

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

“Discovering Your Software”
(1 Corinthians 12)
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

MEMORY VERSE

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. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – THE INVISIBLE MAN SOFTWARE

Getting Started

Maybe you've seen the commercials, two guys meet poised for battle. The guy who is always on the left (John Hodgman), is dressed in a cheap poly blend suit, whose a little overweight, sporting some 70's horn-rimmed glasses. Sadly, he is the personification of a nerd in every way, minus the pocket protector and the tape holding his glasses together. He sheepishly proclaims, "I'm a PC" yet in every commercial he quickly succumbs to the enormous coolness of his arch rival (Justin Long) the young, together, yet understatedly hip adversary who so cavalierly proclaims with the greatest self-confidence, "I'm a Mac." In every ad much to the chagrin of Bill Gates, Dell, and HP, Justin, playing the Mac, emerges as a better, faster and more creative system than PC. Commercial after commercial the Apple Company makes fun of all the obvious weaknesses of the PC, like the need to constantly protect the PC from viruses and also highlights Mac's superior connectivity to other electronic devices. Now, before you accuse me of being a Mac apologist, let me assure you I'm not (I've never been able to afford a Mac and frankly all the cool functions would be lost on my lack of computer savvy). But, if the truth were told I'd like to be a Mac, they're way cool and who doesn't want to be in the in-crowd? I still have bitter memories of being picked last in every pick-up game in my early adolescence.

Now, by this time you may be thinking, ‘What does the battle between Mac and PC have anything to do with spiritual gifts?’ Well I’m so glad you asked! If you have had the pleasure of listening to Mile’s sermons on spiritual gifts he used a great 21st century analogy to help us understand a very supernatural and spiritual phenomenon. He compared spiritual gifts with computer software. Software applications help a very complex machine perform certain functions for the good of its owner. By the same token, when someone accepts Christ as savior, spiritual gifts are “downloaded” in very center of their being to bring glory to their creator and to serve the body of Christ.

What’s even more amazing is the fact that in the early church there was a Spiritual gift debate much like the Mac vs. PC war. When the first churches were formed and experienced the Spirit’s supernatural giftings they quickly became a source of competition and debate especially in the fledging church at Corinth. Some people felt proud to have the “more important” gifts, while others felt they had nothing to offer. Sadly, these attitudes are still prevalent today. But as Paul explains, not one of us has a reason to be arrogant or embarrassed. God has designed each of us differently to reflect the many parts of Him.

To begin this session with some fun, take the Mac vs. Pc quiz at <http://apps.facebook.com/areyouamacorareyou/> to find out which one you are.

Digging Deeper:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 14-26

1. When you hear the term *spiritual gifts* what images, words or questions come to your mind? What if you were an unbeliever, what images do you think this term would conjure up in your thinking ?
2. How many times in the verses 4-6 does Paul repeat that all spiritual gifts and all acts of true services come from the same Spirit of God? What point do you think that Paul is trying to make here?
3. In verse 7 Paul tells us that god gives spiritual “gifts for the common good.” What kind of impact should this have on our understanding and practice of spiritual gifts?
4. What do you think the differences are between “natural talents” and “spiritual gifts?” What are some of the dangers of not knowing the difference especially in the church? Individually?
5. In verses 14-26 Paul compares the Christian community to a human body. What can we learn about spiritual gifts from the bodies function?
6. If all gifts are equally important, why do we often feel we are less important and less useful?

Bringing it Home

Whether you feel more like a PC or a Mac, God has designed you to serve Him in unique ways. Only you can contribute what you were especially made for. For this last exercise pick a partner (that you know well) and go through the spiritual gift list (not an exhaustive list but should make for good discussion) and identify what spiritual gifts you see in them. As you go through the list think about a time when you saw the gift manifested in them and remind them how God has gifted them. Then go around the circle and see if the group agrees with your conclusions.

Gifts that communicate God's Word

Prophecy--The ability to publically communicate God's word regarding a specific situation with challenge, comfort and conviction so as to point people to Christ and his will.

Evangelism –The ability to communicate the good news of Jesus easily and naturally to unbelievers so that they often respond with faith

Apostle—The ability to plant ne churches and oversee their development

Gifts that educate God's People

Teaching—The ability to teach the Bible or train others in a way that causes them to learn and grow spiritually

Exhortation—The ability to care for and motivate others to bring out the best in them as they follow Christ

Wisdom—The ability to understand events and circumstances from god's perspective and share these in an understandable way

Discernment—The ability to know whether one is following the holy Spirit or the enemy.

Gifts that demonstrate God's love

Service—The ability to give practical assistance in a way people feel cared for, without being asked

Mercy—The ability to show comfort toward those who are suffering and sense their emotions in order to care well for them

Hospitality—The ability to make strangers feel welcomed and comfortable

Shepherding—The ability to walk with other through life helping them grow in faith and equipping them for service

Giving--The ability to give your resources away without feeling put out.

Gifts that celebrate God's presence (worship –prayer related gifts)

Intercession—The ability to pray persistently for others

Tongues—The ability to pray in an unknown language that is understood only by god or one who interprets

Gifts that support all four purposes

Leadership—The ability to bring out the best in others in their service to God; the ability to set vision, motivate, equip, train, or set an example of service in order to help a group reach a God-given goal

Administration—The ability to manage people well and organize programs and ministries effectively

Faith –The ability to trust God to act on God’s promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate; the willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a god-given vision expecting God to handle the obstacles