

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. July 17thth 2005

God's Gifts - the gifts in practice

Getting going and discovering your gift

1 Corinthians 12.1-11.



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The terms 'comforter' and 'disturber' can be used to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He is the comforter who comforted the disciples when the risen Jesus left them (John 14:6) and he is the 'disturber' who shocked them out of any sense of complacency and empowered them for witness. In turn the first Christians became both 'comforters' and 'disturbers' receiving the power and presence of God's Spirit such that the world was radically changed. Ordinary men and women living out their lives using the gifts that God gave so that God's love in Jesus Christ was encountered in a new and living way.

Over the last six months at St Paul's we have had the opportunity to match knowledge about God with experience of him, to receive afresh the Holy Spirit's empowering, to discover anew that ministry that each of us has to comfort and disturb and impact the world with love of God and person of Jesus Christ.

In chapter 12 of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth Paul speaks of the importance of Spiritual gifts to the life of the Church. Let's focus on two do's and two don'ts!

Don't be ignorant! (v1.)

Over this series on the gifts of the Spirit we have looked at gifts of hospitality, signs and wonders, healing, evangelism and teaching, service and encouragement, prophecy, tongues, wisdom and knowledge. Elsewhere amongst others Paul also mentions gifts of leadership, pastoring, serving, giving, showing mercy and such a list is not likely to have been exhaustive. "There are different kinds of gifts (v4) and "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." A spiritual gift differs from a skill or talent in that is given by God for his purposes but the two may match up when the Spirit starts to flow in our lives. Sometimes a spiritual gift is given that is a complete surprise! There is one key truth for all and that is no-one in the church should say "I don't have a spiritual gift." Discover your gift/s!

Don't look back! (v2-3)

Paul urges the church in Corinth not to look back but to look forward to their new Spirit filled life. God is always in the business of equipping us to serve him better, of growing each of us to be more like Jesus. He is interested in giving us new gifts and taking us forward in faith but we can miss out through doubt, fear or inertia! It is possible that we have been trying to exercise a gift we don't have, if so let's not look back and shut up shop but look forward to discovering new gifts.

Do be open to the Holy Spirit (v4-6)

Be confident in God, trust in him and all that he would do in you and through you. Receive, recognise and rejoice in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Picture the church as an orchestra with God as the composer and conductor. As the composer God writes the music and different parts perfectly suited for each member of the orchestra and as the conductor determines when and who plays what! All that is required is for you to pick up the instrument that is perfectly suited to you and play!

Do use your gifts (v7)

As the 21st century church we face the challenges of comforting and disturbing our modern day secular culture. Our world needs a church that will both challenge spiritual and moral complacency and be God's good news of love and hope. The urgent truth is that for the 'common good' each one of us needs to use the spiritual gifts God has given. Our church and our world need you and your gifts!



Witness: Questions to discuss

- 1 Using the picture of an orchestra, what instrument do you think God would choose for you?
What piece of music do you think the orchestra would be playing today?
- 2 Looking back over these last six months what gifts have you discovered/rediscovered?
Share your experiences
- 3 What Spiritual gifts have you found to be most difficult to grasp, controversial?
- 4 What gifts not mentioned by Paul do you think he could have included?
- 5 Have doubts, fears and complacency got in the way of you discovering spiritual gifts?
Receive, recognise, and rejoice in the gifts of the Holy Spirit
– spend time together affirming the gifts God has given to each member of the group