

Spiritual Gifts Are For The Whole Congregation



Foundations (Day 226)
by Derek Prince

This week we will go on to examine a second distinctive feature of a Spirit-filled congregation.

In the regular services of most Christian churches today, almost all the real initiative and activity are confined to just a few individuals. The congregation may take part in certain pre-arranged activities, such as the singing of hymns from a book or the repetition of fixed prayers or responses. There may also be, within the main congregation, one or two smaller, specially trained groups – such as the choir or an orchestra. But apart from this all real initiative and activity are left in the hands of one or two individuals while most of the rest of the congregation remains passive.

One person leads the singing; one person prays; one person preaches. Sometimes two or more, even of these activities, may be combined in one person. From the rest of the congregation little more is expected or required than an occasional "Amen."

However, if we examine the life and worship of the early Church as portrayed in the New Testament, we find there was active participation by all the believers present in any service. This was brought about by the supernatural presence and power of the Holy Spirit operating in and through the individual believers.

Further study of this New Testament pattern reveals that the supernatural gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit are not given primarily to the individual believer. Rather they are given, through the vessel of the individual believer, to the church or congregation as a whole. Therefore they cannot achieve their proper purpose unless they are freely manifested and exercised in the life of the congregation.

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul indicates how the gifts of the individual believers are intended to function within the corporate life of the congregation.

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First he lists nine specific supernatural gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit, ending with the words:

> "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (1 Cor. 12:11)

This last phrase indicates that these gifts or manifestations are given in the first instance to individual believers. However, Paul does not end there.

In the next sixteen verses of the same chapter – verses 12-27 – Paul goes on to say that the Christian Church is like one body with many members, and he likens each individual believer to a single member of the one body, ending with the words: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

The lesson therefore is that, though the spiritual gifts are given to individual believers, they are given to enable those believers to play their proper part in the Church – the body of Christ – as a whole. Thus spiritual gifts are not intended primarily for the benefit of the individual but for the life and worship of the whole congregation.

Devotional

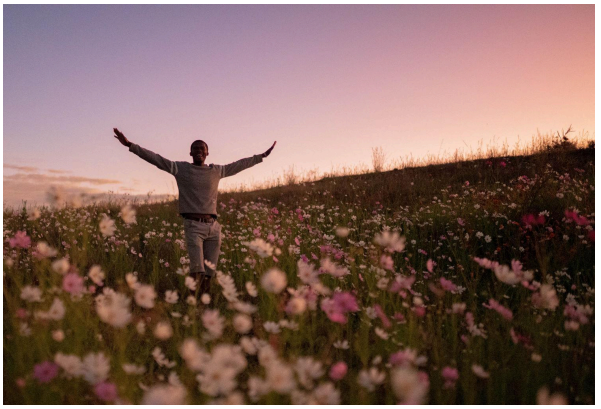
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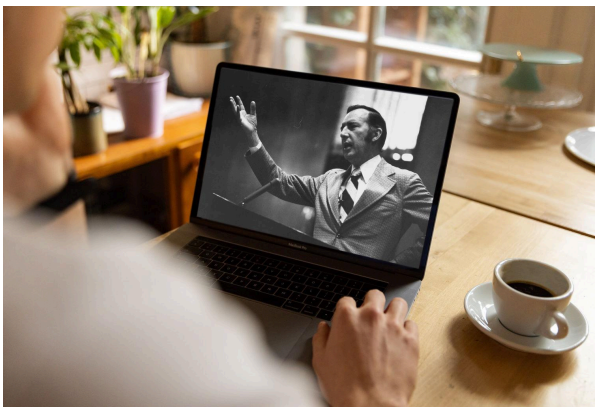
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