

Encouraged

with Paul's letter to the Ephesians

'So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10)'



Handouts to help you read & understand –
for personal Bible study, reading the Bible with a friend or with a group

8th Session **THEME: Equipped with spiritual gifts**

1. Praise God and ask for His Spirit. Then look at this icebreaker question. 10 minutes to get started

God is pleased to work through those whom he has saved in Christ – by his Spirit. Is this something you sometimes experience? If so, wherein did/do you experience that? If not, would you like to experience that?

2. Read Ephesians 4 : 7 – 16, then 4 : 7 – 13 (14-16 we do next time) 30 minutes to understand the passage

Look again at 4:7 Grace in different measures

God's grace has different dimensions. There is God's common grace, which he extends to all people, including the ungodly. Common grace is for instance that the sun goes up over all. Particular grace is the grace by which God saves a person, makes him or her from dead alive. We also call such grace 'saving grace'. Yet this particular grace consists of more than salvation. It also consists of sanctification – to grow up, to grow mature in Christ. It even consists of more, anyone who is saved and sanctified receives even the privilege to have a role in the upbuilding of Christ's body – the church. Concerning the latter, which we also call our 'spiritual gift', not all receive the same gift.

- Does this explanation clarify for you the meaning of verse 7? Is the verse clear or do you have questions about it?
- How can a difference in giftedness lead to problems?
- Does a difference in giftedness of necessity lead to problems?

Look again at 4:8-12 The proper perspective on spiritual gifts

Paul places spiritual gifts in a Scriptural perspective by quoting Psalm 68 in verse 8. Then he explains this Scripture as applying to the Gospel – to Christ's descension and ascension and giving gifts as the ascended Lord in verses 9-11

- Why is it important always first to look at what God's Word reveals about what God has given us in and through Christ, before we think about spiritual gifts that the Lord has given us for building up the church?
- Pay attention to things that strike you in these verses, or things that you have questions about.

Look again at 4:13 The purpose of spiritual gifts

Though there is a difference in spiritual gifts, this variety is not given to lead to dissension and jealousy. On the contrary: if properly used, it leads to maturity, unity, a realisation that we are equally loved and have a faith of equal standing with others, we are equally loving and enjoying our Saviour and Lord. (see also II Peter 1:1)

- In which way can a wrong view of spiritual gifts lead to trouble? (I Corinthians 12-13 may help to find an answer)
- What – in your own words – is the proper view on spiritual gifts?

3. Apply and end with prayer. 15 minutes to make it personal and to pray

Think of one or two brothers or sisters in your church, through whom the Lord – by equipping them with gifts – has built you up and blessed you. It may be good to give thanks for that. Do you have an idea in which area and way the Lord is pleased to work through you? Take some minutes to think and pray about these questions. Then share and end with prayer.

4. Digging deeper.

The (not always easy, but powerful) whole of Psalm 68 is worth of study and meditation. Did the Lord give gifts or receive gifts from men? The best explanation may be that the Lord received (from the Father) gifts among men – to distribute these to them. Philippians 2:1-11 gives a breathtaking insight into Christ's humiliation and exaltation, worth of our study and meditation also.