



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2018-19 Leader Commentary

Unit 3: God's Power and Me
Session 4: The Powerful Equipper (see pp. 156-159)

The Question: How does the Holy Spirit equip me for God's work?

The Point: I can do God's work with confidence because the Holy Spirit equips me.

Background Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Luke 12:8-12; Acts 8:26-40

Focal Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 8:26-29

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How does the Holy Spirit equip me for God's work?" and drive home this one truth: I can do God's work with confidence because the Holy Spirit equips me.

Focus on These Points

He Gives Me Gifts to Serve
(1 Cor. 12:4-7)

The Corinthian Christians struggled with spiritual maturity. And as a result, they also struggled with unity. One of their primary areas of dispute dealt with spiritual gifts. While Paul had made it clear that the Holy Spirit's gifts were designed to build the church and to promote unity in the body, the Corinthians tended to see gifts as a status symbol. For them, certain gifts were more desirable than others, and those who possessed those gifts felt superior to other Christians.

Paul was quick to deflate these expanded egos. He reinforced the true purpose of gifts, challenging the Corinthians to support one another instead of tearing one another down. In verses 4-6, Paul connected gifts to the Spirit, service (or ministries) with the Son, and working (activities) with the Father. In this way differences and unity coexist. The model not only works well within the church, but it also reflects the nature of the Trinity. Each member of the Trinity is unique in its responsibilities and works, but they are unified in mission and purpose. It is important to note that spiritual gifts are just that—they are gifts given by the Spirit. They are not earned, so believers have no reason to feel superior to others. And no gift is more important than any other.

Paul never denied the diversity of the gifts, but he was quick to remind readers that all those gifts came from the same Source: The Holy Spirit. In fact, the original wording put more emphasis on the distribution than the diversity, which places more emphasis on the Spirit than the recipient. He distributed spiritual gifts as He saw fit, and He intended for them to be used to promote health in the church, not division. Again, Paul emphasized the true purpose for the diversity. Gift and strengths were not provided to puff up a person's pride. Instead, they were given to support the "common good." This is the foundational statement in Paul's discussion about gifts. These gifts

should be used, but they should be used to help others—not to feed our personal pride. A self-centered approach only creates divisions, while an others-centered approach nurtures unity.

He Gives Me Words to Say (Luke 12:11-12)

From a public profession of faith to a public baptism to a life that stands in stark contrast to the ways of the world, believers are called to openly profess their commitment to and relationship with Christ. Jesus even said that those who acknowledge Him would be acknowledged in heaven. The fear of persecution plays a major role in tempting us to shirk Christ. In these verses Jesus went as far as promising that His disciples would face the same kind of persecution He faced on earth. Just as He was challenged and interrogated by the religious leaders of His day, they would face similar verbal altercations. As He said, the servant is not greater than the master (Matt. 10:24-25; John 15:18-21). And as one commentator has noted, with persecution and abuse, it is a matter of “when,” not “if.”

Jesus seemed to distinguish two different kinds of persecution. The reference to “synagogues” is strictly Jewish in nature. Meanwhile, the reference to “rulers and authorities” indicates a Gentile persecution. The New Testament makes it clear that the early Christians faced judgment from both courts. For example, in Paul’s case, the Jews actually used the Roman courts to persecute the apostle. In either setting, when those circumstances arose, the disciples would not need to rely on their own wisdom to get them through. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give them guidance and direction. When they were at a loss for words, the Spirit would speak through them. In some ways, this represents a partnership between Christians and the Spirit. As Christ followers immerse themselves in His Word, those truths are planted deep in their hearts. Then, as the need arises, the Spirit is able to bring those principles to mind and teach them how to apply them to their particular situation. In the immediate context of Jesus’ teaching, the disciples had three years of intense training. None of that teaching would go to waste.

He Gives Me Opportunities to Share (Acts 8:26-29)

In Acts 8, Philip was enjoying a great deal of ministry success. He had been driven out of Jerusalem and provided an effective witness to the people of Samaria (Acts 8:1-8). This persecution forced the early church to begin fulfilling the second piece of Jesus’ Great Commission (Acts 1:8).

The Christians had invested heavily in Jerusalem and Judea, but Philip was among the first to take the gospel to Samaria and move the church closer toward making an impact on the world. Yet, even with all the blessings of Samaria, the Spirit had other plans for Philip. The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role throughout Acts. In fact, it has been noted that the “Acts of the Apostles” should really be known as “The Acts of the Spirit” because of His prominence in Luke’s account. In addition to His presence at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17), the Spirit led Philip here and eventually selected Saul/Paul to become the church’s primary missionary (Acts 13:2). Here, the angel of the Lord prompted him to move south, past Jerusalem, to the desert

area of Gaza, essentially an oasis on the edge of the desert, approximately five miles south of Jerusalem.

The Spirit led Philip to a eunuch who served in the court of Ethiopia's Queen Candace, possibly as a minister of finance. Given what is known about the demographics of Meroe, it is likely that he was a man of color. He is portrayed as a God-fearer and was described as coming back from Jerusalem after worshiping. So, he was likely at least a follower—if not a convert—to Judaism. The fact that he was reading a scroll of Isaiah also indicates he was a devout follower, though Philip was going to show him the passage through a Christ-centered filter. The result was the Ethiopian's conversion, possibly spreading the seeds of the gospel to a foreign land.