

December 15, 2008
We ALL Need Communal Spiritual Power!

Dear Friends,

Many years ago I was riding home from a weekend retreat with a leader in his denomination. He was upset with me over my emphasis that a follower of Jesus **MUST KNOW AND USE HIS SPIRITUAL GIFTS**. Those in his denomination prided themselves in being diligent about teaching the Bible as content, but they were lax on applying some of its key points.

As we drove along he admitted that his life had no spiritual power. He'd been taught that spiritual gifts were only for the earliest followers of Jesus but had died out with the apostles. I said to him, "You know that I spent ten years in the Navy. What if you repeatedly asked me, 'What did you do in the Navy?', and my answer was always, 'I was in the Navy'? Would you accept that answer?" He replied, "Of course not! I know that each person in the military has a special duty or assignment. Everyone doesn't do the same thing!" After agreeing with him, I said, "Isn't that the same thing for followers of Jesus? We each have Holy Spirit-empowered assignments (gifts) to carry out in the Kingdom of our Lord. No one can do everything! There is a division of labor as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12, much like the different parts of our body carrying out their function on behalf of the other parts."

The topic of *knowing* and *using* your spiritual gifts has come up in recent conversations. Over the years we've marveled how unaware many followers of Jesus are in this area. Yet, the enactment of the Spirit's gifts through His people to bless others is what we as His people as well as the world needs to see. Our Lord working super-naturally (beyond natural man's ways) through His own is a testimony that the one true God of the universe is powerful!

Paul explores in such depth the body analogy of 1 Corinthians 12 because he is insistent that the family in Jesus realize the interconnectedness they have as His body on earth. The followers of Jesus in Corinth used to be pagans who were "influenced by their idols". Paul knew that ignorance of the truth leaves a void that can allow people to stray (verses 1,2). Therefore, within those for whom Jesus is Lord of their lives, the Holy Spirit has endued gifts for the common good of each person in their faith family. These giftings are intended to be identified, used and appreciated as the Spirit at work through a necessary "body part"! By this means of serving one another for His glory through our gifts, we go way beyond the world's way of seeking its own. We're passing into the realm of seeking each other's well-being (10:24).

Prior to acting alone, discussing problems or situations with each other in your family or faith community provides the opportunity for you to coordinate the working of the Spirit's gifts in each other. Just like the combined efforts of the organs working together that make up the human body, communal discussion enables the various gifts to cooperate together as a spiritual body. The Holy Spirit often uses the combination of gifts to give a more complete solution to the situation.

Many years ago in one of our newsletters we shared that one of the most frequent causes of tension in a Christian marriage was the lack of knowing each others spiritual gifts and using them. You can't appreciate and cooperate with God's work through your spouse if you aren't even aware that he or she has been gifted differently than you have!

Mike: If we want the same attitude as that of Jesus, we are commanded, ***"...in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"*** (Philippians 2:3,4). As Sue's husband, one of my deepest concerns is to ensure that the Holy Spirit in her is neither grieved nor quenched if He can't use her gifts because of me. One of my greatest daily joys is to encourage Sue to use her gifts of exhortation and faith. Anyone who has met her notices the wonderful twinkle of joy in her eyes because the Spirit has not been hindered from using her to bless others. I never want to stifle that wonderful work in her, nor live in such a way that He isn't working out His gifting in me either.

Please download our workbook, **[God's Instruments For War — Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare](#)**. We encourage you as an individual, a married couple, a family, or a faith family: please, don't quench or grieve the Holy Spirit in you! Our Father and His Son have given His children the Spirit so that we can access His great, loving power and do our part in the spiritual warfare His Kingdom is confronting. Are you quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit either by struggling in your own power, or by disregarding how He would use you in the lives of others? If so, you'll discover a growing sense of apprehension and tension in your midst until a divisive spirit severs your relationships. Is this what you want? If not, then please go through our short workbook. It can help you determine what gift(s) the Holy Spirit has given you so that you can bless others as His hands, feet and heart.

If you have the gifts of evangelist or shepherd in particular, we'd love to hear from you, since these are the two primary gifts for the formation of a Hebraic home fellowship.

Mike & Sue