

Power Gifts

Power gifts are those that demonstrate the power, presence, and purposes of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1. (vs. 8-10) How would you define the gifts Paul names in this chapter?

Words of wisdom and knowledge – this is a gift given where the person is given access by God to knowledge or wisdom that they could not have in any other way – that when spoken or revealed – aids a person or community in their growth in Christ.

Faith -someone given the discernment of what God is up to in a community and have utter confidence that God will accomplish it. A person with this gift will speak of this in such a way as to ease fears, build trust, get a community onside.

Healing – bring the healing of God to physical ailments.

Miracles – those whom God empowers to confront evil and break its hold over people’s lives by the power of the Spirit. Note: I didn’t either define this or unpack it in the sermon. This is one of the gifts that would require some serious unpacking and would have been a distraction from the main point to have raised it and not adequately deal with it.

Prophecy – when God gives someone the ability to express publicly a truth of a predictive or situational nature (what God is up to) to a community.

Discernment of Spirits – someone who has a gift to discern when God is present and acting – discernment of whether something is of God or not.

Tongues – speaking in an unknown language. It seems in the new testament that this refers to two different things. First – a language that is unknown to the speaker but known to the hearer – as in Acts 2 when the disciples were empowered by the Spirit to speak the good

news of Jesus in the languages of the people gathered for Pentecost. Second a private prayer language that aids in worship – that can be spoken in a community setting if it is accompanied by a complementary gift...

Interpreter of Tongues – someone to whom God gives the interpretation of what has been said publicly in an unknown tongue.

2. (vs. 4-7) What does Paul say is the purpose of these gifts?

That they are active gifts empowered by God in order to serve others for the common good of the entire community.

3. Have you had any experiences with one of the power gifts? If so would you be willing to share how the experience helped you grow more as a follower of Jesus, or how they helped the church live more into its calling? [Remember when we share our stories we build deeper connections with one another as a community. Your story may be exactly what someone else needs to hear. Your listening in the group to the stories of others is an act of love and kindness. The act of sharing and listening to these stories may be the very things we will need to help us grow into the fullness of Christ]

There may very well be those in your group who have had a bad experience with a power gift and have been harmed. The sharing of this may inhibit others from sharing positive stories – you may want to prepare yourself to address it by expressing your sorrow and grief that it happened – validating the experience that indeed this has been the case for some and it is indeed grievous – reference a future question where you will discuss Paul's instructions to the community to ensure these gifts did not harm by fostering the right environment – and invite further comment – does anyone have a story where because the right environment was fostered for these gifts to be expressed it became an experience that deepened you in Christ's character and call?

4. When discussion of the power gifts is engaged in there is often a mixture of responses – fear, apprehension, doubt, yearning etc. What response is bubbling up in you and why?

Again a strong response one way or another may inhibit others from sharing so you may want to prepare yourself to validate the spectrum of responses – acknowledge that there will be a spectrum – and does anyone have a different response?

It will be in this question that you may encounter people's theological convictions which inhibit their engagement with these gifts.

For some there will be the complete denial of the supernatural.

For others there will be a belief in cessationism – the belief that these gifts were only present during the time of the early church for the sake of establishing the church – but now that the church is established, the canon of scripture close, there is now no more need for these gifts so where we might see evidence of them it will be thought of as not of God.

I would encourage you to allow whatever theological tensions exist in the group to be aired and invite engagement with each conviction. It might be wise to distance the conviction from the person who brought it up by saying something like...

X has just raised a widely held disbelief in the supernatural – or Y has just raised a theological conviction of cessationism – what would you see scripturally that would support or undermine such conviction?

5. In the book of 1 Corinthians Paul is seeking to foster the right environment where these gifts can be exercised for the mutual benefit of all. He invites them amongst other things to test the spirits (make sure this is of God), to exercise the power gifts in an orderly way, in community, and under the authority of their chosen leaders. Why do you think this specific instruction is given around the power gifts?

Test the spirits – there will be counterfeits – Satan often mimics the works of God as we have evidence of in scripture.

Orderly – often related to the gift of tongues – someone should not be speaking in tongues publicly without the complementary gift present of

an interpreter. Done within the context of an orderly worship gathering.

In community – it is the Holy Spirit present in the community that is able to bring discernment for its being of God.

Under authority – is it being done under the authority of the one who has been chosen to be a minister of the word – so that what is being said and done can be measured against the apostolic faith revealed in the scriptures.

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

6. It is the diversity of gifts (love, word, and power gifts) that enables us to live in step with the calling, grow to maturity in Christ, and be built up in love. How could we as a church in particular be more open to the expression of the entire diversity of gifts?

This is one of the main intents of this particular topic – for whatever reason the power gifts have not been given full expression in our midst – why is that? Would we be open to them being expressed – why or why not? I would love it if you would be willing to share the fruit of this conversation with me – feel free to give me a call or drop me an e-mail I would richly appreciate being let in on your discussion.