Spot On #22

👉Restoring the Hebraic understanding of God's Word.
👉Reemphasizing obedience-based loving trust in our Lord Jesus.
👉Reaffirming the way of our Lord that glorifies our heavenly Father.

Figuratively, the center of the bullseye is the point around which everything else revolves.

Fellowship Revolves Around The Lordship Of Jesus And His Spirit's Gifts!

The Newer Testament often uses the term “fellowship”. It's derived from the Greek word *koinonia* — “holding something in common.” Among the religiously-mired, fellowship generally refers to having the same general beliefs and behaviors. And with the proliferation of denominational divisions within Christianity, the definition of fellowship has expanded far beyond people’s belief systems. Think about how “fellowship” has been watered down. If two or more individuals from two or more different denominations take part in anything together, it's considered "fellowship", or more specifically "ecumenical" — their mutual participation conveys an ***aura of unity,*** as in evangelism crusades.

At its core, however, authentic biblical fellowship revolves specifically around our Lord Jesus as the only Head of His Spirit-empowered called-out ones. We've previously written, "Reliance on spiritual empowerment is one of the most distinguishing differences between the **Lordship-committed** and the **religiously-mired**. Spiritual empowerment is a key facet of our Lord's *division of labor* in His Kingdom.” Our Lord's called-out ones, the *genuinely* born again, each have an active part in serving Him and each other. When a whole faith community is using their spiritual gifts, they are authenticating the Spirit's presence in the fellowship family. This important indicator shouldn’t be overlooked. Notice below that Paul stipulates the cooperative process our Lord intends in training His called-out ones. The apostle also identifies the facets of maturity in Christ that would be recognizable:

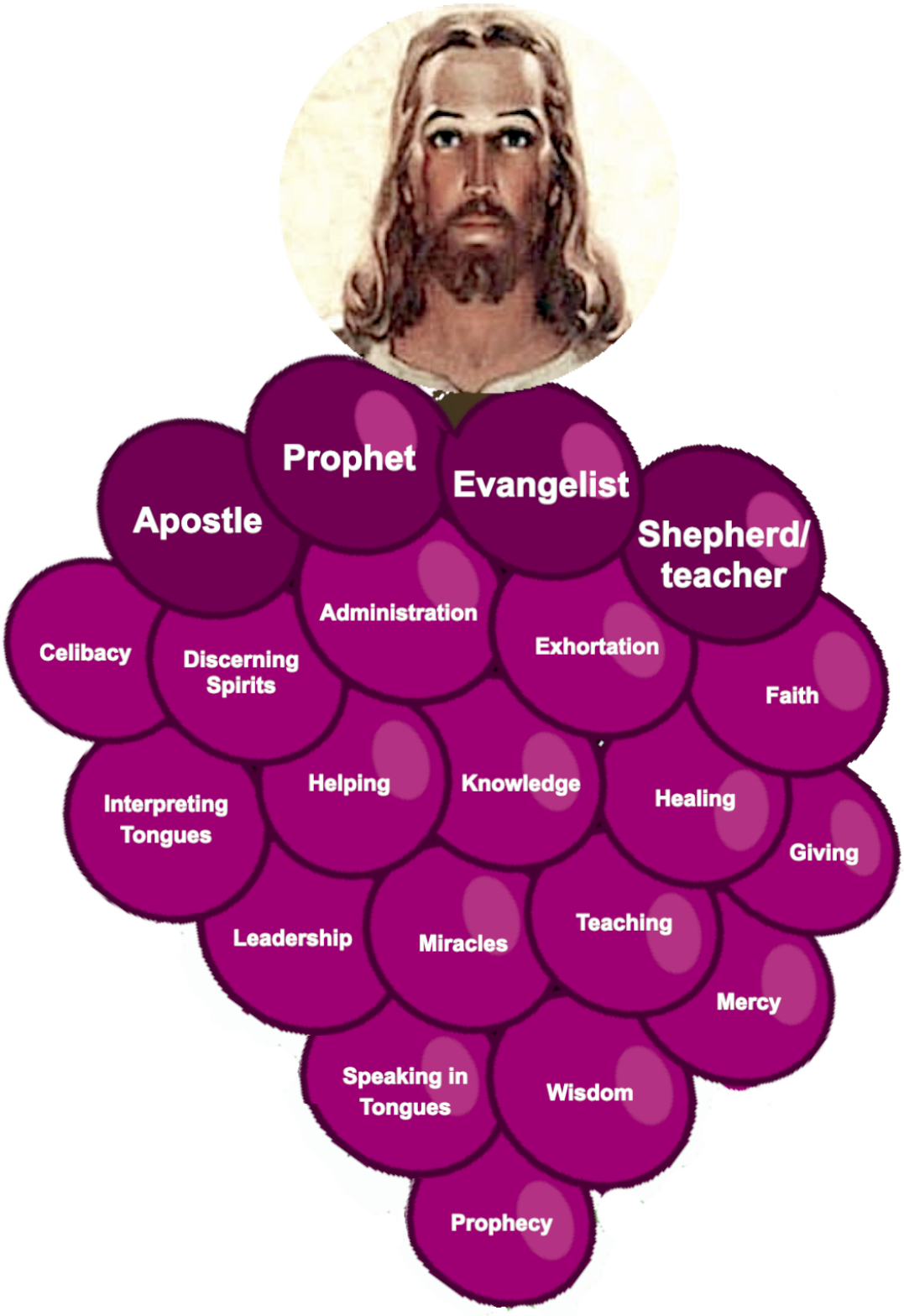
“And Christ Himself **gave some as *apostles*, and some as *prophets*, and some as *evangelists*, and some as *shepherd/teachers***, ➡to equip [literally, to perfect] His people for the work of service, ➡to building the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the full knowledge of the Son of God ➡and become mature, ➡attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, in order that we no longer be infants [suckling on the milk issues of God's Word; see Spot On #20], being blown and carried around by every wind of teaching [whether of creedal distinctions or worldly compromise] and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming [such as marketing God's Word for profit cited in 2Corinthians 2:17].

Instead, speaking the truth in love, ➡we may grow in every respect into Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ. ➡From Him the whole body, being fitted together and held together by every supporting ligament, ➡makes for the growth of the body and building itself up in love, ➡as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

In our book, ***Pastoring By Elders***, we note that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers were already a key part of the Hebrew synagogue system ***before*** the incarnation of Christ. So Paul had no need to define these roles. After our Lord Jesus ascended, these cooperative functions received the Holy Spirit's empowerment as Christ promised (Acts 1:4,5; 2:38,39). You can clearly see in Ephesians 4:11-16 that the alliance of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd/teachers would produce definite identifiable results in the body of Christ (see ➡ above). What were the distinctives of the four equipping gifts from our Lord which were already familiar to the Jewish people?

• An **apostle** (Heb. *shaliach*/Gk. *apostolos*) was a person sent forth to an appointed place on a mission. Not a position of dominance either through ecclesiastical office or anointing, an apostle is someone our Lord uses to

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).



See: Luke 24:49; Acts1:8; 2:38,39; 6:8; Romans 12: 4-8; 15:13; 1Corinthians 12:1-31; 14:1-4; 2Corinthians 4:7; Hebrews 2:4

complete a specific assignment. The Twelve, and then Paul, received special commissioning from Jesus. That this anointing was to continue beyond the original Twelve is indicated by other scriptural apostles such as Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:1,7).

• An ***evangelist*** (Heb. *magid*/Gk. *euaggelistes*) was a faith community planter and repairer. He not only shared the Gospel but also stayed on to gather together a faith family which he would leave in the responsible care of elder(s) – the shepherd/teachers. Timothy and Titus were evangelists and faith family planters: "But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5); and, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was lacking and appoint (anoint) elders in every city, as I directed you" (Titus 1:5).

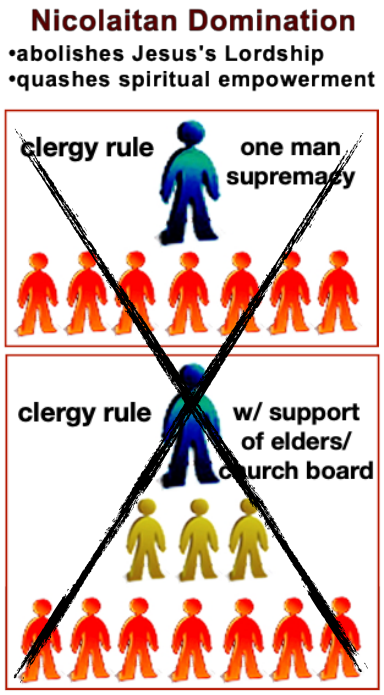
• A ***prophet*** (Heb. *esha'elohim* or *nabi*/Gk. *prophetes*) was someone to whom and through whom God spoke for the benefit of His people. Prophets generally functioned beyond the confines of the Hebrew synagogue, while Paul expanded that work to include prophetic messages shared within worship gatherings. The prophet may be sent by our Lord to foretell a future event (Acts 11:28). Or, he may be used to correct or rebuke unconfessed sin. The prophetic anointing also represents our Lord's mercy through His redemptive emissary to sinners commanding them to repent or else face the consequences.

• A **shepherd/teacher** (Heb. *zaken*/Gk. *poimen;* Heb. *rab*/Gk. *didaskalos*) was an older gray-haired man of leadership who imparted biblical wisdom and counsel to a specific group of people. He represented our heavenly Father's fatherly concern for His children. As a teacher he rightly divided the Word, helping those in his care to apply God's commands to their lives and to exhort them to action.

"Would Jesus belong to a faith community in which there were no apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers?"

In Teaching E-mail 58, ***Do You Dare Ask Yourself?*** (December 26, 2011) we posed the above question. How would you answer? If you say, "No, Jesus would not be part of a faith community that nullifies what He established for His body," can you be part of that community and not be found sinning against Him?

Far, far different than **clergy domination** and the passivity of the **religiously-mired** that it produces, our Lord Jesus envisions the *genuinely* born again functioning through the gift(s) His Spirit apportions them. It's He Who established the mutual cooperation of the spiritual gifts through discipling by the apostle, evangelist, prophet and shepherd/teacher. While anti-Semitism and its centuries of support for Nicolaitanism has prevented this cooperation so far, it's going to change!



If you are Lordship-committed or earnestly seeking to be, you must look to the Holy Spirit indwelling you to find out how He has empowered you according to the gifts listed in Scripture. Whether in a marriage or a faith community, you'll find that it's the mutual cooperation of the spiritual gift(s) that enable you to fulfill Father's divine purposes. Too many couples have undermined their marriages by not discovering our Lord's Kingdom purpose for their union, which is often recognized by their combined giftings. The same holds true for faith communities. Below are two anecdotes from our past when Mike was counseling leaders in the religious establishment prior to our journey to Israel:

😀 In his discussions with various religious leaders, Mike often emphasized the importance of identifying and using the spiritual gifts apportioned by the Spirit to every *genuinely* born again follower of Jesus. One particular pastor followed through on this counsel and handed out a "spiritual gifts survey" to his congregation, similar to the one in our book, ***God's Instruments For War***. After he got the surveys back, the pastor began meeting with individuals in the congregation to talk about their survey results. He discovered that none of the people who were actively serving were operating in their spiritual gifting(s). And when he asked each person why they were doing what they were doing, each answered, "Somebody had to do it!" Each one then agreed to have the pastor shuffle them around into roles that suited their gifting. This meant Spirit-empowered round pegs in round holes and square pegs in square holes. In the months that followed, a dramatic change took place in the congregation as they more fully exuded the essence of the Spirit of our Lord!

😪 After hearing about the wonderful cooperative changes that were taking place in the congregation cited above, another pastor passed out a spiritual gifts survey to his flock. But several weeks elapsed since he'd given out the survey, and only half had been returned. The pastor called Mike and asked what he should do. Mike suggested that he and his elders individually go through the congregation's membership list and checkmark which people they doubted were even born again. Afterwards they compared their lists of people they doubted to those who hadn't returned the survey—and the lists were almost identical! No wonder that folks they'd discerned weren't born again couldn't fill out the survey; they weren't indwelled by the Holy Spirit in the first place! Mike suggested that the elders help these individuals become *genuinely* born again and then help them discover their gifting.

There's Synergy In The Spirit-Empowered Division Of Labor

What do we mean by synergy in the Spirit-empowered division of labor? Synergy is the greater result that mutual cooperation yields than can be achieved by each person alone. The sum is greater than its parts. It's absolutely crucial that you realize that almost all of God's commands in the Newer Testament are given in the plural. This means that His commands are collectively directed at you and your spouse and/or your faith community to put into practice together. Why would these commands be given to us in the plural if our Lord Jesus didn't intend for us to live them out together? The answer to this is especially vital when it comes to the mutual cooperation of the spiritual gifts His Spirit apportions to each person in our Lord's family. By grace,

- EVERY follower of Jesus has a gift or gifts apportioned to him or her.
- EVERY follower of Jesus is responsible to EXERCISE those gifts.
- EVERY follower of Jesus has a gift, therefore ALL should be encouraged.
- NO ONE has all the gifts, therefore ALL should be humble.
- All gifts are FOR the one Body, therefore ALL should be harmonious.
- All gifts are FROM our Lord, therefore ALL should be content.

"As God's fellow-workers we also urge you not to receive His grace and then do nothing with it" (from 2Corinthians 6:1)

Keep in mind that every spiritual gift is given by the Holy Spirit through grace. And each gift functions most effectively through someone who reflects the humility and character of our Lord Jesus. To help you become more Christ-like, our heavenly Father uses ***trials*** and ***suffering*** in your life to transform you because He loves you as His own son or daughter and wants you to mature in obedient trust. This singular biblical reality of God-permitted trials and suffering is completely contrary to the "personal gratification/self fulfillment" aspirations which Humanism has infused into Christianity. Peter encapsulates the importance of suffering in the life of a *genuine* follower of Jesus:

• "Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin" (1Peter 4:1).

• "In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while if need be, you are grieving in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proving of your trust—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1Peter 1:6,7).

Our heavenly Father loves you so much that He puts you through fires of testing that purify your faith as genuine and provide you with humility for His Spirit to use you. In this way you won't rely on your own wits and strength and what has worked for you in the past. Nor will you sin by taking credit for what the Holy Spirit accomplishes through you. Anchor this for yourself and for those who are alongside you in your faith journey: The life of the Lordship-committed will be tested to determine if Jesus ALONE is all-sufficient for you ***and*** that your trust in Him is genuine.

Father does use various ways to help you be genuine and authentic in your trust walk. The two most common strategies we've observed are:

- to take away the props, rituals and even people that make you feel good about your Christianity. Will you complain? *Or* will you resolutely turn to Jesus as all-sufficient for you?
- at times our Father allows you the trial of being betrayed by friends and family in such a way that you can't defend or justify yourself. Again He's seeing if Jesus is all-sufficient for you.

We'll have more on spiritual gifts in our next Spot On. We encourage you to identify your own gift(s). If you can't discern any gifting from the Spirit (remember, we're not discussing talents or abilities like music or sports!), then determine if you're *genuinely* born again in our Lord's eyes. Being born of His Spirit is your primary need!

Mike & Sue

"To each person is given a particular manifestation of the Spirit that will be for the benefit of others… One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (from 1Corinthians 12:7,11).

An invisible God Person – the Holy Spirit – enters every *genuinely* born again person. Gifts of His empowerment are imparted to that individual by grace. These are not human talents, abilities or achievements. Rather, they are differing manifestations of the one Spirit. Before you were born our Lord foreknew you, your future, and how He intended to use you with your spouse and/or faith community. What you have in your control is your loving trust and whether you'll live obediently in fulfilling your Father's purposes which He's prepared in advance for you to accomplish (Ephesians 2:10; see also Philippians 2:13; 2Timothy 2:20,21).

We encourage you to first identify your own gifts and be used by the Holy Spirit. Then you'll find you no longer need to look for a faith community that's based upon creed or whether you like their singing, their youth group, etc. The Holy Spirit will put you where He can best use you to cooperatively fulfill your heavenly Father's will under the Lordship of Jesus. Now that's true fellowship and you can't ask for anything better!