

Prophecy, Discernment, Wisdom, and Knowledge

Connect Group Guide - 9.6.26

Opening Prayer

Key Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 12
- 1 Corinthians 13
- 1 Corinthians 14:26
- 1 Corinthians 14:32-33
- 1 Corinthians 14:40
- James 3:17
- Acts 8

Message Recap

This week's message continued a series on the gifts of the Spirit, focusing on how those gifts are to be used correctly, in order, and always in love. The pastor introduced four gifts -- prophecy, discernment, the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge -- and established guardrails for how all spiritual gifts should operate within the body of Christ. The message closed with a powerful reminder that the church exists for the broken, and that love is the foundation from which every gift must flow.

Key Takeaways

- God is a God of order. The Holy Spirit does not create chaos, and the presence of the Spirit does not mean the absence of structure or self-control.
- Spiritual gifts can be genuine but still be mishandled. A gift from God requires faithful stewardship.
- The purpose of every spiritual gift is to build up the body of Christ -- not to draw attention to the person using the gift.
- In 1 Corinthians, Paul places love (chapter 13) directly between gifts (chapter 12) and order (chapter 14). This is intentional. Everything must be done in love.

- The church exists for the broken. We are never to be a community that turns away those who are hurting, struggling, or in the middle of a long battle.

Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

1. When you hear the phrase "spiritual gifts," what is the first thing that comes to your mind? Has that reaction changed over time or as you have grown in your faith?

Understanding the Gifts

2. Pastor Mike said that spiritual gifts can be genuine but still be mishandled. Can you think of an example -- either from personal experience or something you have observed -- where a gift was used in a way that caused confusion or division rather than building people up? What went wrong?
3. Pastor Mike described two mistakes churches often make: being afraid of the gifts, or becoming so fascinated with the gifts that they lose sight of the purpose. Which of those two tendencies do you think is more common in the churches you have been a part of? Which do you think is more dangerous?
4. Of the four gifts introduced in this message -- prophecy, discernment, the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge -- which one do you find most difficult to understand or accept? Why?
5. The gift of discernment was described as a "heavy" gift -- one where you might sense something others do not, and feel isolated or dismissed because of it. Have you ever experienced that, either as the person with the discernment or as someone who dismissed it? What did you learn from that experience?

Order, Love, and Purpose

6. Pastor Mike made the point that the presence of the Holy Spirit does not mean the absence of order, and that self-control is itself a fruit of the Spirit. How does that reframe the way you think about what a Spirit-filled environment should look like?
7. The structure of 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 was highlighted: gifts, then love, then order. Why do you think love has to sit at the center of how we use our gifts? What happens when gifts are exercised without love?

8. The standard for using a spiritual gift was described this way: the question is not "did people notice me?" but "did it build up the body of Christ?" How would that standard change the way you approach serving, speaking, or using your gifts in everyday life?

The Broken and the Church

9. Pastor Mike shared the story of Jonathan, who felt too broken to walk into his own father's church, and would watch from a distance wishing he could be there. What does that story stir in you? What responsibility does it place on the church as a community?
10. Pastor Mike drew a distinction between tough love and condemnation, and acknowledged that the line between them can be thin. How do you personally navigate that tension with someone you love who is in a long, painful struggle? What has helped you, and what has hurt?
11. Pastor Mike said, "You don't have to understand what somebody is going through, but you need to love them through it." Is there someone in your life right now who needs that kind of love from you -- not answers or solutions, but presence and love? What would it look like to offer that this week?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

- **IDENTIFY YOUR GIFT** - If you have never taken time to seriously consider what spiritual gift or gifts God has given you, do that this week. Pray, reflect on where you feel most alive in service, and ask one or two people who know you well what they observe in you.
- **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION** - This week, when you serve or give or speak into someone's life, pause and ask yourself: "Is this building someone up, or is this about me?" Let that question guide how you engage.
- **REACH TOWARD SOMEONE BROKEN** - Think of one person in your life who may feel too broken, too far gone, or too ashamed to reach out. Send a message, make a call, or show up. You do not need the right words. You just need to go.
- **TEST WHAT YOU HEAR** - If someone speaks something over you as a word of prophecy or wisdom, or if you feel prompted to speak something over someone else, practice the discipline of weighing it against Scripture. Write it down. Pray over it. Talk it through with a trusted, mature believer.

- **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12 THROUGH 14 IN ONE SITTING** - Read all three chapters together this week to see the full arc of Paul's teaching on gifts, love, and order. Note what stands out to you and bring those observations to share with your group.

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting