

Discipleship 101 Chapter 11 Small Group

The Small Group

Opening prayer and insights from last week.

Colossians 4:2, 3 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

Philippians 4:4 – 7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the Peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Most of your spiritual growth comes from small group meetings such as this. Your growth is largely a result of 2 things: a) Overcoming struggles in attitude toward God through hardships, b) Developing spiritual gifts that the Lord has given you. The more you surrender and put aside your own feelings and attitudes and resolve within that you will do as he wants, you will grow in the Lord. You pay a price in your flesh as you grow in the Lord. All will benefit from encouraging people in your group to step out acting in confidence in what you feel God is giving you to act on. You will receive blessings for your obedience in faith. Discuss implications of “impressions” you may have had at times.

Note: The following passage is difficult and I have broken it into 2 parts; ‘prophecy’ and ‘tongues’.

1 Corinthians 14:1-25 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be edified... If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church... I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue... Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. ... but if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’

This passage is confusing to those not familiar. The manifestation of the spirit, ‘prophecy’ does not make one a ‘Prophet’. It is a gift that allows revelation from the Lord in varying ways in a specific place or time. It may be used by a ‘Teacher’ or ‘Encourager’, even an ‘Administrator’ on a situation at hand. The examples used are ‘utterance’ by his Spirit similar to tongues and can be held for an appropriate time.

Discuss above concepts and implications for the group.

1 Corinthians 14:1-25 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ... Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? ... So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning... For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful... "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me", says the Lord. Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers... So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

1 Corinthians 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

The above statement says you are not to put revelation and knowledge above love and unity in the group. Some things are better kept to yourself. Some revelation comes through perception of 'knowledge' or 'wisdom', some as a perception through 'Discerning of spirits'. These, one must exercise to grow in the ability to use them effectively. You can ask for understanding and help from the Lord.

There are 2 aspects to 'Tongues'. One is a prayer language that is a language of the Spirit only. With this gift you can speak forth from your spirit whatever is on your heart even when you do not know it. You can praise or give thanks and pray what ever is troubling you direct to the Lord without figuring it out. This must have 'Interpretation' by the Spirit for anyone to know it. 'Tongues' is very useful for strengthening your relationship with the Lord, but not a help to anyone else. You start by the Spirit giving you a few words and you grow in your 'vocabulary', which has a conceptual interpretation each time. The other is 'Tongues of men' which can be best thought of as prophesy or utterance in a language other than your own. In this case it is for the benefit of a person that understands that language. As in prophesy, God gives this in a specific case. In 'Tongues of angels' God has given you an ability to use at will. One is to build your faith, the other as a sign to someone else.

Discuss these concepts and the implications of effective use of these gifts for the body of Christ. God has given his body gifts to build his body. We must desire and ask for them leaving an open heart for what God may want to do. Consider how you might pray for the benefit of the group on this subject.

It is a lot to take in and will take a while to put into perspective and make sense of it. "The Body of Christ can only be built by his Spirit." Consider this and comment.

Spend some time praying for the building up of the Lord's Body.