

“Spiritual Gifts in the Life of the Church”

CPC Spring 2020 Adult Sunday Studies

Leader’s Guide

February 9, 2020

Lesson Four - “Whatever Needs to be Done: In Weakness or in Strength”

***Quotes, unless otherwise noted, are from Kenneth Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts: Rethinking the Conventional View**

From Last Week - 1) How does the idea of our spiritual identity and purpose being tied to the body of Christ change the way we make decisions? 2) How does the idea that EVERYONE is essential in his/her service/ministry/work within a local body of Christ re-imagine the variety of ways we can participate in the body of Christ in service to the gospel of Jesus Christ? What confidence does it bring that “I” matter when “I” becomes “we?” 3) How does the sacramental union of Christ’s body in heaven with Christ’s mediated body on earth impact the way we will experience intimacy with Christ? 4) How does this study re-shape our understanding of a “health” church? What, in sacramental/spiritual terms is the “bigger” church?

HOOK | If you’re starting to get a handle on the spiritual ministries approach (as opposed to the conventional abilities view), how would you begin to discern what ministry(ies) you should serve or lead? Would you start with what you’re naturally good at? What could be wrong about starting with your strength? Can you think of examples when you or someone else trusted in their strength to the detriment of the power of God?

[A main goal of this study is to challenge the “achiever” mindset that I can only do what I’m an expert at, and I should only trust experts. If that were the case, then the Church would have no leaders but Christ! Therefore, also ask what are the assumptions underneath this “achiever” mindset and how it undermines the gospel when applied to serving the church.]

BOOK | 1Cor. 2.1-5

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much

trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Observations: If we were to ask Paul, "how did you know you had a ministry of preaching," how would he answer? He would certainly NOT say because he was an expert speaker, schooled in ancient rhetoric. In fact, this passage says that he was NOT skilled and wise in worldly terms SO THAT the recipients of his ministry would have faith in God, not humans.

- Other examples (which you could read together) of Paul on God using his weakness include:
 - 2Cor. 1:3-7 - where our afflictions become the means of God's comfort to others;
 - 2Cor. 4:7-12 - Where the weakness of "jars of clay" is intentional so that the "surpassing power" would be seen to belong to God and not man. Notice again that the weakness is intrinsic to how his ministry shows the world the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - 2Cor. 12:1-10 - The famous "thorn in the flesh" passage, which shows clearly that God does not always remove weaknesses from us when we want, precisely for the reason to show God's sufficiency and grace.
 - "Remember, his goal for us is not just to use us but also to do a work of transforming power in us" (173)

LOOK | Contrasting the two views and their understanding of "weakness"

From Berding - "God in his sovereignty usually empowers us, as believers, for the ministries to which he calls us, but sometimes he wants us to serve out of our weakness. The concept of serving out of weakness does not fit well with the conventional view. 'Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers equal to your tasks.' Believers praying for tasks equal to their powers might be an appropriate summary of the conventional view of spiritual gifts. Rather than praying for tasks equal to their powers, perhaps they should, in fact, be praying for powers equal to the tasks to which God has assigned them."

- Notice how different the posture of the person is, depending on which view they take or operate under. We're not trying to get the church to fit to us, but we fit to the church. Have you assumed that God wants you to serve out of your strength in the past? How so and why?

- The key question becomes “how does the church or my neighbor need me?” or “what ministry is needed?” as opposed to “how can I get them to allow me to exercise my special ability?”

TOOK | Serving out of Weakness

- How could you develop the mentality of “I will do whatever needs to be done”? Being on a good sports team always includes the willingness of playing wherever you’re needed, regardless of past experience or perceived gifts.
 - Do you think that’s a mentality that our church fosters well? Why or why not?
- Is there a ministry or task that God has assigned you, but you are unsure you have the power or ability to accomplish it? Why do you think that? What could it look like for you to step out in faith by the power of God?
- How could this mindset start to change your approach to church in general? To evaluating the success of a ministry or church?