

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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“True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia”¹

Spiritual Gifts Within the Community

Goal: To learn what true community is and to practice biblical *Koinonia*.

Objective: To experience *koinonia using spiritual gifts within the church community* based on biblical principles with others who share a common life in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Previous lessons have dealt with *Koinonia* which is translated from the original language as *fellowship with one another* within the body of Christ. This month’s lesson will provide a deeper meaning on *Koinonia* as *experiential fellowship*. “We are not meant to be passive participants or, to use a business metaphor, silent partners in the partnership of the gospel. Rather God intends for all Christians to be active participants in the body, working partners in the enterprise of the gospel.”² God equips us with the Gift of His Holy Spirit to fulfill the work of the church, which is the mandate Jesus gave us; “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen [Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV] Obedience to Jesus’ mandate is an assigned responsibility for every Christian.

Each believer has a unique spiritual gift that the Holy Spirit individually measured out according to God’s sovereign will and design. Spiritual gifts are graciously given and cannot be earned. There are no exceptions to using the gifts; every member has a function within the body that God has assigned him to fulfill.³ We must use our spiritual gifts to minister to one another, not to exalt ourselves but exemplify loving concern for fellow believers.

FUNCTION IN THE BODY

We as the Church are many members but one unified body. The human body is used as a metaphor for the church throughout Scripture. God assigns work for every believer to fulfill His divine purpose in the body. Therefore, all of the parts are vital in the function of the body of Christ.

¹ Bridges, Jerry. True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) Print.

² Ibid, 85

³ Ibid, 85

“A spiritual gift is an ability given by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform the specific function within the body that God has assigned each of us.”⁴ An example would be the way the Holy Spirit arranges prayer warriors with the gift of prayer as background support to those who are more visible in missionary or ministerial work with the gifts to evangelize, preach, or disciple. The apostle Paul often used the analogy of the body in his letters to the churches to emphasize the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He states:

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them... [Romans 12:4-6 NKJV]

SHARING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We are to use our Spiritual Gifts to minister and encourage one another. Our gifts which were so graciously given to us were not for self- edification but are to strengthen and edify the entire body of Christ. When we serve as good stewards, we share in experiential fellowship or working partnership with one another as we use our spiritual gifts. ⁵ “The fellowship with spiritual gifts is for the benefit of the rest of the body and for the advancement of the kingdom of God.”⁶

A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial.
[1Corinthians 12:7, NLT]

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. [1 Peter 4:10]

Sharing spiritual gifts requires an understanding of God’s principle for fellowship with other Christians. Koinonia is concerned with community and fellowship within the body of Christ where we share the life we have in common in Christ. Spiritual gifts are God given graces for serving others. When spiritual gifts are used for fame, personal fulfillment and recognition, they are abused or wrongly applied. Paul challenges believers to consider their use of spiritual gifts with caution.

Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. [Romans 12:3 NLT]

RECOGNIZING YOUR GIFTS

It is critical for Christians to become conscientiously aware of their spiritual gift. This is a necessity. Sometimes we may acknowledge that what seems to be a natural inclination may at times evolve in different way than we ever considered. It is not emphasized enough that Christians should fulfill their function in the work of ministry. According to author Jerry Bridges, “Many people these days are wondering what their gift is, but they are asking the wrong question. We should be seeking primarily to find out our *function* in the body of Christ: or in other words, the particular task assigned by God.”⁷ Seeking to understand our *function* emanates

⁴ Ibid, 87

⁵ Ibid, 99.

⁶ Ibid, 89

⁷ Ibid, 87

from a desire to participate in fellowship with others who are *functioning* in the body of Christ. As we sincerely commit to doing God’s will, the Holy Spirit will direct our lives such that our gifts will begin to emerge. Two important questions to ask are: What opportunities to serve have been opened to you? It is also important to consider; what opportunities in some way have been closed to you? Most important is the confirmation from other Christians. They can validate whether the church or others have been blessed, encouraged, or strengthened by your gift.⁸ All gifts must be developed and exercised. Every gift is a gift of grace whose purpose is to serve others, the church, and to glorify God!

Discussion Question #1:

Do you know your spiritual gift and your God-given function in the body of Christ?

Discussion Question #2:

What does it mean to you for all Christians to edify the body of Christ?

Points to Ponder:

In this lesson, it was stated, “God has assigned every Christian a function in the body of Christ. There are no exceptions to this; every member has a function within the body that God has assigned him to fulfill.” How might you discover and cultivate your function?⁹

Helpful Scripture Passages:

1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4

Closing Prayer:

Lord we thank you for your love and the spiritual gifts you have given each and every one of us. We desire to use our spiritual gifts for edifying the body of Christ. We understand in order to be effective in our church ministry we must depend on the Holy Spirit to help us focus on our function in church ministry and to fulfill God given purposes with our gifts. We thank you for being with us as we seek to obey and grow in relationship with You. In Jesus the Christ’s name we pray! Amen!

Monthly Biblical Lessons

Month	Year	Monthly Biblical Lessons
January	2015	Communion with God
February	2015	Fellowship and Community
March	2015	Spiritual Fellowship
April	2015	Partnership in the Gospel

⁸ Ibid, 101 -102.

⁹ Ibid, 103