

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 18
DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS

Over the past several weeks, in our series Foundation of Faith, we have been looking at the Spiritual gifts that are given to the Church for the edifying of the body of Christ, to point people to Jesus and to bring glory to God. And for many, they look at the gifts and they see their importance, but that is about as far as it goes. There is no hunger to seek them and use them in their Christian life. That is truly sad, it is truly tragic and that is not at all what God desires.

And yes, we have taken our time going through these gifts, looking at them individually for the most part and we also have looked in-depth at who the Holy Spirit is and what His function is in this world and in our life. And truly my prayer has been that through this study you may have a clear understanding of who the Holy Spirit is, His function in the world and in the Church, and lastly, what the various gifts of the Spirit are all about.

But, like I have said many just stop there with the information and they don't bring it to its natural ending, application. But I truly don't want it to end there with just a bunch of information. Yes, information is important. You need to understand the truth regarding the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. But to just gain head knowledge without application is empty. I don't want you to leave here today thinking, "Great study! What's next?" I want you to seek what God has for your life. To understand, to know the gifts He has given you so that you may exercise them in your life which will profit not only the body of Christ but those who come in contact with you and will bring glory to the Lord!

And yes, some of these gifts are given just as is needed as the Holy Spirit sees fit, like healings, miracles tongues and-so-on. And then there are others I believe that are given to certain individuals like evangelists, pastor/teachers, teachers, ministry, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy and-so-on.

Now this will be our final study on the Holy Spirit and specifically the gifts of the Spirit before we move on in our Foundation of Faith series to a study on the Bible. So in our final study, our focus as we conclude our study on the Holy Spirit is Discovering Your Gifts. But before we start let me tell you a story about a man who dreamed of taking a cruise. It was his life's dream. And this man saved, and saved, and saved just so he could go. When he finally had all the money he needed, he bought his ticket and he was walking on air, realizing the dream he had was becoming a reality. He could not believe that this was going to happen, but it was!

Now there really was only one problem. He had no extra money to buy food on this trip, on this cruise. So he decided that it didn't matter, he was going to pack for himself a large portion of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to eat. At least he was able to go on this cruise, and that is all that really mattered to him. The food was not that important. Well that was true until the third or fourth day of hiding in his cabin and eating these sandwiches morning, noon and night! As much as I like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, not every day and every meal!

So finally he couldn't take it any longer and he went to one of the steward's on the ship and asked him how much the meals were, the cheapest one he could get because he couldn't take another peanut butter and jelly sandwich. As the steward listened to what this man had to say, he replied back, "Sir, all the meals are included on this trip!"

Think about that for a minute. How many Christians go through their Christian life not realizing that when you accepted Christ it was a packaged deal, all is included, including the spiritual gifts? You see, I don't think many understand this or they think these gifts are only for those who are being used in a powerful way by God, have big ministries, are the spiritual elite you might say and not for them at all!

And thus, since they don't know what they have in Christ, they are not using their gifts. They may even see what God is doing in other peoples lives, how He is working in them, not even realizing that God has given these things to them also. Now maybe some of you are not sure about this but let me make it perfectly clear for you. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 1:3, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”**

How many spiritual blessings does God give to all those who are in Christ, who are born again, who are saved? Paul tells us that God has given to us **“every spiritual blessing.”** What does that mean? Well, Paul spends 3 chapters telling us of all those spiritual blessings that God has for us and I truly believe that these gifts of the Spirit are part of those blessings because they are grace gifts. In other words, they are gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit and not because we deserve them, but God has freely given them to us as He sees fit and many of the gifts are given for specific situations while others are gifts that are used all the time in individuals as I have said.

Now here's the thing. Let's think this through. When we, as Christians, appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, or the Bema Seat of Christ, I wonder if the Lord will ask us, “What did you do with the gifts that I have given to you?” An interesting question for Paul said in II Corinthians 5:9-10, **“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”**

You see, the issue is not how big your ministry is, but how faithful you were in using the gifts that God has given to you. Too often Christians are burying their gifts, not using them, and that is not pleasing to the Lord. He wants us to take what He has given us and use it for His glory. If we do, then I believe when we appear before the Lord we will hear Him say to us, “**... ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’**” Matthew 25:23.

Remember in John chapter 14, Jesus is telling His disciples that He is going away but when He goes He will not leave them alone, they will not be like orphans. Jesus was going to send them the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to be with them. And He said in John 14:12, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.**” Now many get confused by this statement by Jesus. But please understand that Jesus was not talking about greater works. Why do I believe that? Because how much greater can you do than raise the dead? He was speaking greater in scope. You see, now all believers will be used to touch the lives of others. Jesus in His earthly ministry could only be in one place at a time, but now, through His disciples, He can touch the lives of others through them and us. And thus, if you don’t use your gift you are hurting the body of Christ. If you don’t use your gift you are not pointing people to Jesus. If you don’t use your gift you are not bringing glory to God. That may offend you but that is just the reality. God gives us these gifts to edify the body of Christ, to bring people to Jesus and to bring glory to Him and thus, if you don’t use them, then you are negating these things!

Let me share this story with you to illustrate how not using your gifts can destroy a church. We are told,

Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher, tells about the Roman aqueduct at Segovia, in his native Spain. It was built in 109 A. D. For eighteen hundred years, it carried cool water from the mountains to the hot and thirsty city. Nearly sixty generations of men drank from its flow. Then came another generation, a recent one, who said, "This aqueduct is so great a marvel that it ought to be preserved for our children, as a museum piece. We shall relieve it of its centuries-long labor."

They did; they laid modern iron pipes. They gave the ancient bricks and mortar a reverent rest. And the aqueduct began to fall apart. The sun beating on the dry mortar caused it to crumble. The bricks and stone sagged and threatened to fall. What ages of service could not destroy idleness disintegrated.

- Resource, Sept./ Oct., 1992, p. 4

Did you see that? The aqueduct fell apart because it was not being used for what it was created for and I think the same can happen in our own lives and in our church. If we don't use the gifts that God has given to us, we tend to fall apart. And, if we do not use our gifts in the church, if everyone wants to be served instead of serving, the church will fall apart; the body of Christ, the local body will be ineffective!

Now there was this problem with the disciples of Jesus, and I guess there were many if you think about it and this is the problem I want to focus on because it is important for us to understand what Jesus is going to do for them. They spent 3 years with Jesus, learning from Him. They had all the information, they had all the tools, but they lacked the power to run those tools. And so we see Jesus say to His men before He was taken up into heaven, **“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”** Luke 24:49. This is a key to understand what they were waiting for and it is this power to move the Gospel message forward using the gifts that God was going to give to them!

You see, as they waited in Jerusalem for this power, we see in Acts chapter 2 the fulfillment of that promise. The Holy Spirit came upon them and empowered them to be witnesses of Christ. Now all that information they had, all the tools they possessed, would be energized by the Spirit of God. It was the power to run those tools in a sense!

And in that we see another aspect that made Jesus, the True and Living God. That He towered above all the false gods that were out there and that are out there. And when you think about it, all the false prophets that have come and gone pale in comparison to Jesus! You see, most religions, if not all, tell people how to live, but that is where it ends. But Jesus not only told us how to live, He also gave us the power to live that kind of life, and that power comes from the Holy Spirit.

Now listen to what Paul has to say in I Corinthians chapter 12. He said, “**But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. . . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**” I Corinthians 12:7, 11. The Holy Spirit has given each of us gifts to use as He wills. And those gifts He gives us are to be used for the profit of all. They are to minister to people. And as I have said as we began looking at the gifts of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit takes His painter's palate, in a sense, with all its primary colors, and He mixes together and blends the gifts He wants each of us to have, using them in a special way. And as the body of Christ functions, not doing things that God has not called them to do but walking according to the high calling by which they have been called, a beautiful picture is emerging as we exercise these gifts in our lives.

A beautiful example was shown to me a few weeks back at our Creation/Evolution Seminar with Brian Catalucci from Answers in Genesis. After the conference, when I was driving him to the airport he said that he was blessed to see the people in our church and how they worked together to put on this conference. Each person was involved doing what God called him or her to do. I can't tell you how encouraged I felt and blessed I am because of what God is doing in you and through you and touching the lives of others. He came here to bless us and in the end, we also blessed him! That is the body of Christ functioning as it should, using what God has given them!

And here's the thing. We need to understand that God has not created us to be reservoirs to contain God and if you think about it that would be just plain selfish if He did. God has created us to be channels from which He can flow through and touch the lives of others. And so as a Christian, we need to exercise the gifts that God has given to us. We shouldn't hide them or covet the gifts that other people have but use the ones He has given us with joy in our hearts!

And I can tell you this from personal experience, there is great joy, tremendous blessings when you reach out and serve people. The Christian life is obviously very different than the world's view of life. The Christian life finds its energy in serving as we use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given to us. On the other hand, the world desires to be served, and that is where they think true joy and satisfaction is going to be found. Maybe you have seen that commercial, it is several years old now, where kids are speaking of their future and they are saying things like, "When I grow up I want to be stuck in middle management." Or, "When I grow up I want to make minimum wage." And the idea is this. Don't be stuck in a job where you have to serve others, but go for that job so you will have others serve you! Completely opposite of what the Christians life is all about.

Again, that may shock some of you but we are not here to be served but to serve others. I think many times in the church today we see that problem, where people come in, sit down, and it is a "serve me" mentality. That is our culture and that is what has come into the church. In other words, "I am here to get what I can from this church and when I have taken all I can, I will move on to the next one!" I don't have to say this because you know that this is a wrong perspective to have, but I guess I did say it!

Now, on the other end of the spectrum, if you are finding no joy in what you are doing, if everything seems to be a burden to you, then you better evaluate what you are doing because it is probably not where the Lord wants you. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** It doesn't mean that if you are serving the Lord and it is difficult, then you must be doing something wrong. The idea here is that it is not a burden, but it is a joy to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Others are not finding that joy because they are not serving with the right attitude, they are angry, mad, complaining and I will tell you this, you will never find joy by serving with that kind of attitude!

And if you are not using the gifts that God has given you, you are going to miss out on the blessings, the joy you can find if you did use them, exercise them. You, in a sense, are like an open circuit. You see, the Holy Spirit is not only flowing in you, but when that circuit is completed the Holy Spirit is flowing through you, and that happens when we are plugged into others, in a sense, using those gifts.

We have spent many studies on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit because I think this is important. We have taken in a lot of information over the last few months but, as I have said, information is very important, but it does not end there. Yes, you need to know what the truth is. But we can let that become a bunch of dead information that is vegetating in our brains, or we can let that information, by the power of the Holy Spirit, transform our lives. The Christian life is not just information, it is transformation. It is not just theological discussion or debate, it is experience! It is applying what God has given to us in our lives and walking in faith using those things in our daily life and ministering to others!

Now here are a few questions I will throw out to you. “What are your gifts? Have you identified them yet?” You see, those are important questions we need to answer, we need to know, we need to understand. When we started this study you may not have been aware of the various gifts, what they are all about, but now you have that information. And thus, we are responsible to take what we know and apply it to our lives, using the gifts that God has given us for the profit of all and for the glory of God.

And so, with the remainder of our time we are going to focus on Romans chapter 12 so we can discover our gifts and then, which is just as important, we discover our gifts so that we might use them. It is not just knowing them, it is using them!

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS – ROMANS 12:1-15**1. CONSECRATION - ROMANS 12:1**

The first thing we will look at in regards to using our gifts is consecration, that is what Paul is speaking of here in Romans 12:1. And how important this is in anything we do for God. It is the first step as we see ourselves as a living sacrifice, totally given to God. It is not 80% that we give to God, and 20% we keep for ourselves. We are to give all of ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him on a daily basis.

Keep in mind that Paul, being schooled in the Law of God, being a Pharisee, was most likely taking an Old Testament idea and applying it to the New Testament life. I believe Paul was thinking of the burnt offering or the offering of consecration. This sacrifice was placed on the altar and totally given to God, completely burned up. The entire sacrifice was consumed. And every morning this sacrifice was offered. And if you remember the fire was to burn continually. Thus, the priest, every morning had to clean the old ashes out so they would not put out the fire.

I think that is an important lesson for all of us. Every morning we are to offer ourselves to God. We can't look at past sacrifices that were made, the remains being ashes, for if we do the flame will go out. God is the great "I Am!" not the great "I Was!" or the great "I Will Be!" Of course He is pleased with our sacrifices, but we can't live in the past, nor are we to live in the future. Daily we must come before Him and consecrate ourselves to Him for His glory. Paul says that by doing this it is our "**reasonable service**" or our "**spiritual worship**" unto God! Remember, *CONSECRATION* is the first step in anything we do for God.

And think of consecration like this. We are told,

Will you please tell me in a word,” said a Christian woman to a minister, “what your idea of consecration is?”

Holding out a blank sheet of paper the pastor replied, “It is to sign your name at the bottom of this blank sheet, and to let God fill it in as He will.”

- The Baptist Challenge

That is it in a nut shell. You place your life totally on the altar of sacrifice, you give it to God to be used as He wills and it will be the best thing for our life because our heavenly Father only has what is best for us! Thus, ***CONSECRATION!***

2. TRANSFORMATION - ROMANS 12:2

The next thing that Paul mentions is that of transformation. And think about this for a minute. Isn't it easy to be conformed to this world? Absolutely it is. You don't have to do anything, just absorb what it has for you. Let me show you what I mean by contrasting what the world has for us, and what God has for us. It is a secular worldview compared to a biblical worldview. Listen closely.

The world says: get and grab what you can and live for yourself. It is our right to have these things. But God says: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

The world says: give as good as you get; return good for good and evil for evil and tit for tat. If someone hurts you, you hurt them back. They are only getting what they deserve! But God says: “Do not repay evil for evil but overcome evil with good.”

The world says: sex is for fun; it's enjoyment without commitment. Don't be so old-fashioned, sex is good and who cares if you are married to that person or not. It makes me feel good and that is what is important. And, God gave us this sex drive and thus, He must want us to use it. But God says: sex is for love; it's enjoyment within commitment, it is an intimate relationship that God has given a husband and wife to enjoy.

The world says: go for the top and the end justifies the means. Get to that place and do whatever it takes to get there. If you have to step on someone to get that position or whatever, then you just have to do it. But God says: "Whoever wants to be first among you, let him be the servant of all."

The world says: greatness is measured by achievement. It is the awards, the job, the wife, the kids, the house, the whatever! But God says: greatness is measured by service. We are to be a servant of all! And it is out of that service that we are blessed. We may be nothing in the eyes of this world but God loves us, and what more do we need!

The world says: you're number one; so live for yourself and look out for yourself; nobody else is going to if you don't. But God says: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

The world says: stand up for yourself; fight for your rights. But God says: "Blessed are the meek; they shall inherit the earth."

Do you see how the way the world looks at things is in direct opposition to God? But to be transformed by God it is done as we renew our mind by digging into His Word. You see, if your mind is empty, what will rush in are the attitudes of this world and those attitudes will be manifested into action, the things we do.

That means we are to fill our minds with the things of God and as we do, then our actions will reflect that. I like what the Lord said to Joshua, for we too should apply it to our lives. In Joshua 1:8 we read, “**This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**” You see, it is as you read the Word of God that He reveals Himself, His will for your life. He will show you the gifts He has for you. Allow God to transform your life by His Word working in you and through you.

It is as D. L. Moody said, “The Scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation.” Are you being transformed or conformed? May we be not be *CONFORMED* to this world but *TRANSFORMED* by the renewing of our minds and may what God has done on the inside overflow in the things that we do!

3. CONTEMPLATION - ROMANS 12:3

Here we see Paul bring up the idea of contemplation. How important it is for us to contemplate what God is doing in us. It is easy to get puffed up when we begin to take our eyes off of God and place them upon ourselves, thinking we have done these great things. Be very careful, pride has placed many a people on the shelf, and thus, not being used by God.

Paul, in I Corinthians 1:26-31 said, **“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”** You see, get a proper perspective and don’t let what God is doing go to your head and puff you up. Give Him the glory.

Also, in I Corinthians 4:6-7 Paul said, **“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”**

Don’t glory in what you have, because you didn’t do it, God did! All that you have you have received from God! Keep things in perspective. Contemplate or consider what we have in ourselves, ***NOTHING!*** And then contemplate or consider what we have received from the Lord, ***EVERYTHING!***

Listen to this story of Hudson Taylor and you will see what I mean by this. We are told,

Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large Presbyterian church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of the service introduced the missionary in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China, and then presented him as “our illustrious guest.” Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, “Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.”

- Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, W. Wiersbe, p. 243

Folk’s, that is the way we are to see ourselves, especially as we serve the Lord. It is not about us and what we can do or have done, it is about our illustrious Master, it is about our Lord and what He has done for us! Thus, *CONTEMPLATION!*

4. INFORMATION - ROMANS 12:4-6a

Next we see Paul speak of information and then he goes on to list how the information we take in is then manifested in our actions, the things we do. As James 1:22 says, “**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**” In other words, put into practice what you have learned for the profit of the body of Christ. I hope that I have showed you the various tools, the gifts that God has for you, and now you will take that information and use it for the glory of God. That you would use the tools properly, not abusing them or not using them. Take the information and use it in the things you do.

In Our Daily Bread they wrote of this story. We are told,

Several years ago I read an article about Queen Mary, who made it her practice to visit Scotland every year. She was so loved by the people there that she often mingled with them freely without a protective escort. One afternoon while walking with some children, she went out farther than she'd planned. Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, so she stopped at a nearby house to borrow an umbrella. "If you will lend me one," she said to the lady who answered the door, "I will send it back to you tomorrow." The woman didn't recognize the Queen and was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella. So she handed her one that she intended to throw away. The fabric was torn in several places and one of the ribs was broken.

The next day another knock was heard at the door. When the lady opened it, she was greeted by a royal guard, who was holding in his hand her old, tattered umbrella. "The Queen sent me," he said. "She asked me to thank you for loaning her this." For a moment the woman was stunned, then, she burst into tears. "Oh, what an opportunity I missed," she cried. "I didn't give the Queen my very best!"

- Our Daily Bread

I wonder how often we don't give our Lord the very best, but we do give Him that which is old, tattered! You see, we serve the Lord and in knowing that information, that truth, in all we do, we should bring honor and glory to Him, we should serve Him to the best of our abilities because we know who He is, we have the correct **INFORMATION!**

5. APPLICATION THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION - ROMANS 12:6-8

You might call this section that Paul is speaking on, application through experimentation! What do I mean by that? As I have said, you need to use the gifts that God has given to you. That means you are going to have to take a step of faith. Where is your heart at? What are you burdened for? Maybe you have a real burden for those in prison, or maybe those that are in nursing homes. The gift of mercy may be the gift that God has given to you. Now what if we didn't have, let's say a prison ministry or a nursing home ministry? So what! If God has placed this upon your heart, if you have that burden, come and see me and we will see what we can do to help you get started. Yes, it is a step of faith or as I have said, application through experimentation.

The thing I want you to take away from this study is this. Where your heart is at is where your gift is at! Not too profound, but true. That means you need to take a step of faith, get your feet wet. If it doesn't fit, don't give up. See what doors God opens for you. If you take that step of faith God will confirm in your heart that what you are doing is right or wrong for you. And let me tell you that confirmation is important. It reassures you that what you are doing is right, and God will use people to also confirm this in your heart. Application through experimentation - take that step of faith!

When a body is functioning properly, when it is healthy, each part does what it is called to do. When you cut yourself and start to bleed, the clotting mechanism in the blood comes into action to prevent you from bleeding to death. Also, the white blood cells are activated to prevent any infection from getting a foothold in the body. You see, if those clotting factors said, “Hey, I am sick and tired of always coming to the rescue when bozo here does something stupid. Let someone else get involved, I’m taking a rest!” If that were to occur, you would bleed to death no matter how small the cut was! Because of the action or non-action of one, the entire body was affected and not in a good way!

The same is true for the body of Christ. We are not in competition with each other but we compliment each other! Too often it is the other way around as we let pride drive us instead of the Spirit of God! You see, we are here to help each other, and to keep the body here at Calvary Chapel healthy; we need to exercise the gifts that God has given to us. Now for those who hop from one church to another, they are not helping the body to function, they are many times like a parasite drawing from the body but never giving back. Others feel they have no gifts, I disagree, you just don’t use what God has given to you! And if you are using your gift and you are causing division, problems wherever you go, then you are not using them correctly. You see, the gifts are for building up, encouraging, comforting, correcting when needed, always for the betterment of the body!

When you look at the body of Christ, we are His hands, His feet, His mouth, His ears and-so-on, as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

“After World War II, a group of German students volunteered to help rebuild an English cathedral that had been severely damaged by German bombs. As work progressed, they became concerned about a large statue of Jesus, whose arms were outstretched and beneath which was the inscription: ‘Come unto Me.’ They had particular difficulty trying to restore the hands, which had been completely destroyed. After much discussion, they decided to let the hands remain missing and changed the inscription to: ‘Christ has no hands but ours.’” God can use whatever He wants, but He has chosen to use man to be His representative here on this earth, may we serve Him faithfully! And thus, ***APPLICATION THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION!***

6. EXHORTATION - ROMANS 12:9-15

Here Paul is speaking of exhortation or encouraging others in the work. Now, as I have said so many times in our studies on the gifts of the Spirit, they are for the profit of all. You are to minister to others using the gifts and in doing so you will be blessed, satisfied, refreshed.

The writer of Hebrews put it this way when he said, “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**” Hebrews 10:24-25. We should be looking at people, seeking how we can exhort them, build them up, spur them into action, get them back on track, and-so-on.

And our exhortation is that we are to be doing this more and more as the Lord's return draws close. Why? Maybe we will need to exhort people as the days are getting more wicked and we should be doing that even now because those days, the last days before the Lord returns, the days we are living in are going to be more and more difficult and they are more difficult! Paul warned Timothy, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”** II Timothy 3:1-4.

The problem comes when we develop an “I” problem. We are so focused on self and our needs, what we want that we are not looking how we can exhort others, but we are looking how others can help us. That is self-centeredness and it will keep you from serving and it will rob you of the joy that is found in serving. As one person has said, stewardship is the “use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals.” Let's keep that perspective and be others-centered instead of self-centered! Let me give you this example of how the body is to function, how we are to exhort each other in the work that is before us. We are told,

During World War II, England needed to increase its production of coal. Winston Churchill called together labor leaders to enlist their support. At the end of his presentation he asked them to picture in their minds a parade which he knew would be held in Piccadilly Circus after the war.

First, he said, would come the sailors who had kept the vital sea lanes open. Then would come the soldiers who had come home from Dunkirk and then gone on to defeat Rommel in Africa. Then would come the pilots who had driven the Luftwaffe from the sky.

Last of all, he said, would come a long line of sweat-stained, soot-streaked men in miner's caps. Someone would cry from the crowd, "And where were you during the critical days of our struggle?" And from ten thousand throats would come the answer, "We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal."

Not all the jobs in a church are prominent and glamorous. But it is often the people with their "faces to the coal" who help the church accomplish its mission.

- Don McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream*

You see, it is not about self it is about the Lord and His work. It is not about self, it is about others and as we encourage others in the work, the work continues on for the glory of God, for the edifying of the body of Christ and for drawing people to Jesus. We are to be ***EXHORTERS!***

I do realize that over the last several weeks you have received a lot of information on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. But our faith, our Christian life is not just information, it is application, it is experience. It is putting into practice these things we have learned. That is what this last study is all about, to wrap up all that we have learned and to point you in the direction so you may take that step of faith and use those gifts that God has given you.

Go out there and find an opportunity to serve, don't wait for one to drop in your lap as you are just sitting in your Lazy Boy recliner watching TV. The ball is in your court now. You have the tools, and you have the power to use them. Use them for the glory of God and the building up of the body of Christ. Remember, we are not the Lone Ranger but part of the body of Christ. And as we are part of the body of Christ we are to serve, use our gifts, plug ourselves into a fellowship and instead of just drawing out we need to give back!

Listen to this story as we begin to wrap things up. The great violinist Nicolo Paganini willed his marvelous violin to the city of Genoa, on just one condition. That condition was that this violin must never again be played upon. The problem was that while wood is being used it begins to wear down slightly as it is handled. But if the wood is left alone, discarded, it begins to decay. The lovely toned violin became worm eaten and useless because it was not used. It is only a reminder that a life withdrawn from service to others becomes quite useless!

I hope I have challenged you, informed you, and I hope you take it to the next level; you take that next step and put these things into practice. D. L. Moody, that great preacher from the late 1800's had a very wise and old Christian man challenge him when he was very young. This wise old Christian gentleman said to Moody, "You know, Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." Moody's response was, "I will try my utmost to be that man." I think he made it!

I think that is a challenge to all of us. You see, the world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by those who are fully and wholly consecrated to him. May our reply be, as Moody's was, "I will try my utmost to be that man." Remember what Hanani the seer said to King Asa, King of Judah, in II Chronicles 16:9, "**For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him . . .**" Can you step forward and say, "Hear I am Lord, send me because I want to do my utmost to be that man for you Lord!"