

## 11. Building Relationships for Evangelism Through Spiritual Gifts

In our last several topics, we have talked about crossing barriers to share the Gospel and four different approaches to sharing the Gospel. Today, we are going to begin a series of topics on how to use our spiritual gifts to effectively build relationships with non-Christians so that we can have the opportunity to share the gospel with them. We will look particularly at the seven spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8 since those verses tell us that every Christian has one or more of the spiritual gifts listed in those verses, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

In these verses, we see that seven different spiritual gifts are listed:

1. prophecy
2. ministry
3. teaching
4. exhortation
5. giving
6. leading
7. showing mercy

In 1 Peter 4:10-11, we see that spiritual gifts are used primarily to serve other Christians, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Although our gifts are used primarily to serve other Christians, we can also use them effectively in evangelism. In these verses, we also see that we use our spiritual gifts in two different ways:

- Some spiritual gifts are used particularly through serving
- Some spiritual gifts are used particularly through speaking

In building relationships to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians, some of us will build those relationships primarily by what we say, while others will build those relationships primarily by what we do. That is why evangelism is most effective when we are working together as a team. As Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” Since we have been given different gifts, we need to ask ourselves the question, “How do I build relationships with non-Christians most effectively? Do I build those relationships primarily by what I say or primarily by what I do?”

The way we build relationships, both with Christians and with non-Christians, is often related to our spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all*...” In these verses, we see that:

- The Holy Spirit gives us different gifts to serve one another effectively
- Christ gives us different ways to minister and serve one another effectively
- The Father gives us supernatural energy and power to serve effectively

Since the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father all work together to prepare us to build relationships with others, we will be ineffective if we just depend on ourselves instead of depending on all of the resources that the Trinity provides for us to minister effectively. That is why we need to continually pray about every part of our ministry, so that we do all that we do in the strength that the Trinity provides rather than our own strength.

This is especially true in the use of our spiritual gifts. If we depend on our own strength we will misuse our spiritual gifts rather than using them effectively. That is why Paul had to spend three chapters in 1 Corinthians talking about the proper use of spiritual gifts. The center chapter of those three talks about the importance of love in the use of our spiritual gifts. Without love, we are nothing and we will accomplish nothing positive.

That is why Paul prayed daily that the Ephesians would be rooted and grounded in love - Ephesians 3:16-19. Then, Paul explained how we walk in Christ in Colossians 2:6-7, where we see that: “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” These verses teach us that:

- We have received Christ
- We are to walk in Christ
- We are to be rooted in Christ
- We are to be built up in Christ
- We are to be established in the faith through Christ
- We are to abound with thanksgiving through Christ

This is a contagious attitude that will draw others to Christ regardless of what spiritual gifts we have.

If we do not take root in Christ and His love, the New Testament mentioned two other roots that may develop in our lives. Those two roots will drive people away from Christ, instead of drawing them to Him. The two negative roots mentioned in the New Testament are:

- ◆ A root of the love of money which can cause us to err from the faith and pierce ourselves with many sorrows - 1 Timothy 6:10
- ◆ A root of bitterness which will trouble us and will cause many others to be defiled - Hebrews 12:15

In our next seven topics, we will be looking at the seven spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8 and how the Lord wants to use your particular gifts to build relationships with non-Christians for the purpose of evangelism. May the Lord richly bless you as you continue to take deeper root in Christ and His love, since that will determine how effectively you are able to use your spiritual gifts for evangelism and ministry to other Christians.