

## Lesson 6 – What Is Expected of Me as a Member of GBC?

*“Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” - 1 Pt 4:10*

If you are considering committing to a local church, you most likely sense that God is moving in you and in the place you are attending. It is important however to remember that the health of a church will largely depend on you. As one author said, “the health of the local church depends on the willingness of its members to inspect their hearts, correct their thinking, and apply their hands to the work of the ministry.”<sup>1</sup> For GBC to be a healthy church, you must learn to walk in holiness, apply God’s Word, and use the gifts He has given you for His glory and the good of those He has placed around you.

In our culture, we are constantly trained to have a consumeristic mindset. We have been trained to think that we should have it “our way right away.” We are used to flipping through hundreds of channels on the television or selecting from countless made to order menus. If we bring this same type of expectation into a church, we will quickly be disappointed. Satan has a plan to create discontentment in our hearts so that we will become distracted from why we should really be there, to please God and serve others.

There will be times that we don’t enjoy the music style or sermon topics. There will be times when we may not agree with how a decision was made or the way a particular person responded (or didn’t) to us. Satan will do whatever he can to keep you focused on you. As you face these challenges, keep in mind that we are all sinners who are being transformed into the image of Christ. We grow by sacrificing our wants and desires for the glory of God and the good of others.

To help focus our minds on how we can glorify God and do good to others in and through the local church, we must always keep in mind that we have not been created to exist by ourselves, but rather God has designed us to work alongside other believers as we carry out His mission. No one Christian can serve the purposes of God by himself. He has created us to work together to fulfill His calling.

In the Scriptures we are told that once we come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), made a member of the family of God (Matt. 12:48-50; Jn. 1:12; Gal. 6:10), baptized into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), gifted by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pt. 4:11), and called to serve as a priest in God’s Kingdom (1 Pt. 2:4, 9; Rom. 1:6). In the following pages we will examine what it means to be a priest in God’s Kingdom, a part of the body of Christ, and be gifted by the Holy Spirit.

If we each learn to focus on these important ideas for the purpose of glorifying God by building up His Body, we will be a healthy church where people can grow in our love for God and others.

**God calls each of us to serve as priests wherever we go...**

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<sup>1</sup> *What is a Healthy Church Member?* by Thabiti M. Anyabwile, g. 15

**1 Peter 2:4, 9** *“As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

**Revelation 1:6** *“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”*

A priest is someone called by God to minister to people on God’s behalf. Under the Old Covenant, only the Levites had the honor of serving as priests in God’s work. Under the New Covenant, Jesus calls all believers to serve as priests. We each have the honor of ministering to those around us by serving their needs, proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed, and praying for them.

Being a part of the priesthood of believers requires a huge paradigm shift for most people. It is often easy to think of the paid ministers as the ones who are called to do all the work while the rest of us sit back and cheer them on. This is in complete contradiction to the doctrine of the priesthood of the believers. We each are called to serve God, no matter what our vocation. As a priest, we must first see our places of work as places of ministry in which God has put us to honor and serve Him.

God has called every believer to serve as a priest in His kingdom. This means that every Christian is in full-time ministry serving the Lord, whether inside the church or out in the community. Wherever we are, we must always be focused on Knowing Christ and Making Him Known.

### **God calls us to each do our part in the Body of Christ...**

**Romans 12:4–5** *“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

**1 Corinthians 12:4–26** (excerpts) *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men...The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...and we were all given the one Spirit to drink...But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”*

The analogy of believers being the Body of Christ is an amazing one. Paul’s metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 likens the community of believers as each being part of the Lord Jesus on earth. The church is to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. Through the power of His Spirit who lives in us, Jesus serves the needy, touches the outcasts, speaks to the

weary, and challenges the stubborn in heart. Though Jesus has gone to heaven to prepare a place for His bride (Jn. 14:1-3), He is still present today through His church.

In the human body, each part is intricately linked to the rest and each part is critical to the health and productivity of the whole. If one part of the body does not work as it should, the body becomes handicapped and unable to function properly. Unfortunately, the Body of Christ often appears handicapped because its members are paralyzed with fear, apathy, business, or selfishness.

A church will only be healthy if its diversely gifted members work together. This concept was at the heart of Jesus' high priestly prayer where He prayed that we "may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You..." (Jn. 17:21). In a culture that values independence, Christians are called upon by Jesus to have deep, authentic relationships, but also to work hand-in-hand in mutual dependence for the cause of the Gospel.

## **God calls each of us to use our Spiritual Gifts...**

### **What Are Spiritual Gifts?**

A spiritual gift literally is a "manifestation of the Spirit" (*charisma*).<sup>2</sup> This manifestation of the Spirit can be defined as a supernatural ability given by God to a believer through the Holy Spirit for the purpose of fulfilling the ministry to which he has been called. As priests who are part of the Body of Christ, we have been equipped by God with spiritual gifts to carry out specific ministries.

### **What is the difference between Spiritual Gifts and Natural Abilities?**

Out of His common grace, God gives unique talents and personalities to all people. Some people have talents like being able to sing, dance, play sports, work with their hands, or lead people in great causes. In the same way people have varying personalities. Some are out-going, some are more reserved, some are funny, and some are naturally intriguing. All of these characteristics are common blessings from God, but they are not related to the specific work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. It is true, however, that oftentimes our natural talents and spiritual gifts complement each other in unique ministry opportunities.

### **What is the Purpose of a Spiritual Gift?**

**1 Peter 4:11** *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone*

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<sup>2</sup> The word "charisma" means "that which is freely and graciously given." A "charismatic" then is one to whom the gifts are given. All Christians then are in the basic sense charismatic. In our day, the word "charismatic" however is predominantly used to describe a group of believers who focus especially on the sign gifts of healings, tongues, prophecy, and miracles.

*serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”*

**Ephesians 4:11–16** *”It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

The Scriptures compare the way a church is designed to work with the way each part of the human body is designed to work together (Col. 1:18, 1:24, 2:19; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4, 12, 16, 5:30; 1Cor. 12:12-31; Rom 12:5). Just as every part of the body is necessary, every Christian is vitally important to carry out the Gospel mission,

When believers use their spiritual gift, God does the following things:

- 1. He uses us to help build up His church.** (Eph. 4:12,16)
- 2. He uses us to strengthen and encourage one another.** (Rom. 1:11-12)
- 3. He uses our gifts to serve and bless other believers.** (1 Cor 12:7)
- 4. He uses our gifts to mature the church, protect it from evil, and radiate love.** (Eph. 4:16)
- 5. He uses our gifts to bring glory to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.** (1 Pt. 4:11, 5:4)

Simply put, the purpose of a spiritual gift is to bring glory to God and maturity to other believers.

### **How Do We Receive Spiritual Gifts?**

Spiritual gifts are given to all Christians by God through the Holy Spirit at the beginning of their salvation (1 Cor. 12:11). Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, and some people may have many (1 Cor. 12:11,18; Heb. 2:4; 1 Pt. 4:10). It is important to remember that God is the One who chooses who gets what gifts (1 Cor. 12:6, 7, 11,

18, 24, 28). We are given the gifts we have by God’s grace and can do nothing to earn or get a different gift (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4–7, 11).<sup>3</sup>

God has appointed people in churches the specific gifts that are needed for the overall health of the church. If we are dissatisfied with the gift God has given to us, we are sinning by coveting the gift God has given our brother or sister (1 Cor. 12:15-20). If we feel that we don’t need other’s gifts to help the church, others, or ourselves, we are sinning by being prideful and self-sufficient (1 Cor. 12:21-26). When we feel this kind of comparison, inadequacy, or superiority, we must humbly repent and submit to the way God has designed His Body to work.

### What are the Different Spiritual Gifts?

The NT contains six lists of Spiritual gifts. The following chart summarizes all the gifts mentioned.<sup>4</sup>

1 Cor 12:28	1 Cor. 12:8-10	Rom. 12:6-8, 13	1 Cor. 7:7
1. Apostle	9. Wisdom	2. Prophecy	22. Marriage
2. Prophet	10. Knowledge	16. Serving	23. Celibacy
3. Teacher	11. Faith	3. Teaching	<b>Eph. 4:11</b>
4. Miracles	5. Healings	17. Encouraging	1. Apostle
5. Healings	4. Miracles	18. Giving	2. Prophet
6. Helps	2. Prophecy	19. Leadership	14. Evangelist
7. Admin.	12. Distinguishing of Spirits	20. Mercy	15. Pastor
8. Tongues	8. Tongues	21. Hospitality	<b>1 Peter 4:11</b>
	13. Interpretation of Tongues		Speaking / Serving

The purpose of these lists is not to describe all the possible gifts, but rather to provide a survey of many of the gifts. The purpose behind this is twofold. *First*, the lists show the diversity within the Body of Christ. As we have already seen, we all have one purpose and one Lord, but we do not all have the same gifts and responsibilities within the Body. *Second*, the gifts are likely listed so believers can get an idea of what their gifts might be. As we read through the list, there are some ministries you may sense a certain passion for while there are others you know

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<sup>3</sup> Some within Christianity teach that we can ask God to give us particular gifts (usually tongues). GBC does not hold this belief. We believe that the verses which say “desire earnestly spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1, 39) are exhortations *to the community* to use of gifts that edify the whole church (1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 19, 23, 26, 31).

<sup>4</sup> This chart is from the *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, written by Wayne Grudem.

you don't have. By reading and praying for God to show you His plan, you will begin to sense His great desire to use you in His purposes.

### **How Can I Find Out What My Spiritual Gifts Are?**

One of the most important aspects of growing in maturity in Christ is discovering how God has uniquely designed you to serve in the Body of Christ. In recent years there some have created gift assessment tools to help people understand what their gifts are. These tools may be helpful in the initial diagnosis of your gifts, but they are by no means the best avenue or most exhaustive. The following list contains the most effective way to discover your gift.

- 1. Begin praying that God would show you what He desires for you to do**
- 2. Try serving in different ways to discover what you are passionate about and most effective in.**
- 3. Seek the counsel of church leaders and mature Christians who have wisdom. The confirmation of honest believers is the most effective way to discover your gifting.** (Acts 13:1–4; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6)
- 4. Reflect on how God is already using you to bear fruit.**
- 5. Understand that though serving the Lord can be tiring, you should expect to have a sense of accomplishment, energy, and joy if you are serving in your area of gifting.**

As you can see, the best way to find your place is to do something. We must be willing to put ourselves into service and be open to failure, struggle, and constructive criticism. Oftentimes people are too insecure with themselves to put themselves “out there” in faith. God calls us to stop focusing on ourselves and to place our focus and faith in Him.

It is important to understand that faithfully serving God in the area He has called you to is the most fulfilling thing anyone can do. God has created us to walk in certain areas of service (Eph. 2:10) and by doing this we fulfill the purposes He has for our lives. This is when we find true contentment, true joy, and true intimacy with our Creator.

### **Are There Some Gifts That are No Longer Given to the Church?**

It is quite appropriate that in the middle of Paul's teaching concerning spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), God dedicates an entire chapter to love. Discussions concerning spiritual gifts have caused much division in many churches. It is important for us to address this issue, but we must do so with humility and love.

There is a broad spectrum of how people answer the question of whether certain “sign” gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, miracles, prophecy, etc.) are still active in the church. This spectrum can be broken down into five broad views:<sup>5</sup>

1. **Cessationist View:** believes there are no miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit today. Sign gifts were confined to the 1<sup>st</sup> century during the foundation of the church, primarily by the Apostles.
2. **Open but Cautious View:** believes that the use of such gifts is possible today, but is cautious with their exercise of them. This view tends to exalt the basics of evangelism, Bible study, and faithful obedience, but is open to God working miraculously as He chooses. Though God may use miraculous gifts, they are not the main focus of this view.
3. **Charismatic View:** believes all gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended for today. There is some disagreement within this view regarding a “second baptism” and the role of speaking in tongues.
4. **Pentecostal:** believes all gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended for today. Christians should seek a “second baptism” which provides new spiritual power for ministry. When baptism occurs, they will speak in tongues as a “sign” of their baptism.
5. **3<sup>rd</sup> Wave View:** believes all gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended for today. The proclamation of the Gospel should ordinarily be accompanied by “signs, wonders, and miracles” as seen in the NT.

At GBC we align with the “open but cautious view.” We do not believe the Bible teaches the cessation of gifts,<sup>6</sup> but do believe the purpose of those gifts has changed from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. We believe God can do whatever He so chooses, but our primary responsibility is to walk in faithfulness in the basics. We do not believe “signs, wonders, and miracles” should be the focus of our ministry, but if God so chooses, we will certainly not resist Him. The following is a list of certain principles that may help to clarify any questions regarding our view of this subject.

1. **We do not believe that one gift is more important than another gift. The most important thing is that God be glorified and the Body be edified.**

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<sup>5</sup> Much of the information is taken from the excellent work *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today: 4 Views* from the Counterpoints series. (Edited by Gundry and Grudem). We recommend this book for personal study.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 should not be used to support the cessationist view. “The perfect” (13:10) in this text is the second coming of Jesus and not the “maturity of the church” or “completion of the canon of Scripture.”

2. **We do not believe in a “second baptism.” Baptism in the Spirit happens for all believers at conversion (1 Cor. 12:13). Speaking in tongues is not a sign of the second baptism.**
  
3. **We believe all people should use the gifts God has given them in harmony with guidelines provided in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 12:27-31). Uninterpreted tongues are not intended for use in the public assembly of believers and are not a sign of special blessing from God (14:13-33).**
  
4. **If someone believes to have a “word from God” (including an interpreted tongue) he should consult the elders who will hear and judge the word (1 Cor. 14:29-33, 39-40). If the elders believe the word is from God, it will be shared with the congregation.**

### **Graham Bible Church: Core Identities**

1. **We desire to be a people of Truth**

At GBC we value the fact that God has spoken. Because of our value for truth, we allow God's Word and devotion to Jesus to guide us in all we do. Our pulpit will always remain faithful to upholding the Bible as God's authoritative revelation. Our Bible studies, counseling, and service projects will all be done in a way that honors God's Word as truth.

## **2. We desire to be a people of Hope**

At GBC we believe we have great reason to hope because of God's love (2 Thess. 2:16). Our world often leaves people wounded and hopeless, but in the midst of this we can agree with the Apostle Paul who said, "we rejoice in our tribulations knowing...that our hope will not disappoint" (Rom. 5:3-5). Our commitment to offering hope to a world that has lost its way will be found in our preaching, counseling, and fellowship. God is working at this moment to restore wounded relationships, lift up those who are hurting, and heal broken hearts. GBC is committed to joining God in this quest.

## **3. We desire to honor the Family**

At GBC we desire to see fathers, mothers, children, and friends have deep, genuine community. We desire for people to trust, love, encourage, and challenge one another in Christ. We value God's passion for the family in the home and the family in the church. In light of this, we do our best not to overwhelm people with church schedules and countless activities. This allows people the time to develop friendships outside of Sunday morning fellowship. We encourage small groups and prayer meetings to foster more intimate settings than a crowded Sunday morning. We attempt to keep age segregation to a minimum and provide as many opportunities for whole family fellowship as possible.

## **4. We desire to be active in Missional Living**

At GBC we believe God has created each of us to uniquely reach our community and the world with the Gospel. We are each called to act as priests in our homes, community, and the world abroad. We should love those God has placed around in practical ways to help them see the Gospel in action. We each should constantly be praying for and pursuing after those God has placed around us to help them know who Christ is and what He has done. The ministry is not left up to the "professionals." By God's grace we each have the honor and privilege of making Christ known in our daily lives.

## **5. We desire to be a people of Dependence**

At GBC we believe what Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches, if a man remains in me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit; but apart from Me, you can do nothing." We believe that without God's blessing and protection, we will be consumed by our pride and the enemy's sinister plan. Because of this, we humbly depend upon God's Word for direction. We are dedicated to prayer throughout the week, at Sunday prayer meeting, and through other special prayer activities. We value humble dependence on God and commit to leaning continually upon His everlasting arms.