritual gift.

Two. Love is more important than possessing a spiritual gift. By comparing 1 Corinthians 12:31a with 31b, Paul points to the way of love, which is better than the desire for the spiritual gifts. The implication is that if the spiritual gifts are lacking in some Christians or even in some Christian churches, love must never be lacking! While ordinary and extraordinary abilities or functions or offices of the Holy Spirit are sovereignly given *to some Christians* in the Body of Christ, love is a gift of the Holy Spirit that is given *to all individual Christians*!

Three. To be spiritual is more than possessing a spiritual gift. The possession of spiritual gifts does not make a person more spiritual! The Christians in the church at Corinth possessed all the ordinary and extraordinary spiritual gifts, and yet they remained unspiritual, carnal and immature (1 Cor 1:7; 3:1). The characteristics of being genuinely spiritual are spiritual maturity (1 Cor 3:1-4) and the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-24).

(T) **Fourth. What are the purposes of spiritual gifts?** The four distinct purposes of spiritual gifts are *to serve* one another, *to build up* the Church, *to equip* Christians for works of service and ultimately *to glorify* God in all things!

(S) **POINT 2. RECEIVING, RECOGNISING AND ASSESSING SPIRITUAL GIFTS.**

**First. Who determines which spiritual gift you receive?**

God sovereignly and graciously gives spiritual gifts to Christians and appoints the special functions or offices in the Church. He ultimately determines which spiritual gifts and functions he gives and to whom he gives them. And the Christians, to whom spiritual gifts have been given, are exhorted to eagerly desire to use those spiritual gifts that build up the Church. God arranges a specific place for each Christian in the Body of Christ. Although he does not necessarily assign to each and every Christian his *specific service*, each and everyone must *serve!* And although he does not necessarily give each and every Christian a *spiritual gift or function or office*, each and everyone must *love!*

(T) **Second. How do Christians discover whether God has given them a spiritual gift?**

It does not matter whether it is a special ability or a special office or God's general grace. There are three ways to discover the possession of God's grace or the possession of special abilities.

**One. By studying the Bible and prayer.** Understand the biblical teaching about the spiritual gifts, their characteristics and functions.

**Two. By serving in the Church.** Get involved in different kinds of Christian services, like teaching the children, leading the youth, showing mercy to the helpless, encouraging people with problems, preaching the gospel. If God has given you his grace, which may be an ordinary or a special ability, this will begin to be manifested as you serve others and build up the church. God does not give his grace or spiritual gifts as an ornament to brag about, but as an ability to serve others. A Christian, who does not serve, can't really discover whether God has given him a special spiritual gift or not.

**Three. By evaluating your service, not just your aptitude.** A spiritual gift is an ability that provokes you to serve in the area of that gift. It expresses itself in *the desire to serve* in that area. Because spiritual gifts are inseparable from serving others and building others up, the effect your service has on others is a good indication of your spiritual gift. Ask yourself, "How do other Christians evaluate my service?" "What do other people often ask me to do?" "What do they say that I can do well?" "What do they say that I did that benefited them?" Then 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?"

(S) **POINT 3. DESCRIPTION OF SOME IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

There are about 25 spiritual gifts or offices listed in the New Testament. Here follows a short description of some of the most helpful spiritual gifts.

**The office of apostle.** The office of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul were unique. This spiritual office no longer exists, because no one after them were called, trained and sent by Jesus Christ himself. However, the office of being an apostle of the church still exists. An apostle of the church is a delegate or representative of the local church that is sent out to accomplish a special task. The word may be applied to modern day missionaries that plant new churches and build up these churches.

(T) **The gift of prophecy.** The gift of prophecy is speaking forth or proclaiming in a Holy Spirit inspired way that which has already been revealed in the preaching and teaching of the apostles of Christ. This is the general meaning of the word *prophecy*. To prophesy is the special ability or function to proclaim (preach) the biblical truths in order to edify particular Christians by encouraging and comforting them, or to edify the Church as the Body of Christ by equipping the members for various works of service. Christians with this spiritual gift openly proclaim or preach God's already revealed messages in the Bible in a very persuasive and convincing way. They speak with intelligible words and with power.

(S) **The office of teacher and the gift of teaching.** A teacher is a function or office in the church. Teaching is a special ability in the church. Teachers communicate the truth of the Bible especially to Christians. They are among the ordinary offices or officers in the New Testament Church. While the New Testament prophets received their message by direct revelation, the New Testament teachers derived their knowledge from the study of the Old Testament Scriptures, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the apostles, thus, from the 66 books of the Bible. The office of teacher was open to everyone's ambition, and the requirement of a special spiritual ability of teaching for the teacher is not mentioned (James 3:1). The office of a teacher is based on a *calling* rather than on a special spiritual gift. Some Christians receive the *special office* being a teacher or shepherd-teacher in the church, but they are cautioned to consider their office as a great responsibility. Other Christians receive a *special ability* of teaching. But all Christians are called to perform the function or task of teaching one another.

The first task of teachers 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. The second task of teachers is *to practise* what they teach and set an example of living out the truth. The third task of teachers is *to teach* the truth of the Bible with authority and without loss of meaning or the

original intention, in order to make the truth understandable and practical. Teaching is directed to new Christians in order to make them disciples that obey Christ's commands. And teaching is directed to Christians that are teachable, faithful and able to later teach others.

1 Corinthians 12:28 teaches that the New Testament prophets and New Testament teachers are the two most senior grades of ministry under the apostles of Christ. Because both the apostles of Christ and the New Testament prophets only had a task to perform in the early period of the New Testament Church, the office of teacher, the task of teaching and the spiritual gift of teaching should have a very high priority in the Christian Church worldwide. Nothing builds Christians up like God's truth!

**(T) The office of evangelist.**

An evangelist is a function or office. It is the special ability to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers so effectively that people are being saved and the number of Christians in the church is increased. While some Christians are called to be evangelists and some receive the spiritual gift of evangelism, all Christians are called to participate in making known the good news or bringing in the harvest.

**(S) The office of shepherd.**

A shepherd is a function or office. It is the special ability to feed, protect, care and guide Christians in the church towards spiritual growth and well-being. They search for the lost and bring back the strays. They especially show concern and loving care to the small, the weak and the needy. While some Christians are called to be shepherds and some receive the spiritual gift of shepherding, all Christians are called to participate in caring for one another.

**(T) The offices of leader and administrator.**

A leader is a function or a special ability in the church. The leaders lead by walking in the front, by giving direction and by setting a good example. This is especially the task of the elders of the church.

An administrator is a function or a special ability in the church. The administrators lead by steering the church through difficulties and by giving wisdom. There were elders in the church that directed the affairs of the church without the burden of preaching and teaching. While the helpers took the external administration of the church upon themselves, the administrators gave themselves to a certain amount of spiritual leadership of the church.

**(S) The gifts of serving and helping.**

Serving is a special ability. It could also have been the function of the deacons in the church. The servants see and alleviate different kinds of needs.

Helping is a special ability. The helpers give assistance in a great variety of tasks in the church.

**(T) The gifts of speaking a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, a psalm or a word of encouragement.**

Speaking a word of wisdom is speaking a word that has wisdom as its contents. It is the desire and special ability to show people the best means to attain the highest goals. Christians with this spiritual gift show other people how they could best live to please God.

Speaking a word of knowledge is speaking a word that has knowledge as its contents. It is the desire and special ability to explain clearly to people the meaning of things that were previously hidden. Christians with this spiritual gift discern whether particular knowledge is good and valid, that is, whether it is in agreement with God's revelation in the Bible or not.

Speaking a psalm is the desire and special ability to speak to other people by means of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Christians with this spiritual gift convey God's message by means of poems, songs and music.

Speaking an exhortation or encouragement is the desire and special ability to stimulate Christians to do what the Bible says, whether by means of a public speech or by means of a personal talk. Christians with this spiritual gift advise and counsel other Christians in the area of personal growth and service. They exhort Christians to apply the lessons of the Bible to daily life and to the development of their character. They urge Christians to behave as Christians and encourage them to take steps in faith.

**(S) The gift of giving or contributing.**

Giving is the desire and the special ability to use earthly possessions for the highest well-being of people and for the greater glory of God. Christians with this spiritual gift direct their attention to the acquisition of money or possessions in order to further the kingdom of God. They entrust their money or possessions to other Christians in order to extend the kingdom of God.

(T) **The gift of showing mercy.**

Showing mercy is the desire and special ability to empathise with the needs of others and consequently comfort and help them. Christians with this spiritual gift are generally good observers and good listeners. They quickly assess the situation of need and the thoughts and feelings of people that are discouraged and hurt, abused or oppressed, sick or handicapped, old and dying, and of people that fear or mourn. They have the ability to empathise and sympathise with their misery.

(S) **The gift of faith.**

Faith is the desire and special ability to accomplish a special task for God. Christians with this spiritual gift trust in God when he calls them to accomplish a particular difficult assignment. For example, God may ask them to live and work in a foreign country, to persevering under persecution or to bring justice to an unjust world. Christians with this spiritual gift trust God to do particular miracles and to accomplish great things through them. They trust God to remove difficulties, even if they are as large as mountains. They trust God to bring into existence things that humanly speaking seem impossible. As Noah, Abraham and Moses, they realise God's purposes through faith.

(T) **The gifts of healing.**

Gifts of healing are a variety of desires and special abilities to heal the diseases of the body, soul or spirit of other people. God uses people that possess one of these gifts as human instruments of healing people in a supernatural way. All healing is divine healing!

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

How should a Christian use his spiritual gift for the common good of all other Christians?

One. Christians need one another's service. Each member is needed to serve the others. And each member needs the service of the others. Serving one another with the extraordinary or ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit is therefore another expression of loving one another! As the hand cannot do without the foot and the foot without the eye, so each member cannot do without the other's service or spiritual gift. Each member's service or spiritual gift complements that of another. In this way, the Church of Christ is being built up in the best way.

Two. The spiritual gift of showing mercy as an example. All Christians should be involved in the ministry of showing mercy. They are called to be a Good Samaritan and help people in need. While all Christians should show mercy, only some Christians have received *the spiritual gift of showing mercy*. These Christians should show mercy, be an example of showing mercy and if possible, equip others how to show mercy.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach Christians that spiritual gifts are for serving one another.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

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