

The **SHAPE** of you

Session 5: Spiritual gifts working together

8.00 Intro game

Construction challenge! Table is covered with toothpicks. How high can people build them? (There are also grapes, among other things. After a few prompts to try working together and use anything on the table, people started to get that the grapes were useful to connect the toothpicks into strong, solid shapes. We referred back to this after reading 1 Corinthians 13 – spiritual gifts are useless without love, fruit of the Spirit. God can do some things with us on our own, but LOTS more when we work together and have lots of love from him!)

8.20 What we've done so far

Review the course aims. Summarise the journey so far and how each step relates to the aims. Discuss what people think they've got the most out of discovering so far, and what people think we still need to do to get to where they want to be.

8.30 Spiritual gifts – who, what, why and how?

READ 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Who are spiritual gifts for? (Note: “to each one”!)

What are they? (“The manifestation of the spirit” expressed in lots of ways – we can list some...)

What are they for? (“the common good” according to 1 Corinthians 12:7)

How does God distribute spiritual gifts? What does this mean for a group of Christians?

READ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Why does Paul emphasise the importance of love here? Where do we get our love from?

8.50 Let's worship God and practise prophecy!

First – worship. This isn't about our abilities as much as God's. Spend time orienting to him. Be aware of the Spirit's presence and be conscious of inviting the Spirit to move, in and through us, like the air into our lungs and out through our mouths. Encourage everyone to put sound to the movement of the air – speak out words of praise to God.

God might give tongues we don't understand as well as words we do. This is a safe place for both. Move the focus from ourselves, our shapes and abilities, to God, his shape, his abilities.

READ 2 Peter 1:21 and 1 Corinthians 14:1-3

What are the key features of prophecy? (Essentially: words from God for people)

Suggest: prophecy is like medicine – everyone should be able to access and dispense “over the counter” strengthening, encouragement and comfort. There is more available for qualified practitioners, but that isn't all of us. So we avoid trying to be like Isaiah unless God grows us that way.

Activation exercise: From what I can see...

Ask for and pass on a word from God based what a person is wearing or carrying today. Demonstrate with a volunteer then try in pairs. Everyone gets a turn at giving and receiving. *(Note: in our Oct 2019 session, it seemed best to do this around the table with those comfortable to offer or receive prophecy while others observed.)*

Review together: did anyone get anything which seemed meaningful that they'd credit to God?

Encourage: hearing words from God for people isn't difficult – it's impossible! We can't learn to work this out cleverly. We can learn to recognise God's voice and simply pass on what we hear. God knows how to grab our attention – it could be words or pictures, imagined or remembered, perhaps including some Bible.

(Notes for future use – we didn't get time to cover this in our Oct 2019 session)

Three practical rules:

1. God doesn't contradict himself. So if it disagrees with the Bible, it's not God!
2. Stick to strengthening, encouraging, comforting. Avoid births, deaths, marriages...
3. Let it flow lightly. You might not understand or have a complete picture, but a part of a bigger whole. God can use you to say things that make no sense to you. Say them anyway, but always offered lightly for discernment rather than heavily, "God sayeth..."

Activation exercise 2: What vehicle are you like?

Ask God to bring a vehicle to mind which seems relevant for a person. Picture it with details, colours, textures, how it moves – anything that stands out. Demo then do in pairs.

Review together: what seemed meaningful and worth thanking God for? Were there any words of knowledge – things that the person prophesying most likely received from the Spirit? Did any scripture seem relevant or come to mind after weighing up the relevance of the pictures?

Note: from experience, prophecy is not fortune telling or fate. It does not prescribe or predict our future. It can shine a light on opportunities and aspects of us that God wants us to see. But it's always up to us what to do with that information. Discerning, weighing, deciding what is from God is something which might need a bit more help and other people's spiritual gifts.

9.30 What other spiritual gifts are there?

Prophecy is especially important because it's a way in to understanding each other and the other gifts that God wants us to use and develop.

(Give out handout listing and describing 20 spiritual gifts.)

Look at some examples to see if any seem to apply to us, or maybe to others in the group. Can the group help each other to see where these gifts might have been given and used?

Think back to the Experiences which shaped us. Any stories about something God used you for, involving a spiritual gift he gave for the occasion. (Helen and I have examples!)

9.45 Prayer

Thank God for what we have seen, tonight and before tonight, where we know he is at work.

Ask for help this week in reflecting on spiritual gifts. What does he want to do with us?

READ 1 Peter 4:10-11

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."