

- B) In Greek, the word which is translated for "gift" is *charisma*\*. In Greek, the word *charisma* is never meant to signify a special Spirit-given ability.
  
- C) Rather, the "gifts" of Scripture which God gives are, within their context, ministries which build up and edify the Body of Christ, His church.
  
- D) The emphasis of Scripture is not on the individual or their strengths for a given ministry, but on the ministry itself, irrespective (many times) of ability or personal gifting.

#### 5) The Humble Mindset Of Serving The Lord

- A) Perhaps you have been waiting for a "spiritual gift" lightning bolt to strike you and reveal where you can serve. A personal "burning bush" for getting involved.
  
- B) Perhaps you have resisted serving because you lack "gifting," or "special ability." Perhaps, you question your strengths.
  
- C) Rather, serve the Lord (Colossians 3:24), and trust Him to give you the strength, even in weakness, to glorify God and expand His Kingdom (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:25-31).

\* *χάρισμα* (*charisma*) and its plural form *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*) simply means "a gift of grace, a free gift." The translation error which is made is a personalization of *χάρισμα*. While the *χαρίσματα* are certainly gifts from God, it takes the concept out of context as viewing them as directed to individuals, rather than the "Body of Christ," the church. Viewing the gifts as ministries with which God has graced His body (the church) provides a more clear and balancing view of the essence of the *χαρίσματα*. While this view is not the subject of this sermon, clearly it is a notable departure from the traditional view and it is a critical aspect of the background for this sermon. For some of you, this will deeply color your ability to proceed forward without further understanding and study. I would implore you to consider Dr. Kenneth Berding's book, *What are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional View* (Kregel Publications, 2006). His book has been a refreshing theological answer to the "gaps" within the traditional view of spiritual gifts, I commend the book to you for further study with this strong recommendation.

# Finding Your Fit

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**FOR THE BODY IS NOT ONE MEMBER, BUT MANY...**  
**~ 1<sup>ST</sup> CORINTHIANS 12:14 (NASB)**

#### 1) The "Traditional" Approach To Spiritual "Gifts"

- A) As a long-time follower of Jesus Christ, I have spent a great deal of time going to church in the past 30+ years. Discovering, understanding, and developing "spiritual giftedness" has always been a popular subject.
  
- B) The scenario goes something like this...
  - i) Ministry is not just for professionals. God has given all followers of Jesus "spiritual abilities" to use in the church. Everyone should be involved, this includes you.
  
  - ii) God has given everyone at least one "gift." You might not know what your gift is, which simply means your ability is hidden. You should seek God in prayer to reveal your hidden "gift(s)."
  
  - iii) The first goal of getting involved is knowing what kind of "spiritual abilities" God gives to people. You can, according to this view, learn these "gifts" from Scripture.
  
  - iv) Studying the lists of "gifts" in Scripture (there are many, but the most common are 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:27-31; Ephesians 4:11-12 & Romans 12:6-8) informs you of what is possible.

- v) Often, there is a "Spiritual Gifts Indicator" type of test which tests for strengths and weaknesses and directs you to consider gifts in your areas of primary strength.
  - vi) Finally, in order to test out your newly discovered "gifts," you should get involved in a ministry which needs your gifts and serve the Lord in that ministry.
- C) Discovering your gifts and serving within your "gifted" area was always presented as the best way to avoid burnout and a provided a sense of purpose.

## 2) The "Spiritual Gift Elephants" In The Room

- A) When you get a gift, is it yours to keep? Or is does God take the gift back sometimes (e.g. if you backslide or deny Jesus)? Or is the gift always yours, no matter what?
- B) What is the difference between a gift and a talent? Do they work together? Are gifts "spiritual power" for natural talents, and how can you know the difference?
- C) Do you get one gift, or two, or more? If everyone gets a gift, why do some people never show any sign or indication of their gifting?
- D) Are the lists of the "gifts" exhaustive? Or are they a "summary" of types of gifts?

## 3) The "African Bull Elephant" In The Room

- A) The traditional approach to "spiritual gifts" always emphasizes strength areas. Doesn't the Apostle Paul (who wrote all the lists of "gifts") emphasize exactly the opposite?

- B) Doesn't Paul emphasize a "theology of weakness" rather than strength (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10)? Doesn't Paul chide others when they get too focused on their strengths (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:10)? Doesn't Paul advocate weakness over strength?
- C) In fact, isn't "weakness theology" a biblical theme?
  - i) Israel was chosen for their weakness (Deuteronomy 7:7).
  - ii) Samson, the strongest man in the Bible, never succeeds until he becomes blind and weak (Judges 16:21ff).
  - iii) Saul was chosen by God to be Israel's first king, but was from the least family amongst the smallest tribe in Israel (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 9:21) and hid to avoid being king (10:20-24).
  - iv) Mankind is pictured as weak and frail, only strengthened by the power of God (Psalm 71).
  - v) Jesus Christ chose human weakness to reveal the divine strength of God (Philippians 2:5ff, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:4).
  - vi) God's strength is perfected in human weakness (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9).
  - vii) God chooses and uses those who are weak and foolish (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:26-31), so that God will receive all glory.
- D) In fact, the Gospel message itself is called "foolishness" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:21) and was delivered in "weakness, with fear and trembling" (2:1-5) to the very church to which Paul later would provide a "list of gifts."

## 4) An Alternative View Emphasizing "The Body"

- A) In English, when a person is "gifted" or possesses a "gift" it can mean "possessing exceptional talent or personal ability." For example, a "gifted" pianist or athlete.