

:: the discussion

This weekend, Don Williams and Chad Halliburton (depending on the service you attended) reexamined the subject of spiritual gifts. This week's curriculum will seem strikingly similar to last weeks, in that it will primarily consist of carving out space to prayerfully listen to the Holy Spirit and minister to one another out of what we hear him saying to us. The reason we are walking this same path is that, for most of us, this practice of discerning the Holy Spirit's voice and ministering to one another out of it is something with which most of us have very little experience. And like any skill, the only way to grow in our ability to do it is through practice.

[pray + recap]

Take a moment to pray for the evening's conversation.

As a church, we have begun to carve out space to listen for the Holy Spirit's leading. We tried this last week in Life Group, or at Third Wednesday, and Don Williams led us in a time of listening and sharing what the Holy Spirit shared at the services he led this weekend.

For those who were present at one of these "Holy Spirit" guided ministry times, what was your experience like?

What thoughts or questions or concerns are stirred up as you engage in this sort of ministry time?

For those who have sensed the Holy Spirit's leading, what does that feel like? In what ways do you sense the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

For those who are having difficulty sensing the Holy Spirit's presence or leading, what questions or feelings are stirred up for you?

Do you recognize anything that might be hindering you from hearing the Holy Spirit?

For some of us, this subject of hearing God's voice is frustrating because we feel like He never speaks to us. But maybe the issue isn't that God doesn't speak to us so much as we simply don't recognize the ways He does speak to us.

For those of you who feel like God does speak to you, in what ways does He speak? Do you hear with your ears? Your mind? Your heart?

Like last week, we are going to spend the majority of tonight simply creating space for the Holy Spirit to speak to us. Don described several ways that the Holy Spirit tends to speak: Sometimes he will highlight a word or a short sentence that keeps repeating itself in your mind. Other times, he will put a verse on your heart. Sometimes a person will see a picture or a scene playing out in their mind. Still others may feel a pain somewhere in their body that hasn't been injured. Or perhaps you simply feel a burden to pray for a particular person or about a specific subject. These are some of the ways that the Holy Spirit leads people to know what to pray for.

So, we are going to take about 10 minutes to silently sit and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us. This may seem like an eternity, but for many of us, it will take most of that time simply to still our minds and get into a listening posture. If, during this time, you do get a thought or a word or a picture or even a feeling, write it down or describe what you see or feel on a 3x5 card. Don't try to second guess whether it came from the Holy Spirit or from your own imagination. Just write it down and put the card aside and continue to listen. You might end up writing several things down, or you might not write anything down. Either way is totally fine. We are simply practicing getting into a posture to listen.

***Pass out a few 3x5 cards and a pen to each person.*

***Pray over this time. Specifically, invite the Holy Spirit to help your group overcome anything that could potentially hinder them from recognizing the Spirit's voice.*

***Release your group to sit with the Spirit. They can move or get into a different posture if they feel like it would help them be better able to listen.*

After 10 minutes (it may seem like a long time, but don't short-change it), gather your group back together and collect the 3x5 cards. Then, read the following::

In just a moment, I'm going to read through what we wrote on these cards. As I do, let's invite the Holy Spirit to help us discern whether or not what is written is meant for us. Here are a couple things to remember:

The Holy Spirit will never say anything that is contrary to scripture.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of things, but he never condemns; so if you begin to feel condemnation, that is not from God.

***Read through the cards out loud.*

As we read through these cards, were there any of them that spoke directly to you? Which ones?

You can lead this prayer time one of two ways::

- 1) Let everyone share what struck them, then go around the room and pray for one another.*
- 2) Go one by one, inviting someone to share and then gathering around this person and praying over them before moving onto the next person.*

When the prayer time has ended, spend some time reflecting on what this process was like for everyone, including those who didn't hear anything at all.