The "Body of Christ" and Spiritual Gifts

Paul liked to encourage Christians to look upon themselves as the “body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24) and often uses the term "body of Christ" in his letters to refer to the local church (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24). Paul loved the small churches that he founded on his missionary journeys, and had a very definite idea as to how they were to behave in order that they would enjoy the full power of the Holy Spirit. If there is a uniform theme in those "body" passages, it is that the individual members in churches needed to yield to the corporate body.

In letters to three separate destinations, Paul used the "body" metaphor while discussing spiritual gifts. Why? It was because the spiritual gifts were the source of the power of the church, and these individual-centered churches were not gaining the full value of those gifts because they were interpreting the gifts in an individualistic, rather than in a corporate, way. In short, these Gentiles would have had God recognize and gift them as individuals so that they could each go out into the world and do great works with the Spirit's power and claim the credit for themselves.

But Paul had to tell them again and again that the gifts were always given in the corporate context, no one individual being given all the gifts. So God had set up the rules in such a way that the gathered people had to cooperate with each other, work corporately in order to discern God's will, appreciate the gifts of the other members of the church, use them for the common good, and, especially, to practice love within the church (1 Cor. 13)—something so important to Jesus that he made intra-church love a "New Commandment" in John 13:34, just before his trial and crucifixion. When the church functioned in this manner, all the credit for its accomplishments would go to God to His glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

A Special Spiritual Gift

The Bible teaches clearly that each Christian is given a special spiritual gift. This is a divinely determined and enabled spiritual capacity for ministry; and God desires we use it to fulfill His unique plan and purpose for us. We do not have a choice in the spiritual gift God gives us. God gives His spiritual gifts as He determines.

1 Corinthians 12:11 (AMP)
All these [gifts, achievements, abilities] are inspired and brought to pass by one and the same [Holy] Spirit, Who apportions to each person individually [exactly] as He chooses.

Each Christian is called upon by God to be faithful to exercise his spiritual gift in ministry. Exercising our gift is our responsibility, but producing the results are His. Therefore, assuming you have been responsible in the use of your spiritual gift, you cannot claim credit when the results are abundant, nor should you be discouraged when the results are less than you expected.

We do not need to know our special spiritual gift with certainty, before we can begin serving the Lord. Some have the gift of mercy, but everyone is to extend mercy to those who suffer. Some have the gift of teaching, but we must all teach from time to time in the classroom of life. Some have the gift of giving, but all of us are called to give back to God of our money, time, and resources. We must not become so obsessed with discovering our spiritual gift, that we do nothing until we know. Instead of waiting until God reveals our spiritual gift to us, we must all get busy working and serving the Lord because “faith without works is dead” faith (Ja. 2:26).

God will reveal our spiritual gift to us. As we get more involved in our service to the Lord Jesus, we will find that some of the things we do, we enjoy more and have a greater passion for, than others. Further, the results of those things will always be beneficial and affirmed by other believers.

By being aware of our emotional and spiritual response to what we have already been doing, and noting the results, God will help us discover our unique and special spiritual gift. We can, then, begin devoting greater and greater amounts of our time, energy, and resources to that specific area of spiritual service and be on our way to fulfilling God's unique plan and purpose for us for His glory. It is to that end, that HOCCC is devoted.

-Missionaries for Christ