

Lloyd's

LEADERSHIP

LETTER

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

By Vineyard national director Lloyd Rankin

The Church was born in supernatural power on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had instructed the 11 and those associated with them to wait until they had received the gift the Father promised (Acts 1:4). In Acts 1, we read, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Then, in an act like Genesis 1, a wind blows on the 120 gathered in the upper room, breathing life into the fledgling church; and in an act like the fire that led the Israelites leaving Egypt, or the fire falling on a covenant sacrifice, tongues of fire came and rested on each person. Then they received the power that was promised. Acts 2:4, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." As a result of this supernatural birth, the church grew from 120 to over 3000 on its first day!

The Holy Spirit is given to each of us to give us the power (ability) to be an effective witness. In the same way that Jesus' ministry was marked by both words and actions, so will ours as we seek to use all that God has given His church to accomplish His plans. He invites us to join Him in this adventure. This *Leadership Letter* is written to give you an overview of the gifts, some practical guidelines and advice to be able to use these gifts more often and effectively and to help others do so as well. So welcome to the adventure. Let's get started!

We are a Presence-led movement

One of the significant promises God gave me when we started this movement of churches in New Zealand was Exodus 33:14, "The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest.'"

We are a Presence-led church-planting movement more than a purpose-led, or programme-led movement, though purpose and

programme are important. We are churches and people who are looking for the Lord's Presence. Outside of the church gathering we are looking for the "breaking in of the Kingdom". There is a swirl of activity around the advancing edge of the Kingdom and we seek to spend as much time as possible with people who are at the advancing edge of God's Kingdom. It seems that certain people attract more supernatural activity than others. There are some who the Lord seems to draw near to especially – people in pain, the poor and the marginalised, the foreigners, the brokenhearted, the needy, the humble and those in transition (life stage transitions, geographical transitions, relationship transitions etc).

It is good to remember that the results of using spiritual gifts, which produce "signs, wonders and miracles", are all signs – they point people to Jesus. While they certainly alleviate suffering, they are not an end in themselves – they draw people to their God. Our adventure is looking for the times and places that the Kingdom breaks in and God draws nearer to a person, and in that moment, taking a risk and partnering with Him as He brings His Kingdom to people.

God is a gift-giving God

God is, in His nature, a gift-giving God. John 3:16 tells us God loved the world so much He gave Jesus. Jesus loved the world so much He gave His life. Jesus also loves the Church (Eph 5:25) and gives her His Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26) and He gives ministry gifts to the Church (Eph 4:11-12). The Holy Spirit loves individuals so much He gives them spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7-11; Rom 12:6-8) so they can live a life of purpose. We are made in the image of God, and we find ourselves coming more fully alive as we become gift-givers as well.

Christians love God and people so much that they reach out to receive a spiritual gift from God to pass on to another person.

There are three main groupings of spiritual gifts in the New Testament.

Lloyd's LEADERSHIP LETTER

Motivational gifts

Romans 12:6-8 lists seven gifts (prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading/directing, showing mercy) commonly called the motivational gifts. They are given to us permanently and they are at the core of how we act and respond to people and situations in life. All people have these motivational gifts, but the Cross cleanses and empowers them to be used to bless others, and not only ourselves.

Ministry gifts

Ephesians 4:11-12 lists five gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher) that are commonly called ascension ministry gifts, or five-fold ministry gifts. They are primarily gifts of people whose role is to be like "player-coaches" and train the church to be effective witnesses to our generation. All Christians will have some mixture of these gifts, but the measure of the gift differs.

Charismatic gifts

Finally, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 lists nine gifts which are commonly called charismatic gifts. They are "situational", or given for the moment rather than permanently (eg, if we meet a sick person we may "reach out" for a gift of healing to give them. Or if we are meeting with a group of people we reach out for a prophecy for them). These gifts work with us being the receivers, who then pass on the gift to the end receiver. For example – who received the gift of healing, the person who prayed for the sick person, or the sick person who was prayed for and is now well? I hope you chose option 2 :-)

Because the gifts of the Spirit are gifts, and not something we earn or work for, they work in a particular way. We must receive them from God and then pass them on to another person or persons. However, the more we use spiritual gifts the better we get at it.

The gifts of the Spirit are the senses of the Church

The gifts function similarly to how our five main human senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell) enable us to relate to the physical world. The gifts of the Holy Spirit enable us to relate to both the physical and spiritual world. The gifts are the senses of the Church.

Another way of looking at it is that the nine fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, Gal 5:22-23) are the nature of Jesus and the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous power, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, message in tongues, interpretation of tongues, 1 Cor 12.7-11) are the power of Jesus. Both are equally needed to be effective witnesses for God

We practice using gifts with Christians

Church is where we practice receiving and giving the various gifts, so we are ready to reach out for them and use them in the "marketplace" (our workplace, our friends and family and local

community) to be naturally supernatural. Church gatherings of all sizes are safe places to grow in our use of the gifts, through the pastoral leadership of whoever is overseeing the gathering. Leaders do their best to create a high-grace, low-risk culture to help people learn and grow in using spiritual gifts.

According to 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." The gifts "work" by us each bringing what God gives us to bless other people. It encourages us and them, AND builds community.

At the end of the chapter Paul encourages us to "eagerly desire the greater gifts" (1 Cor 12:31). The greater gift is the gift that is most needed for a particular situation. For example, if someone is sick and needs to receive a healing they may be encouraged a little with a prophecy, but the greater gift for them at that moment is a gift of healing.

Using the gifts of the Spirit

1. God gives us gifts so that we will minister. Together, as all the gifts are expressed, the body of Christ works.
2. Every believer has at least one gift operating (James 1:17).
3. No gift is more important than another. They are equally important and equally effective. They are all to simply express Jesus to a person.
4. If we do not minister, we are robbing the Body of Christ.
5. A gift only has value when it is used (eg, if a car sits in a garage, it is still a car, but unless it is used it is useless).
6. The Spirit of God knew what He was doing when He placed you in the Body, at this time, with your particular gift.
7. Because it is a gift, and you didn't earn it or work for it, there is no place for jealousy, envy or pride.
8. Don't try to do what you're not gifted for.
9. The gift is for the Body, not you.
10. Gifts differ in measure, so don't copy – be yourself.
11. Results differ too; leave these to God.
12. Results are based on faithfulness.

Gift mixes

We tend not to have just one gift – eg, the gift of teaching. Rather, we have a mix of gifts – eg, a pastoral and teaching gift, and a gift of leadership, and serving, and we often reach out for a message of wisdom. Each of us is beautifully unique.

Major in your gifts

God gives you your unique gift mix so you can effectively serve and minister to people. However, we have a tendency to neglect what we are gifted in, and try areas we are not gifted in. I want to encourage you to major in your strengths, and grow in your gifting. It is like a muscle – the more you use your gifts the more effective you will become. We should serve faithfully, but try as much as you can to serve in your areas of gifting. We often start out faith-filled, and as we grow we become faithful to our gifting and calling. The more you use what God has gifted you with, the more He can give you.

Lloyd's LEADERSHIP LETTER

Some thoughts on finding your gifting

1. God gives us strong desires (Ps 37:4). What appeals the most?
2. Gifts motivate us – what makes you mad, sad or glad?
3. God gives us a sense of responsibility for an area.
4. We can receive vision from God and others.
5. Expect that God will speak to you.
6. We will tend to be fruitful in certain areas (but try new areas).
7. We are recognised and received by others in the church who notice our gift.
8. Generally, because they are only visible when they are expressed, we discover that we best minister in certain ways.
9. Pray, meditate and study about the gift.

Growing in your gifts

1. Develop your gifts as good stewards. They are given to you by God as a trust and a blessing.
2. Get involved in ministry (you can only steer a moving ship).
3. Don't just wait for opportunity to come your way – look for opportunities.
4. Watch out for “gift-projection” – we can tend to think everyone thinks and acts like us, and if they don't there is something wrong with them! For example, an evangelist can expect everyone to be like them, and everything is about “lost” people. But we need all the gifts working together to clearly point to Jesus.
5. Do more of what God is blessing.
6. Don't stop praying for the sick!
7. Don't stop inviting the Holy Spirit.
8. Remember, if we are leading a meeting, whether small or large, people come for God not for us.

Interpretative keys for 1 Corinthians 12-14

1. This letter is a corrective letter from Paul. He was correcting mistakes they were making, not giving a full explanation of how the gifts were to operate.
2. There is a difference between speaking in tongues (perhaps better described as speaking in an unlearned language) and the gift of tongues (which is bringing a message in tongues), in the same way as there is a difference between speaking in English and bringing a message from God in English (prophecy).
3. 1 Corinthians 13:9, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part” (NIV). Be careful of being over-spiritual. Rather than, “Thus saith the Lord...” try, “I sense the Lord saying...” or “I am wondering if God is...”

Some practical ideas on receiving and using charismatic gifts

1. Receiving the gifts

If we are baptised/filled/released in the Holy Spirit we have the potential to move in any and all of the nine gifts. (All the gifts are resident in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is resident in

you!). (Check out the section later in this letter about helping people to be filled with the Holy Spirit.)

However, what tends to happen is that we move more freely in some gifts more than others (according to our personality, calling, gift mix, experience, etc).

2. The key is YIELDING – which is an active pressing in in faith. Active not passive.

Holy Spirit -> our spirit -> our soul (Mind, will, emotions) -> our body (we speak, or touch) -> the gift is released/delivered.

We are simply vessels who God moves through. Moving in the gifts is a co-operative act.

3. Our motive for moving in any of the gifts must always be love. 1 Corinthians 13 (the love chapter) is positioned in the middle of the teaching on gifts for a reason. We must have love for God, and love for people. No love? We are a noisy gong! “Gifts passing away”? Not until Heaven passes away.
4. We are not to be ignorant of our gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:1-6. Learn about the gifts, so you can use them more effectively.
5. We are not to neglect our gifts (1 Tim 4:14) but should stir them up (2 Tim 1:6).
6. “Earnestly desire the greater gifts” (1 Cor 12:31) – ie, the right gift for the right time; eg, reach out for the gift of healing if someone is sick – rather than for a prophecy.
7. Gifts and callings are irrevocable (Rom 11:29) Moving in the gifts of the Spirit is not an indication of Christ-like character, or maturity. (Always remember that God could speak through Balaam's donkey).
8. Gifts should be “Christ-centred”, not “Spirit-centred”. We are the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit always glorifies Jesus, and Jesus always passes the glory on to the Father.
9. We are not to get personal direction from our own moving in the gifts of the Spirit – eg, prophesying to yourself. 1 Corinthians 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”
10. The purpose for all the gifts is the furthering of the Kingdom of God.
11. 1 Corinthians 14 is to correct “weirdness” in their meetings - and to correct the “as the Spirit leads” and “God told me” syndrome!
12. These things are the ideal. Don't get too upset by mistakes – but keep well clear of error. For example, prophecy is a mixture of the human and the divine. We hear and interpret through our cultural, theological and personal filters.
13. Minister in humility – let the risk be yours. Don't tell people “Just believe”. Vineyard values reality and honesty!

Practical tips on learning to hear God's voice

A key to using the gifts of the Holy Spirit is growing in the art of hearing God's voice. Here are a number of ways (not a complete list)

Lloyd's LEADERSHIP LETTER

God communicates with us, to tip us off that He is giving us a gift to pass on to someone.

1. An inner voice or urging. You need to learn to act on it straight away – though don't get weird and scare people. We always say, "I am wondering if..." or "I think God may be saying..."
2. An exceptionally clear thought.
3. The noise of your mind subsides and a particular thought surfaces that you did not initiate.
4. A distinct intuition (a holy hunch).
5. A mental picture or visual image of a particular word.
6. In a crowded room you can look at a particular person and ask God if there is anything He wants to do for that person through you.
7. Sometimes when pre-Christians are being drawn, you'll find yourself drawn to them or they may be drawn to you.
8. You may look at a certain person and sense God's encouragement to talk to them.
9. A mental impression – you "see" something momentarily.
10. A Scripture comes to mind.
11. A physical symptom, or sympathetic symptom.
12. A "burst of faith" – though we need to "know ourselves" so that we don't do bizarre things.

Practical tips on helping people receive the baptism or release or filling of the Holy Spirit

Most times when people were filled or baptised in the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, it was accompanied by the sign of speaking in an unlearned language, and prophecy (e.g. Acts 2:4, 9:19). Paul says he spoke in tongues more than others. (1 Cor 14:18, 10:44-47). On the occasions where it is not explicit, observers clearly "saw" something supernatural had occurred. I encourage the person I am praying with to expect God will give them a new prayer language, that is unlearned, as a gift from God. I also encourage them that praying in their unlearned language will build them up in faith (Jude 20).

1. Use explanations that will help people understand most easily. For example, "You already have received the Holy Spirit when you believed – but God wants to give you an unlearned language to help you pray more effectively." An example of receiving the infilling and the gift of an unlearned language would be like downloading new software/app to enable you to do something you weren't able to do before. Speaking in an unlearned language doesn't make you "more" of a Christian – but it is a free gift available to anyone who asks. It is the gift of a language: so you still have to actually speak – the Holy Spirit doesn't take control of your tongue. So you need to make a noise and move your mouth – and trust that God will form words from your noises as you begin to speak audibly. From the scriptures explain that God gives good gifts if we ask Him (not a snake or a stone, Mt 7:7-12) and they need not worry that they will get something "dodgy".

I also clarify that the gift of a new language is like the doorway they step through into becoming familiar with using any of the nine gifts of the Spirit. It is the gateway gift that connects us to the other gifts. Receiving this unlearned language requires a step into faith, and we repeat that step each time we reach out for a gift.

2. After the explanation, invite the person to simply pray aloud that Jesus will come and fill them with the Holy Spirit, and to give them the gift of an unlearned language.
3. Explain that it is a step of faith for everyone; that a lot of people initially feel like they are making it up; or repeating what someone else has said.
4. Invite the person to focus their heart and mind on giving God verbal/audible praise. Invite them to say a few words/phrases in English, and then to speak words/sounds they don't recognise.
5. It is often helpful to have the people praying for the person to be speaking/worshipping in tongues – it helps create an atmosphere of faith and expectancy and also helps them not to feel self-conscious.
6. So lay hands on the person's shoulder or back and begin to pray in tongues. After a short time encourage them to start making sounds if they haven't already.

We are acting like a "midwife" – we can't do it for them, but we can coach them through it. Most people struggle with the faith step of opening their mouth and saying something that hasn't come from their mind. I find it helpful to explain that praying in a learned language comes from our head, whereas when we pray in an unlearned language the words originate from our spirit – the centre of our body.

Once they have said a few words (some just get a few sounds, others get lots) encourage them to practise at home – to "go for it". Use the gift/new software/new app, or whatever metaphor you might have used.

Practical tips on leading a "ministry time"

1. Pray before the ministry time. Ask God for words of knowledge and direction. See it as a distinct component of the meeting.
2. Invite a team to work with you.
3. Invite people to stand (or sit if they have been standing) – a change of physical position is often helpful in breaking any apathy or disinterest.
4. Then welcome the Holy Spirit to engage with people ("Come, Holy Spirit, and bless your people").
5. You may want to ask people to bring spiritual gifts – be specific as to what you are looking for (not testimonies but invitations) and you hold the microphone rather than giving it away.
6. Frame the prophetic words, or words of knowledge etc, as "invitations from God to receive from him uniquely".
7. Encourage people to engage again with the Holy Spirit.
8. Clearly invite people to respond for prayer. Make it clear if you want them to come forward, or put their hand up and have people come to them etc. Explain what will happen.
9. Invite ministry people to begin praying.

Lloyd's LEADERSHIP LETTER

10. Encourage those praying for people to use our five-step ministry model until they are very familiar with praying for people.
11. If you are leading, watch for the "energy" level of the congregation and any unusual behaviour of pray-er/prayee. You are directing/pastoring this. We need to keep people safe, while also receiving effective ministry.
12. It may be appropriate to have worship and/or testimonies of healed people.
13. Dismiss congregation with a blessing when appropriate. Don't ask people to stand and watch for too long.

Two mistakes we can make in leading church meetings

1. Not giving the Holy Spirit room to move.
2. Letting anything happen thinking it is the Holy Spirit.

Both are quenching the Holy Spirit. We need to pastor the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Pastoring is opening the door to what you believe God wants to do, and not blessing what He isn't.

Let the plant grow before you prune it!

Five-step ministry model

1. **The interview** (Where does it hurt? What is happening?)

Introduce yourself, ask questions, observe the person (countenance?), look and listen, be natural (ask the person what they think is wrong). Sort information according to past, present experiences. Be supernatural (ask the Holy Spirit to show His insights). Sort information according to gifts of the Holy Spirit (ie, words of knowledge, wisdom...).

2. **Diagnostic decision** (What has caused the condition?)

It could be natural factors:

- Living in a fallen world (virus, accidents, disappointment etc)
- Sin
- Emotional/social (unforgiveness)
- Family history (genetic disorder)

It could be caused by spiritual factors:

- Demonic affliction
- Demonic oppression (compulsive behaviour, irrational fear)

3. **Prayer selection** (How should I pray?)

Prayer directed to God – most common: Petition (ask for the Spirit's presence, ask for the Spirit's healing) Prayer from God – command or pronouncement (of faith) To demons (rebuke, bind, expel)

4. **Prayer engagement** (How are we doing? When should I stop praying?)

Prayer ministry should be directed towards the problem while looking for the Spirit's presence, The effect you are praying for is healing. There may be observable phenomena that show that healing is happening (warmth, tingling, shaking, tears, dizziness, perspiration). Praying with your eyes open at times means you can observe and co-operate and follow the Spirit's lead. Ask questions – it won't stop the activity of the Spirit. Problems on the receiving end may be blocking healing, or healing may have occurred without visible signs. Stop praying when healing is completed or you sense that the Spirit is finished for now, or you don't know what else to do!

5. **After prayer** (What to do or expect next?)

Summarise the situation. Maybe explain what you think has occurred. Give any encouraging words, pictures, scripture given by the Holy Spirit to you. If healing hasn't happened or is incomplete, affirm and encourage them in their seeking of God for healing. Avoid giving counsel – no personal advice – and don't condemn a person for not receiving healing (as lack of faith).

Go deeper

If you would like to do some further reading, use our Vineyard College's *Next Level* resource. See "Grow 2012" under the "Resources" tab at vineyard.org.nz.