

IT'S TIME TO RELEASE THE BODY

A HOLY DISCONTENT

There is an increasing wave of holy discontent moving across the church, the Body of Christ. It is not necessarily a negative or rebellious discontent. It is not a rejection of the faith or the truth of the Word. For many it is rather a, “there must be more than this” type of discontent. Those who hunger for more sensory experiences tend to gravitate toward increased interest in manifestations and signs and wonders.

For others it is a, “there must be a better way to do church.” These have spawned a resurgence of the house church movement, as well as various attempts to do church in a more meaningful way. Much of this is due to a desire to be an integral and active participant in the ongoing life of the church.

For some it is a sense that “church” is no longer relevant. These have checked out of “church going” and concluded they can be faithful believers without being involved in the “system.” Many of these are convinced that just living the Christian life is all they need. Others in total disillusionment have concluded that the, “whole Christian thing” is not for them.

Almost inevitably when I ask believers about their church I hear them respond with comments like; “*They* have decided, to do this, *they* hope that more people will come if *they* do such and such, etc.” In very few cases do I hear reference to their church as, “*we*.” This is clear evidence of a deep sense of detachment. While they still feel obligated to be where they are they have no feeling of real ownership or influential involvement.

Pastors are becoming more and more frustrated. Only those capable of providing mega programs and exciting entertainment are able to hold large congregations. Church boards are hiring and firing pastors who can't keep things going and keep the interest of the congregations. Some pastors are resigning to find other careers with fewer demands and less pressure.

It is becoming more than obvious that a new, or perhaps a more Biblical strategy must be recovered. In the next section we will take some time to examine the development and inherent factors of our present dilemma. After this we will present what we believe is a viable and exciting proposition to bring us into healthy release of the Body.

THE AWAKENING OF A SLEEPING GIANT

Almost immediately upon a definite salvation experience most believers want to serve the Lord and be useful. However, the message that is soon communicated is, that if you want to serve in the church you need to “get trained.” This probably assumes Theology and or Pastoral leadership training. If this does not take place then, “service in the church” will probably be limited to ushering, working the sound system, or perhaps being on a worship team. If one does not get training they should be satisfied to attend meetings, be a cheerful giver and live a good Christian life, unless they become influential enough to be voted onto a board or committee.

While this may have been satisfactory in the past the wave of holy discontent is crying out for something more. Somehow believers are coming to realize that if they are members of the Body, than they should have an actual place and function in the Body. They may not necessarily know what that place is but since it is part of their spiritual inheritance they want to enter into it. Years ago a book called, *The Comfortable Pew*, was written to descry the situation of inaction in the Body. Today we could write a book called, *The Uncomfortable Pew*, speaking about the cry for involvement.

In many parts of the church there has been a renewed emphasis on hearing the Lord’s voice and practicing intimacy with the Lord. While this has awakened many and activated the prophetic gifting within the Body, it has also, perhaps unwittingly aggravated the problem. This is like teaching children how to use their voice but not giving them and opportunity to talk. If someone other than the “ordained” or “appointed” leaders hear from the Lord what do we do with it? If they speak they are probably seen as being critical, out of place or maybe even rebellious. Perhaps we have been killing the prophets almost as fast as we are raising them up!

This experience has driven many out of certain churches. In some cases they go into isolation. Some fortunate ones may find a place of love, acceptance and forbearance. Here their gift can be recognized, allowed to function and given opportunity to mature.

So, if this sleeping giant, often referred to as the laity is awakening what shall we do with him? Simply being a giant does not qualify one for constructive endeavors. We must find a practical Biblical way to train and bring this giant into a healthy constructive function. While we use the term giant as a collective entity we are actually talking about individuals, persons with whom we must work to enable them, each one, to find and fulfill their callings.

A further reason that it is urgent that the Body be activated relates to the coming harvest. If the revival we are praying for comes and brings in myriads of new converts who will shepherd and mentor them? In our present condition not only would the new babes be neglected they would be born as atrophied and inactive as their spiritual parents. Since we all reproduce after our own kind the Lord desires to bring us into a healthy living functioning Body before He releases us to birth many children.

THE CLERGY “PASTOR” DILEMMA

Most congregations have a designated leader usually know as the pastor. If there are several usually one is referred to as the senior pastor. This person is assumed to give oversight and primary leadership to the congregation. Why the term pastor has been chosen is hard to understand. Not only is the term pastor the least mentioned in the Bible, there is no indication that the one with the pastoral gift should be leading the congregation.

Often the “pastor” is not a pastor by gifting, but perhaps a teacher, or perhaps an evangelist or a prophet. In this case the church will be strengthened in this particular dimension. So, in order for the church to grow in a healthy balance he or she must be periodically replaced. A person with a genuine pastoral gift tends to become a spiritual father/parent to many. If by then he is replaced, we end up exchanging fathers without consideration as to how many orphans are being created.

Although unintentionally the pastor is often seen as being in a different class than other members. Others are simply the laity. They observe and render support but it is his church and he is in charge. This has a paralyzing effect on the Body.

In many cases where there is a church board, while these are often referred to as elders many times they are not elders in the Biblical sense. They see the pastor as their employee. Rather than they being co-workers under the pastor's leadership to facilitate his calling they expect him to accommodate and serve their interests. This relegates him to be little more than a hireling. After we look at the release of the Body we will put forward a proposal for re-positioning leadership within the Body.

A starting place in releasing the Body must involve helping each believer to discern their gifts. Sad to say many older believers have never ever come to know what their gifting is. Why should they? If they did it they would not be enabled to practice its function. For this reason we will give major attention to the discerning of gifts.

DISCERNING GIFTS

In the New Testament there are primarily three gift listings. We will deal with each of these in detail since their understanding and employment is critical for the release of the Body.

As a backdrop to these gift listings we need to carefully observe 1 Corinthians 12 4-6. This will help us to understand the difference in each of the three lists.

Three kinds of gifts, from three sources for three purposes. 1 Corinthians 12 4-6

In verse 4 we read: "There are different kinds of **gifts**, but the same **Spirit**." Here we have the Greek word '*charisma*' which can be translated grace gifts and we see the Spirit as the source. This we believe refers to what we will call the **Spiritual Gifts** as found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. These gifts speak of the believer's **function** which they can perform because of the **Spirit's** enablement.

In verse 5: “There are different kinds of **service** but the same **Lord**” Here we have the Greek word ‘*diakonia*’ which can be translated service or ministry and it is indicated that they are from the **Lord**, or from Jesus. This has reference to what we will call the **Ministry Gifts or Administrative Gifts** as listed in Ephesians 4:11. These gifts resulting from the Lord’s ascension are given by Him to certain believers **for equipping** the other saints for service so that the Body can build itself up in love. c.f. Eph. 4:16.

Thirdly, in Verse 6; “There are different kinds of **working**, but the same **God** works all of them in all men.” Here we find the Greek word ‘*energima*’ which means energy or motivation and it comes from **God** the Father. This is referring to the list found in Roman 12: 6-8 which we call the **Personality, Dispositional** or Natural gifts. These gifts granted by the **Father** as natural qualities help us to recognize our **dispositional placement** in the Body.

I. PERSONALITY - DISPOSITIONAL GIFTS ROMANS 12:6-9

Since the **Personality or Dispositional** gifts are our inborn qualities granted to us even at birth we will begin with these. These are unique character qualities bestowed on us by the Father. In a sense we might say these are the basic tools we arrive with. For usefulness it is important that we ourselves and the leaders we work with are aware of the particular tools i.e. dispositional qualities we come to the job with. Much frustration in the church, in our relationships, and in life could be avoided if we would better understand and appreciate each others’ personality gifts. “He is like a square peg in a round hole,” speaks of an all too common situation when this matter is not addressed.

In the list of personality gifts there are seven; 1) **prophetic/inspirational** 2) **servant/administrator**, 3) **teacher**, 4) **encourager**, 5) **giver**, 6) **leader**, 7) **mercy**. Before we deal with each one of these separately we will address some pertinent considerations.

While to some extent as we mature we should have a measure of all of these, there is usually one or perhaps several that “come natural” because it’s just the way we are “wired”.

Paul introduces these gifts as analogous to parts of the body, so we need to see how each complements the others for a full body

function. To illustrate this we will suggest a part of the body that each might symbolize.

As we come to recognize our own and others personality gifting we will develop a new level of acceptance for ourselves and a renewed respect and appreciation for others. We will come to realize that persons with different gifts perceive things from a different perspective. This will deal with our frequent compulsions to measure every one by our view and personal standard. Meanwhile, let's keep in mind that the purpose of this exercise is not to compartmentalize but to appreciate and release each other. We will also note some of the strengths and some of the weaknesses of each.

1) **Prophetic /inspirational** -part of the Body -eyes

These persons have a special ability to perceive and grasp things quickly. They have a strong intuitive nature, able to quickly see faults, weaknesses and often feel a need to expose them. As soon as they see or understand something they are ready to take action and may have difficulty with those who seem slow or just wanting to keep studying something as is often the case of the teacher. They are quick to get new ideas and revelations but not too effective in carrying things through. Personal friendships may be hindered by frankness resulting in these persons feeling lonely and rejected. They can tend to be too quick to jump to conclusions, are very innovative and useful but need the balance of the other gifts.

2) **Servant/ administrator** -part of the Body –hands

This temperament recognizes need and is always willing to help and likes to get things done. He is usually ready to help and support the leaders, is willing to be obedient and follow orders. Often they are faithful intercessors but may find it difficult to say no and are often overloaded. They can easily feel that they are a victim and feel exploited. Tend to feel impatient with those who, “won't help.” They may unknowingly impose by being too helpful and may be over protective of their children. They may have difficulty being served by others.

3) **Teacher** -part of the Body –mind

The teacher disposition needs to evaluate, validate, understand and explain things. Wanting to look at all sides and different angles

they like to read and research everything before they accept things. They usually are interested in history, news and current affairs. They don't like to pass judgment until having studied the matter. Often being slow in application they can be a frustration to the prophet. They can tend to be impatient with those who make unfounded statements. Being strong in the mind they may have difficulty flowing with the unpredictability of the Spirit. They can be dogmatic and legalistic once they have arrived at a conclusion.

4) **Encourager/exhorter** –part of the Body –the mouth

This disposition loves to talk, is positive and encouraging. They see the potential in people and believe it is possible to overcome any obstacle; always ready to give counsel with positive steps to take action. They aim to speak to the heart rather than the mind. They are always eager to share personal experiences including hardships to motivate others to press on, but can have a tendency to interrupt others. They may tend to intimidate others who are having a difficult time. Often find it hard to follow through on a project.

5) **Giver** –part of the Body –arms

This personality loves to meet people's needs, directly or indirectly. They desire to be the answer to someone's prayer often preferring to remain unidentified. They are generally good in handling finance and other resources, but do not appreciate pressure or fund raising, wanting to give according to their leading.

They can be long time faithful loyal supporters. They sometimes tend to care more for the cause rather than people. They may be judgmental toward poor managers or people who give less than they. At times may attempt to gain control through giving. They can frustrate their spouse by, "giving everything away."

6) **Leader/administrator** –part of the Body –shoulders

This gifted person has a unique ability to arrange and prioritize matters. They can visualize final results and know how and to whom to delegate. Can assess people's abilities and arrange their placement for best results. Diligent and not easily side tracked they are always willing and ready for a new challenge. It is not easy to admit error, since they see "mistakes" rather as a learning experience. They can tend to make people feel used in order to achieve their goals.

They may be weak in showing appreciation and can find it difficult to consider the observations and advice of others.

7) **Mercy –Compassion** -part of the Body –heart

These are deeply loyal to friends, sensitive to hurt and suffering caring for the needs of others. They believe the best in everyone, and show unconditional acceptance. They are willing to help and spend time with people and provide a shoulder to cry on, but, are able to discern genuine love. Knowing intimacy they can be radical worshippers. They may become possessive, and take on offenses easily. Sometimes they have difficulty being on time; don't plan ahead. They may compromise in order not to hurt feelings. They can tend to establish unhealthy emotional connections with the opposite sex, and tend to attract people who are looking for pity.

THE GIFTS IN PRACTICAL LIFE

As a review we will consider how for a project to be completed there is a need and a place for each personality gift. Let's assume that the **prophetic** person gets a bright idea to build a unique structure. The idea is great but with him it will still primarily be talk.

For the work to be done there will be a need for **servants** to actually do the work. They feel fulfilled by getting in there and doing it!

Meanwhile the **teacher** gift will need to study the proposal and validate its feasibility and the implications involved. He is looking at the finer details and the merits of the actual project.

In order for people to actually believe in the whole idea and be ready to get at it will require the **encourager** gift. He is the "salesman" who convinces everyone that it can be done!

But, unless the **giver** gift comes into action to provide resources it will still remain in the theory stage.

Probably only the **administrator** gift will now be able to organize and co-ordinate the action. He is able to do this in a way that others will accept and respond to his organization. He might be considered the foreman.

By now matters will have become quite impersonal and project focused, losing sight of the personal dimension. So, we need

the **mercy** gift to keep relationships in view and to keep love and mercy flowing.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Let's look at another example to show how each gift expresses itself in its own way. Molly Smith is in the hospital. First the **prophetic** person arrives. They will want to consider the spiritual significance of the person's illness. They will pray that the Lord will give revelation concerning the situation. When the **servant** arrives they will immediately inquire as to what the persons' needs are and how they can be of help. The **teacher** will share information and research about the person's illness, and what they have learned about this particular sickness. The **encourager** will tell encouraging stories and assure the sick person that the Lord's healing hand is at work. They will share how this is a great learning experience and much will be gained. When the **giver** arrives they will want to know if the person is insured and if their resources are adequate to carry them through this time of trial. The **administrator** will ask if legal or home help is required and will offer to organize assistance if needed. The **mercy** will begin to weep with compassion and embrace the person. They will wipe the forehead and speak soft words of sympathy.

WORK AND FAMILY IMPLICATIONS

Many times people are frustrated simply because they are placed in a wrong role. A **servant** makes a better substitute teacher than a **teacher** does. A **teacher** needs time to study, prepare and research and have a plan in order to feel worthwhile. A **servant** is happy to simply follow instructions and do what someone else has planned.

Much conflict in marriage results from partners not being aware of and appreciating each other's gifting. A **prophetic** person sees things quickly, does not need deep social connections and can change and adjust easily. A **mercy** needs deep relationships and takes time to detach from close friends. If a sudden move is called for, the **prophet** will be ready and on the way quickly. The **mercy** will need a

time to grieve during the separation time, and then will need extra time to create new friendships. If the spouses are not aware of these differing needs, a move can be devastating to the marriage.

Bill is a **teacher** personality even though he is not a professional teacher. He reads and studies everything he sees. He must watch the news every night and gains satisfaction from being an informed person. His wife Sue is a **servant** by disposition. She gains purpose by keeping everything clean and in order. She finds it very difficult to focus on a book filled with ideas or stories. For her the here and now and getting the work done is more important. Unless they recognize and appreciate their different personality, John may be frustrated at his “uninformed” wife, and she may feel that he should, “get his nose out of a book and do something.” Of course, each must allow themselves to be stretched and expanded to accommodate some of the others’ interests.

If both parents and two out of four children are **prophetic**, one is a **mercy** and one is a **servant**, unexpected problems may arise. The parents and the two children may love to exchange ideas, concepts and revelations. This gives them much satisfaction. The third child being a **servant** sees a need to get things done, cleans, washes and is gradually made to feel dumb and uninformed, and perhaps even “used.” The parents can not understand why he is feeling rejected. The **mercy** seems to be more concerned about sick cats and feeding the pan handlers then engaging in a stimulating discussion. If the differing dispositional gifts were recognized and affirmed, many problems and misunderstandings could be avoided.

After we have some degree of awareness of our personality gifts we should begin to be more able to recognize who we are, why we see things the way we do and where we fit in the bigger picture.

II. SPIRITUAL MIRACULOUS GIFTS. 1 COR 12:7-11

Let’s be aware that the Greek word for gift *charisma* is just an extension of the word for grace, *charis*. “Each one should use whatever gift *charisma* he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace *charis* in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

This tells us that a gift is granted in order that an aspect of God's grace can be expressed. For the fullness of God's grace to be realized requires all of the expressions of the miraculous gifts.

These gifts usually manifest themselves in particular situations when a specific anointing is required to address a need in a unique situation. This is why they may be called manifestations. Certain persons due to the Holy Spirit's endowment are enabled to express God's grace in a particular way.

In the equipping gifts we can refer to the person by the name of that gift, such as an apostle, pastor, etc. Perhaps we could say that their dispositional gifts have been developed to become their person. But, in the Spiritual gifts we do not say one is a word of wisdom, etc., rather that they express God's grace in such a way in a given situation.

While all believers may have a degree of "spiritual ability" in any or all of these, the word clearly indicates that these gifts are granted in a fuller measure to certain ones. While the motivational gifts are descriptive of ones personality traits these gifts are expressions of ones' function in the Body. It is time that we acknowledge these and make room for their functioning in the life of the church. Now we will consider the nine expressions, or manifestations of God's grace as found in 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11.

1) Word of Wisdom

Much knowledge and information in itself is often not adequate. Therefore the Lord has placed in the Body certain saints who are granted a special portion of wisdom. This is an unnatural capacity to see thorough situations and apply knowledge in the most effective way. These can often see how to apply spiritual truth in everyday life. What appears to many as a mystery or riddle can many times be resolved by those who are granted the "word of wisdom." This wisdom is often beyond human wisdom communicated to the person by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the Body.

2) Word of Knowledge

There may be varying degrees of this gift. Some expositors believe that this gift is seen in those who are diligent to study, research, and gather vast amounts of information and experience. This may give them a perspective beyond most others. While this may have some merit we believe however, this gift can be activated by the Holy

Spirit in the person so that they may be given knowledge about a person or situation that could not be known by human knowledge.

This gift is at times granted to the prophet or to the one who has the gift of healing. In these cases the ministering one will be shown conditions and factors that they would have no natural way of knowing. A measure of this gift can also be a great help to an evangelist in that it can reveal the hidden things of the heart and bring conviction to the unbeliever.

I believe we can all aspire to a certain measure of this gift as we learn to “lean not on our own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5

3) Faith

While to each member is given a measure of faith, some members of the Body of Christ seem to be granted with a fuller measure. They have a special capacity to discern the Lord’s desire and to “risk everything” for its fulfillment. They are ready to step out while others are still unsure. They seem to be able to keep believing the Word, or what the Lord told them, even if all natural evidence seems contrary. These can be a big encouragement to the Body, but must practice forbearance realizing that not all members have the same level of faith.

4) Healing

This gift involves a unique capacity given by the Holy Spirit to call forth healing in various forms. It seems that in our Western culture where we have moved to such total dependence on medicine and science that the Lord needs to recover this gift. Often he releases this gift more readily in other cultures, because they trust only in Him.

Like any of these gifts, the gift of healing does not arrive in its full maturity but requires practice and training. Just as we allow a child to crawl and stumble before they walk so we must allow the practice and gradual development of these gifts. Let us seek to find, release and enter into the flow of the gift of healing in a full measure, and encourage and bless those who move in this gift.

5) Miracles

Miracles are actions or activities that go contrary to or beyond natural possibilities. There is a need to see this gift active in the church life. Meanwhile we must keep in mind that the exercise of this

gift is to release an expression of God's grace and not to draw attention to the worker of miracles. Until we come to that level of maturity the Lord may limit the release of this gift.

6) Prophecy

The persons with this gift often, without intention, just see and understand things that are not visible to others. Quite often they get into trouble until they know how to handle this gift, because what they see may appear presumptuous or threatening to insecure leaders. Their usual capacity is not so much to foretell the future, but to see beneath the surface of the present or to be aware of one's past. While some have this gift in a fuller measure in 1 Corinthians 14: 31 Paul suggests that we can all prophecy. As we allow this to develop people who come to our gatherings will surely see and acknowledge God's presence. If this gift can be expressed and received with much grace and forbearance it will be a great help and blessing to the body.

7) Discerning spirits

This is a special ability to recognize with assurance whether certain behavior is of God, is merely human or perhaps satanic. Those with this gift can recognize the true motives of people. They may also quickly sense when a person is distorting the truth or communicating error. They may further be able to recognize when a demonic spirit is at work in a particular situation or in a given person.

This gift seems to be rare, perhaps because we have not allowed it or cultivated it in a positive or constructive way. This, as all of these gifts, do not arrive instantly mature but require maturing and tempering. If we would allow and mature this gift we might see more "casting out of demons" which is part of the mandate given by our Lord to His church.

8) Tongues

Although many wish to deny the matter of tongues it is clearly set forth here and elsewhere. Those who have not experienced this gift go to great length to deny its validity. They would be wiser to admit that it is not in their realm of experience and respect those who experience and appreciate the gift. It is our view that there are basically two forms of tongues. One is a personal expression sometimes referred to as a prayer language. This can be a personally

meaningful and enriching experience. The other form which is probably referred to here is when a revelation is received and transmitted by an unknown language through one who has this gift. Whether this is a particular foreign language is not relevant. The purpose is to allow the Lord to communicate a message outside of ones' natural understanding.

9) Interpreting tongues

This is a unique gift which is intended to align with the gift of tongues. The one who exercises this gift, and it could be the one who speaks in tongues, is enabled to bring into an understandable language the message which was given in tongues. This gift is not simply a result of the person happening to know the language the tongue's speaker was using. Just as the tongue is a Holy Spirit inspired utterance, so the interpretation is Holy Spirit inspired.

III. THE EQUIPPING GIFTS EPHESIANS 4: 11-12

These gifts refer to the equipping capacity of those whose gifts are mature. They do not simply function in this gift but they have become an expression of the gift so they can now be called by or referred to as this gift, evangelist, teacher, etc. Their primary function at this point is to develop and release the gifts of the saints who will be inspired and equipped to build up the Body. They are specifically commissioned by the ascended Lord to bring His Body into maturity and to a full expression of Himself. These have been matured by being faithful in exercising their gifts in service to and in participation in the Body.

Traditionally even if these gifts have been recognized and allowed their primary purpose and activity has not been clear. We must recognize that they have not been called to do the work, but to prepare God's people to do the work. They are not called primarily to act but to activate.

In a sense they should see their gifting being activated and reproduced in others, however, the main task is not to re-produce themselves, but to activate and release others to carry the aspects which they incorporate into the life of the congregation. This should also apply to the function of a pastor. If he is in a congregation for five years there

should be a number of pastors emerging who are doing the pastoring while he simply oversees or pastors them.

It is those whose giftings we have earlier described that should do the work of ministry and in this way the Body will, “build itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4: 16

In describing these giftings we will take a two-fold approach. In each case we will describe the qualities of persons who carry the mantle of that particular gift. Then we will suggest some qualities and characteristic which they should be generating within the members of the Body.

These gifts to the Body are commonly referred to as the **five-fold gifts**. A helpful analogy to describe the function of these five ministries is their parallel to the five fingers of the hand. We will touch on this briefly in our description of each.

1) **Apostles**

Relative to the hand the apostle might be considered the thumb. Coming from the head through the arm the thumb is the first member. It might be called the founding member, and the member that is in contact with and can activate and strengthen all the other members.

They are persons whose heart and vision have been enlarged to see the big picture. Carrying the Lord’s heart for initiating and advancing the Kingdom he is often given a sense of the overall blueprint for a new work. In these cases he becomes the “sent one” which is the meaning of the word apostle. While part of the apostles’ mandate is to see that congregations are kept on track, his broader calling means that he should leave the local work to others so he can focus on enlarging the bigger picture. He is also called to produce new leaders. This is essential since he will be increasingly called to serve beyond a local congregation.

We see an increasing problem occurring when a founding pastor is being called into an apostolic role. If he is not able or ready to entrust the local leadership to others frustration will mount. He will be running the church from wherever he is and when at home will feel obligated to continue to be everything to everyone. Most of his speaking will be reporting of what God is doing in the big picture and the congregation will find it difficult to relate. Meanwhile he may in fact simply be trying to add his apostolic call onto his already

overloaded agenda. How to release some of their former duties must be given serious consideration.

Where this transition has been worked through the apostle gains new release in his emerging call and other local leaders can fill the gap with confidence and assurance. Many other members will step up to new levels of responsibility. A good question for an emerging apostle to ask is: “What is it that only I am called to do, and what am I doing that others could be doing?” Hopefully during his ministry he has prepared and equipped young or new leaders.

An apostle does not simply become an apostle by assuming that title. His apostleship must be validated by others and confirmed by the fruit of his ministry. As in the New Testament pattern the apostle and the prophet must work together to bring balance, safety and authority to their ministry.

Let me interject that apostolic mantels are beginning to be recognized beyond “religious church” settings. We now hear of “city apostles,” “workplace apostles,” “business apostles,” etc. This is a refreshing way to bring the church into the real world and breaks the concept that the gifts are intended to operate only within the “church” sphere. The above principles are also generally applicable in these contexts as well.

2) Prophets

The prophet may be regarded as the index finger. Because of its position and mobility it is very well-equipped to indicate objects very precisely. It can very easily stretch itself out to be visible as a single finger. Sometimes we are warned by a raised index finger. Sometimes we are given orientation by a finger pointing us in the right direction. Sometimes it is an “explanatory” finger, pointing details out to us which we hadn’t noticed.

At the same time the prophet must maintain a humble and gracious spirit. Often times a prophet may be misunderstood or ignored. If he is immature and subjective he may become easily offended. It is not his role to direct or control, but to convey what he senses, from the Holy Spirit, then to allow others to discern and implement the matters. If the word is from God, He will take the responsibility to see it carried through in His way in His time. While the prophet may see a need for discipline it is usually best for the

apostle who has the authority, or the pastor who is closer to the heart of the sheep to administer that discipline.

The prophet can easily appear to the pastor as an irritant and at times a meddler because he often sees the weaknesses but bears little responsibility to “fix the mess” For this reason the prophet is specifically called to work with the apostle. His direct responsibility to the local church is described in 1. Corinthians 14, 3: “But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”

3) Teachers

In 1 Corinthians 12: 28 Paul places teachers third; consequently we might regard them as the middle finger of the hand. This finger gives the hand stability when gripping. It can carry heavy weights and it stands by the side of the prophet and the pastor.

This gift has the capacity to study and understand the Word, making it relevant and applicable to daily life. While the teacher appreciates the work and words of the apostle and prophet he is concerned that all matters are aligned with the written Word. His being in the center of the hand suggests that his role is to keep the balance by assuring that the Word is central to what transpires in the life of the church.

He is called and must be given time to teach and train others to know the Word and to, “rightly divide the word of truth.” While the prophet calls down rain from heaven, the teacher helps people to draw water from the word.

4) Pastors

The pastor may be likened to the fourth or the ring finger. A ring is a sign of loyalty, commitment and enduring companionship. The ring may have engraved a name on it, even so the pastor has the names of his flock engraved on his heart. While we have used the word pastor in a very broad and general term to designate one as a church leader, in fact it applies to a very specific gift. The pastors’ role is deeply relational, expressing care concern and availability. The Greek word is also translated as shepherd, indicating one who stays home and takes care of the sheep. For the stability of a local church the pastor gift should be the most constant factor. In early times he was a permanent presence in the church unless he was called to

apostleship. Changing shepherds from time to time is hardly a Biblical concept.

The pastors' primary tools are love, gentleness and a caring heart. It is not necessary that he incorporates all of the gifts, and this is why we say that a "pastor" was not intended to be the exclusive leader of a church. He should walk closely with and rely on others who possess the other gifts to administer the church.

5) Evangelists

When we reach to pick up something the little finger tends to make the first contact. Its' tendency then is to turn it over to the other fingers. This typifies the evangelist. The one, who reaches out, who finds it natural to contact non-believers and desires to bring them into the love and care of the Body.

He believes in the actual and immediate working of the Holy Spirit in his sermons, and expects that decisions should occur here and now, whereas the teacher expects listeners to consider and effect a gradual change.

His interest circles around certain basic truths relative to the gospel, the lost, heaven and hell, and judgment. He preaches by describing experiences and more than almost anyone-else testifies for the Lord. The "non-converted" are much more important to him than the converted.

A common tendency lies in that he often is weak in follow-up and planning, can tend to exaggeration, have a sales mentality, and criticize Christians who aren't evangelistic (gift projection). Here again we see how the other gifts are necessary to work together to bring a healthy balance.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE FIVE-FOLD GIFTS

With a renewed acceptance of the clearly specified five gifts acknowledged in the early church has come a desire to see them active in many church circles. I believe this is not quite as simple as giving certain ones a new title, in the way we have used the term pastor as a title. After considerable study of this matter I share the following observations.

By Gift and Function not by Title or Self Acclamation

If we wish to be faithful to our Lord's directive in Matthew 23: 9-10 we will avoid giving titles that classify or grant status to certain ones. While a term such as prophet or evangelist may serve to describe our function or calling it dare not be used to elevate us into a special category

Those who carry a ministry gift mantle do not need to advertise, promote or convince others of their calling. When the Lord brought us to our present church some years ago we began to love and serve the saints. After a time the leaders approached us indicating that they wished to designate us as one of the pastors. Having developed an aversion to positions and titles from past experience I responded. "I do not feel I need or want a title. Besides, I do not believe that being given a title changes what one is, at best it can only confirm what already exists"

Their response, "By your presence and by your effect on the saints, and by their receptivity toward you, you are already a pastor. We feel that for the sense of order in the Body, and to avoid misunderstanding we would like to publicly acknowledge you as a member of our pastoral team." As we prayed it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit to have this acknowledgement made.

As time went on many expressed appreciation for my teaching, which is really my primary gift. Here we see that the Body will know and recognize one's gift as we function within the Body.

Five-fold Gifts Belong to the Broader Body

Much of the frustration related to trying to implement the five-fold gifts come as a result of trying to impose it on a particular congregation or house church. In the New Testament a congregation was never seen to stand independently, but as a part of the Church in that locality. As we see the Body beyond our immediate circle, we will be able to recognize and appreciate these gifts in our community or city and let them function where needed. This requires that the gifted ones hearts are enlarged to love and embrace the broader Body. It also means that leaders must release any grip of possessiveness over their private flock, and allow other influences which might enrich the life of the believers under their care.

This goes beyond “pulpit exchange.” It involves gifts and resources being regionally acknowledged and shared that the Body, and not just “our church” can be built up.

THE BODY A CORPORATE ENTITY -LIVING THE BODY LIFE

The word corporate is derived from the Latin *corpus* meaning Body. The significance and implications of God’s people being a Body is very significant but often not realized. Let’s consider some aspects of a Body and see how these aspects translate themselves into the life of the church as a Body.

We will look at, corporate hearing, corporate prayer and corporate meetings.

Every part of the Body is connected both to the head and to other parts of the Body. Any action by one part affects the other parts. While every member is able to hear and can receive directions from the head, the implications involve others, so we must allow what we hear to be balanced by those close to us in the Body.

No part of the Body exists or operates independently or for its own purpose. Our pain, our joy, and our success involve not just ourselves, but are to be shared with others.

If any part of the Body draws attention to itself it creates a distortion. Even though my hand or my mouth may be the most active part, if it draws attention to itself it becomes a distraction and the message is compromised.

Some parts are more obvious, others less obvious but of equal necessity for full function of the Body to realize its purposes. The primary purpose of every part is to express the head in harmony with the other parts.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF CORPORATE HEARING

We had been meeting in a large performance auditorium for several years. This was a facility much larger than we needed. Since another larger church wanted the use of the auditorium we were asked to meet in a cafeteria for a trial period. Toward the end of this trial

period we needed to decide whether to stay in the cafeteria or return to the auditorium. The poor sound and other factors in the cafeteria had produced considerable frustration.

At a particular evening meeting we decided to see what the sense of the Body was. We agreed not to discuss the pros and cons, not to get into all the implications, but simply invite each one present to ask the Lord as to what was His desire in the matter. "After you feel that you have heard from the Lord come forward and share what you are hearing. We are not here to debate, to try to convince or persuade anyone, we just want an environment where anyone can share what they feel they are hearing."

The following is a summary of what was shared that night. Each paragraph is the response of one person.

Summary of Corporate Hearing on Where to Meet –Aug. 7, 07

-Songs 2:4 He's taking me to the banqueting hall...

-Auditorium is a place where we can be independent, and not so close to each other, in the cafeteria God is teaching us to be more corporate.

-The Cafeteria: is all open, well lit, transparent, with sky lights, very transparent. In the theatre we could hide, now God is taking us from a dark place where we can hide to where He is shining light and we can be seen. Even the prayer room is exposed, not hidden.

-God is challenging us to be able to overcome distractions and focus on God.

-He must increase and we must decrease. Though the place decreases, He will increase.

-Picture of connecting dots. Each dot is likened to a step in life's journey, not destination. He didn't lead us out to bring us back again.

-Before the River Jordan, the Israelites were circumcised and than faced battles.

Similarly, our lives need to be changed by many challenges in order to overcome.

Crossing the Jordan requires many changes.

-The Cafeteria is an eating place – a place for family and sharing time.

-We can be closer together. I saw two hearts knitted together. As we trust & obey.

The heavens will open as we worship, light shines in. His ways, not our ways.

-Oneness takes place in natural and spiritual realms. When we work together to set up and take down chairs and equipment, through our working together we come into a deeper oneness, and hear corporately.

-Don't lose focus of God because of the building. He is preparing us for the next stage. I saw picture of loaf of bread being baked in the kitchen. Others will smell the fragrance of the loaf as it is done.

-He is taking us from spectators to ownership of the church even as we set up. As we stay together we can fight the next battles.

-Be faithful in little things. He will give more. Our unity will increase. Fight to the end. We need to face the problems, like the sound system and so on, but we will overcome. The Lord will give us a strategy.

-It is not where we meet but HOW we meet. The Lord is in either place.

Dream: A person who owed money to loan shark tried to run away and hide and pay later. Later, the loan shark said the \$1,000 loan became \$10,000. Interpretation: When our hearts are tested do not procrastinate or will need to pay higher price later.

-An Auditorium is a place to pretend, dress up, and put on costumes and masks

A cafeteria is where people eat, being themselves, food in mouth, being who we really are, as a real family. Place of enjoyment and coming together.

-To night we are a family who can hear together and work together.

-Cafeteria is o-k, but we need discipline since we are in the awesome presence of God.

-In auditorium we were on two levels, in the Cafeteria we are all on the same level.

-Character, molding, time.

At this point there was a plea that no one should be intimidated, everyone should feel free to express themselves. No one should leave feeling that they were not allowed to be heard. Even

though less than half had spoken, everyone was at rest and agreed that the Lord had spoken in a clear and beautiful way. Prior to and during this time none of the primary leaders indicated their feeling on the matter.

Eventually we could confidently say, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” The full report was shared with the entire Body the next Sunday and others who were not present that evening confirmed that the Lord had spoken to them as well.

CORPORATE PRAYER

For a number of years a group of about twelve men have met at 5:00 am on Fridays for prayer. For the first hour we pray and seek God’s face individually. Just being together in the Lord’s presence in this way draws us into a deeper intimacy with the Lord.

During the second hour we gather in a circle for corporate prayer. At this time we gather not to pray around the world, or to pray for everyone’s concerns. We want to sense what God has in His heart for us to carry corporately. Someone may express a burden and offer a prayer. If this resonates in another heart it will be picked up, if not, then that person’s prayer will suffice. Suddenly someone will offer a prayer that will somehow touch the sense of the Body and different ones will pick it up and carry it higher and higher until there is a rest and assurance that the goal was reached in response to our corporate prayer.

This of course requires grace and maturity, and a trust that we are not for or against any person. But, we must learn that there are times when want to move beyond personal and individual concerns to connect with the Head of the Body. In this way He can find expression for what is on His heart to be released through His Body.

Sometimes during this time someone will try to move to something else, but there is still a sense that the earlier matter was not complete, so the prayer will be brought back to complete the unfinished item. To realize this everyone must be willing to bring his spirit into subjection to the Lord and to the other members of the Body. This requires a trust and assurance that at times the Lord’s voice in the Body is more reliable than my personal hearing.

This practice has brought us to a measure of unity and authority. We are often in awe as to how the Lord has both led our prayer and honored us with His favor and changed circumstances, even in our city and our nation.

At times someone will express a personal burden. At that time they will be assured that we will pray for them specifically at the end of the meeting.

CORPORATE MEETINGS

“If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’ What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. . .

Two or three prophets should speak, and other should weigh carefully what is said. And if revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”

1 Corinthians 14: 24 -26, 29 -33.

Here we have a clear model of a corporate meeting; but where is it in practice and how shall we implement it?

First we begin by believing it and desiring it. It may initially best be practiced in smaller group settings. Usually, the first response is that many saints will not open their mouths. Perhaps an equally important concern should be that some will not shut their mouths.

If we have some clarity on the matters shared in this booklet it will make the matter more practically applicable. Sometimes to bring an understanding requires that we deal with misunderstandings. We have been conditioned to assume that a meeting of the church follows a format where believers gather, have a time of worship then there will be a time when by prior arranged leader will speak. This model is hardly related to the above passage.

While our usual format may have a place for “church meetings,” for corporate gatherings we must change a mindset by sowing seeds of understanding and cultivating corporate habits from infancy to maturity.

First we must understand that a corporate meeting is a time when various members of the Body who each have a measure of Christ come together to release that measure. This will allow Christ to express Himself through the Body. For this to transpire each member must be actively open to and receiving from Christ.

As an illustration: suppose I have a full picture which I have cut into sections. Now I give each section of this outline to a different person to present spontaneously. Each one must attain some grasp as to what the overall picture is, and then sense when their part should be presented to harmonize and develop the full picture.

This will require practice, but with an environment of encouragement, forbearance and experience, confidence will increase and the joy realized will be a great reward. If many of the appendages of a body have been in a state of atrophy it will certainly take time for it to gain normal function. The principles shared in the corporate hearing and corporate prayer will be very helpful in this journey.

FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT IN LEADING MEETINGS

There are also times when the church gathers for a specific time of ministry or teaching. The following has been our practice at Church of Zion for these types of meetings. During the week the key leaders are seeking the Lord for a word or a message for the congregation. On Sunday at 9:00am there is an open pre-service prayer at the end of which everyone present is given opportunity to share briefly if they feel they sense something from the Lord.

Next the leadership team, pastors with spouses and about eight to ten leaders gather to discern what the Lord may have on His heart for the meeting. One or several may have prepared a message; others may have a word or a vision. Everything is laid before the Lord to sense what is on His heart. Usually there is a general agreement and a confirmation that the message prepared by a certain one is the Word for this hour. Or there may be a sense that the Lord has something else in mind. This process takes only about 15 minutes.

During the worship time and actual meeting the leaders sit close to each other so that if anyone senses the Spirit moving in a different direction they can confer with each other. This is often sensed while in the Lord's presence during worship. Sometimes the message planned will not be delivered. Each one has learned to hold things lightly and trust that the Holy Spirit can lead more clearly through the corporate counsel, then through personal agenda. Persons from the congregation may share with the leaders if they sense they have a timely word. This will be considered in light of its timeliness and profit to the Body.

As we are ready to lay down our agenda and allow the Holy Spirit to be in charge, over and over he surprises us and takes us beyond what we had planned or thought. In this way every meeting is an exciting adventure!

A HEALTHY BODY IS COMPREHENSIVE

Like the human body so the corporate Body is very comprehensive. The body's immune system detects foreign or destructive elements. It responds positively to what is health enhancing. Each part grows and moves in relation to others and in proportion to its place in the body. When sickness or injuries happen, it will immediately begin the process of self healing.

If the corporate Body is healthy it also has an "immune system" which will readily accept that which is positive and constructive and resist what is negative. When pain or injuries occur through offence or misunderstanding the healing oil of the Spirit will generate self healing to the Body as a whole and to the members in particular. For the body to be healthy it also needs exercise. This includes the continuous moving and functioning of all the members in their God ordained place and according to their gifting.

Furthermore a Body will recognize its' true leaders and shepherds. They will have a sense of trust, security and respect toward such, whether they have a title or not. They may obey the appointed leaders out of obligation, but they will sense the warmth and fatherly or motherly love from the real shepherds who lay down their life for the sheep. Truly the Body is an amazing organism! If the Body is indwelled by the Spirit and is alive and well we can trust the Body.

BODY INVOLVED IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Certainly there must be leadership in a congregation. While we need an environment where all can be involved and each allowed to function in their capacity with Christ as the head there is still a need for order and leadership. Let's look at some principles relative to leadership.

1. Plural leaders as a core team

Whether these are referred to as pastors, elders or otherwise it is best that there be at least three who form the primary leadership core. Ideally it could include at least three of the equipping gifts. If these persons are married it is ideal that both spouses be involved if possible. Spouses can often add a perspective and a balance. These oversee the congregational activities and find ways to activate the Body and endeavor to hear the Lord's heart coming through the Body as well as directly. They should deal with the more intimate and personal aspects of the church. While they may make final decisions these decisions should seriously consider the corporate voice of the Body. Decisions affecting the Body life as a whole should be clearly communicated with and agreed upon with an expanded leadership team.

Even if one or several are fully supported by the congregation they should not be regarded as employees of the others. They should love and honor one another as co-workers in the Lords' Vineyard.

2. A leadership team.

This should be made up of mature members who are active in caring for various parts of the Body. These are representing the heart and interests of the Body as a whole, and not simply their own interests or agenda. They should be representative to the extent that no one in the Body feels they have no access to leadership. At the same time their over riding desire must be to hear the Lord's voice and harmonize with the rest of the leadership rather than to cater to a particular interest group. Depending on the size of the congregation this group could number up to twelve. If there is a larger number due to time limitations some may well feel like spectators.

If a decision is immanent the team members, after clearly stating their view, should defer to and fully support the decision of the

core leaders. The Lord can accommodate and override a wrong decision more readily than healing a division.

3. Open Access to all.

In order to maintain a sense of ownership in the Body all members should have access to some level of leadership. When possible open meetings can allow sincere input. The saints must learn the difference between giving opinions and reporting what they sense that they may be hearing from the Lord. And, this must be presented as an offering not as a demand. Argumentation and debate prove nothing and only activate the flesh and promote the private interests of the debaters. They must also learn that the church is not a democracy where the majority rules. This means that voting is not a vehicle of choice any more than is a dictatorship.

If there is an awareness and appreciation for the different perspectives of those with different giftings defensiveness should be kept to a minimum. After leaders have sincerely heard the sense of the Body there are times when leaders must make a decision and this needs to be respected.

BEYOND FOUR WALLS AND MEETINGS

The last word in this booklet comes to me from my son Ron, the leader of a small home congregation. He tells me that the reason many have left large “churches” is because they want church to include and involve every day and every aspect of their lives, not just Sundays and meeting times.

I respond, “Thanks Ron, for this reminder. This demands that we begin to see that the release of the Body must be seen beyond the context of four walls and meetings.”

It further means that the gifts must be released to operate in the home, at work, at school and even at play. The pastoral gift can function on a ball team. Those who operate in “word of knowledge” can do so at work. Evangelists can mentor and train students to be evangelist on campus. Apostles can be apostles on city councils directing them in the way of righteousness.

Let’s let church be our way of life not just our way of meeting and let the gifts be active in our daily lives not just in our weekly meetings. In this way we can all be in full-time ministry.