

## :: the discussion

This weekend, Mike and Steve Carter continued our study of spiritual gifts. In the first half of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul contrasts prophesy and speaking in tongues, arguing that it's more valuable to prophesy within the church because it edifies everyone, whereas speaking in tongues merely edifies the speaker. In Life Group, we will be examining the ways in which we elevate certain spiritual gifts, while ignoring others.

### [pray + recap]

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

We've spent the last month discussing Spiritual Gifts. What has been stirred up through this time?

How has your understanding of the Holy Spirit been challenged through this time?

How has your perception of Spiritual Gifts been challenged or refined?

Spend some time debriefing this weekend's message.  
What stood out? What resonated with you? Why?

We have been working through 1 Corinthians 12-14, biting off small chunks and processing what Paul is saying. But he originally wrote this section as a whole, continuous thought directed to a church that was misunderstanding the purpose of Spiritual Gifts. So, let's read the whole thought together.

#### **Read 1 Corinthians 12-14:25**

What is the heart of Paul's message regarding Spiritual Gifts?

What, according to Paul, is the primary purpose of Spiritual Gifts?  
(12:7; 14:12)

Why do you think he spends so much time talking about love?  
What does love have to do with practicing the spiritual gifts?

The Corinthian church had begun to highjack the spiritual gifts, which were intended to be used to build up the Body of Christ, and use them to draw distinctions between one another. Since they were in a culture that valued eloquent speaking, and many of the believers had converted from pagan religions where ecstatic babbling was often practiced, they tended to focus on speaking in tongues over and above all other spiritual gifts. But Paul points out that they have missed the point; tongues, while a valuable way to connect with and worship God, is not nearly as helpful to building up the Body of Christ as are other gifts. He then encourages them to desire those gifts which are helpful for building up the church. Like the Corinthians, we tend to place greater value on certain spiritual gifts, while discounting others.

Mike and Steve gave a list of the spiritual gifts that are mentioned in the New Testament. The following list is compiled from 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:

prophesy, working miracles, serving, teaching, evangelizing, pastorally caring for people, encouraging, leadership, showing mercy to those who are hurting, contributing to the needs of others, healing, helping others, administration, speaking in foreign tongues, interpreting foreign tongues, serving others in practical ways, and discerning between truth and error.

Which gifts do we tend to place the greatest importance on within the church? Why?

Which of these gifts do we tend to downplay or disregard? Why?

What does this reveal about what we value within the church?

God is God; He doesn't need us to speak for Him, or heal the sick, or do anything else. And yet, He chooses to empower His people with Spiritual Gifts. Why do you think this is?

What is the value of having the Body of Christ minister to one another?

In what ways could we misuse or highjack the spiritual gifts for our own agenda?

Once God gives us a spiritual gift, does that mean He will always have us minister out of that gifting?  
Does that mean that we control when and how we use that gifting?  
Why or why not?

What are the dangers of pigeon-holing ourselves into a certain gift?

**the response::**

I'm going to read over the list of spiritual gifting. As I do, silently consider which of these gifts God has had you use in the past:

*\*\*slowly read over the list of spiritual gifts twice.*

Now, spend a few minutes silently talking with God about the gifts He has entrusted to you. Here are a couple questions to consider as you talk with God:

Have you embraced your giftings, or downplayed them because they didn't seem as important as other gifts?

Have you been using them to glorify God and edify others, or to glorify and edify yourself?

*After about 4 minutes, go onto the next section:*

Paul called us to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts," particularly those gifts which help us build up the body of Christ. I'm going to read the list of spiritual gifts again. As I do, silently consider which of them you are drawn towards.

*\*\*slowly read over the list of spiritual gifts.*

As I read through that list, there were probably a couple gifts that stood out to you over and above the others. Spend a few minutes silently conversing with God about those giftings. Invite God to help you understand why you are drawn to these particular gifts. Is it out of love for others, or more selfish motives?

*After several minutes, have your group break into groups of 2-3 and spend some time sharing what has been stirred up through this time and praying for one another.*