

FACTORS OF FAITHFULNESS

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

LESSON SIX: FAITHFUL IN MINISTRY EPHESIANS 4:7-16; 1 CORINTHIANS 12

MAIN POINT

God has given gifts to every Christian to serve the Body of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- What is the most fulfilling job you have ever had? What about it fulfilled you?
- Is there a ministry you love participating in? Why do you like it so much?
- How have you been able to use your abilities to serve the Body of Christ?

God has given every member of the spiritual family at least one spiritual gift to use in serving others and building His kingdom. Such gifts or abilities are not based on our merit or worth before God. Rather, they are evidence of God's grace to, and love for, each one of us. Each believer has Spirit-given gifts and talents to be used as we live for the greater cause. Because of this, every member of the Body of Christ is important and essential to its function.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:7-16.

In verse 8, Paul reminded His readers that when our Lord ascended to Heaven, He did not leave us helpless orphans. He did not give us the great missionary responsibility and then just say, "Do the best you can." He equipped us to do what we need to do.

- What does it look like for God to impart His grace in different ways to different people?

- What's the purpose of diversity of gifts within Christian community? Why is it essential to the mission?

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul lists some of the different spiritual gifts Christ gives His followers, making it clear that the purpose of these gifts is to build up the Body of Christ, not to earn wealth or praise. Some people become prideful about their gifts, while others feel their gifts are inferior. Spiritual gifting is meant to help the Church accomplish God's purposes.

- How did Paul describe the way people grow in Christ? Can a person grow in Christ without the Church? Why or why not?
- What is the connection between Christ and the Church? How does the Church accomplish God's plan?

Paul knew that believers could not grow in Christ unless they had people around them who could encourage growth. This is part of God's plan. He made the Church to be essential to a person's growth in Christ.

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

- According to this passage, why does God give His children spiritual gifts? How does verse 7 help answer this question?
- What words did Paul use instead of "gifts" in verses 5 and 6? How does this help you better understand the purpose of our spiritual gifts?
- What makes a spiritual gift different than other talents or abilities that we may possess? What is an example of this difference in your life?

A grace gift is a God-given, spiritual ability for service and ministry. It goes far beyond natural talents. Every member of the Body of Christ has a grace gift, and we should never fail to appreciate what our resurrected, ascended Lord has done for us. We are to value our spiritual gifts.

Because all gifts come from the Spirit of God (see 1 Corinthians 12:4), every gift is useful to the body. Paul urged the Corinthian believers not to let their gifts divide them, but rather, to use their gifts to strengthen their commitment and connection to the Body of Christ. Just as we all come to the family of God with different backgrounds, we all have different gifts for the good of the Church.

- What spiritual gifts are listed in these verses?

- Why is it important for believers to know which spiritual gifts they have?
- How do we determine what our specific spiritual gifts are? What place do spiritual practices like the study of Scripture and prayer have in helping us determine what our individual gifts are?

Paul's purpose in these verses was not to give a complete list of all possible spiritual gifts, but rather to emphasize the unity of the Spirit even among the great variety of gifts. The *One Holy Spirit* is active in many ways through the devoted service of God's people. The *many gifts* listed show us the importance of diversity among the body. Knowing what gifts we have allows us to serve God in the way that He has called and created us to serve.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Are you using the spiritual gifts God has given you? Is there a step you could take to serve the body in a greater way through those gifts?
- What talents and abilities are represented in your group? How can we use these gifts together to build the Church and serve our community?
- In what ways can you encourage your spouse, your children, or other brothers and sisters in Christ to use their own gifts?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for the way He has gifted every member of His Church—both at your church and throughout the world—to serve the Kingdom and each other. Pray that all the members of your group would sacrificially use their individual gifts for the sake of others.