



EARTHLY ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HEAVENLY ASSIGNMENTS

Several years ago at Christmas time, I gave my wife a Christmas “wish list,” assuming I would get most of the gadget toys on my list. Christmas morning came and I began to tear into all my gifts. As I opened several boxes, to my surprise and disappointment, none of my gadgets were in the packages. In those, however, were useful things such as socks, shirts, pants, and a suit.

Many of us involved in growing churches make a similar assumption. We suppose that simply administering spiritual gifts inventories to our church members will automatically grow our churches both spiritually and numerically. While these inventories point to potential spiritual gifts and are helpful, they do not automatically assume our churches will grow. When used properly, however, they do have a distinct value.

It may sound strange for a person who has written a popular spiritual gifts inventory to write an article titled “False Assumptions About Spiritual Gifts Inventories.” However, after working with scores of churches, it has become apparent to me that spiritual gift inventories are vastly misunderstood. Following are three false assumptions I have discovered about spiritual gift inventories.

FALSE ASSUMPTION 1

Inventories definitely reveal gifts. The Bible clearly teaches Christians have received a spiritual gift(s) (Ephesians 4:7). However, spiritual gift inventories do not reveal specifically where one’s spiritual gifts stop and one’s responsibilities to Christian roles (i.e. —role or mercy or evangelism) and natural abilities begin. I have observed individuals who take a spiritual gift inventory and score high in four or five different gifts. When asked what they believe their spiritual gifts are, they simply take the scoring sheet and name their top five scores, assuming these are definitely their spiritual gifts.

Let me share an example. Jack took a spiritual gift inventory and scored high in evangelism. After completing the inventory, he told me he did not have the gift of evangelism. In college, Jack started a chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ, which stresses evangelism. Jack told me, “I know the gift of evangelism when I see it, and I don’t have it.” His life experiences, coupled with

his passion for non-believers, caused him to score high on the inventory relating to evangelism even though he does not possess the gift.

One possible reason for scoring high or low on a particular gift may simply be that words or phrases in the inventory either resonate or do not resonate when reading them. Many other factors could also account for scoring high or low in a particular gift.

FALSE ASSUMPTION 2

Spiritual gifts determine ministry. While it sounds neat to tell someone to take a spiritual gift inventory and based on the results we will help you find the right ministry based on your spiritual gifts. Completing the inventory and determining one's gifts is helpful in discovering a ministry. However, to best select a ministry opportunity, it would also be beneficial to discover other insights such as personality, abilities, optimal environment for ministry, passion areas, life experiences, spiritual maturity, time available for ministry to name just a few areas the JUST taking a spiritual gift inventory do not reveal.

Let me tender another example. John is in charge of the bereavement ministry in a large local church. On his inventory, John scored high in administration and low in mercy. Since taking the inventory John has been able to validate that he has the gift of administration. He also has determined he does not have the gift of mercy. If spiritual gift inventories and determining one's gift were the only criteria (which often they are in pointing people to certain ministries) in determining John's ministry, he would not be involved in bereavement ministry. **However,** John's life experiences have given him a passion for his ministry. John and his wife have had a miscarriage, lost a child carried to full-term, and had a four-year-old child die of cancer. John used his life experiences and his spiritual gift of administration, along with his passion for those who have lost loved ones, to create one of the finest bereavement ministries in America.

Bottom line –Spiritual gift inventories are a wonderful asset when church leaders and those taking them understand their value and limitations.

COUNTERING FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

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It is important to note that spiritual gift inventories are a part of discovering one's gift(s). But, the following principles are just as vital if not more vital in the discovery of one's spiritual gift(s).

- Believe you have a spiritual gift(s) – I Corinthians 12:7
- Ask God to reveal your spiritual gift(s) – James 1:5
- Explores possibilities (get involved in ministry) to determine your spiritual gift(s) – I Corinthians 12:2
- Listen to teaching by other Christians on spiritual gifts – Colossians 3:16
- Evaluate your effectiveness in ministry – John 15:8
- Expect confirmation from the Body of Christ – Galatians 2:9
- Examine your feelings – Psalm 37:4
- Examine your motives – Proverbs 16:2