

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

*Discovering Graces and Partnering
to Manifest the Fullness of Christ*



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Spiritual Gifts:
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INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The resurrected Man Christ Jesus has called for the making of disciples after the manner in which He made disciples: “that they might *be with him* and he might *send* them out” (Mk. 3:14). First and foremost, we are to be with Him, communing by His Spirit in us, who teaches us all things. Before we can do, we must be. We must learn our identity in Christ from an intimate, abiding relationship with Him. Then we will bear fruit; the life of Christ will come forth from within us.¹ He will move us into the world to love and serve and spend our lives for His sake.²

Spiritual gifts form a significant link between identity and activity. A spiritual gift is a particular grace deposited into our human spirits by the Holy Spirit, which enables us to manifest the life of Christ for His glory and the common good. Spiritual gifts are part of the core of our identities and the basis for our ministries. Therefore, Paul wrote, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Cor. 12:1). Spiritual gifts are so important!

This significance proves true individually and collectively. Jesus is building His Church³ as living stones⁴ – not brick and mortar, but people in relationship with one another. Man builds institutional churches by tasks and talents, but *Jesus builds His Church by spiritual gifts*. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, but not all the gifts. Therefore, each believer needs other believers, and the others need him (1 Cor. 12:17). Spiritual gifts compose Christ’s blueprint for arranging the parts of the Body (1 Cor. 12:18). These gifts of grace are given to meet others’ needs and to partner with one another in ministry.⁵

We must understand spiritual gifts. When we operate apart from them, at best we do good that does not last (Jn. 15:5, 16); at worst, we become depressed or frustrated in the propagation of soulishness and systems that hurt others and misrepresent Christ. When we discover our gifts and flow in them, we joyfully experience the life of Christ in a manner personally designed for us. When we cooperate with those who have different gifts, we manifest a more complete picture of Christ for the glory of God and advance of His Kingdom. May it be so!

¹ Jn. 15:1-17, 16:13-14; 2 Cor. 13:14

² Jn. 13:14, 35; 15:17; 20:21; Lk. 22:26-27; Mt. 16:24-25

³ Mt. 16:18-19

⁴ 1 Pet. 2:4-5, cf. Eph. 2:19-22

⁵ E.g. 1 Pet. 4:10 and 1 Cor. 12:29

SECTION ONE: GIFTS OF GRACE

Grace is the expression of favor. It is unearned and stems from the steadfast love and kindness of the giver. In Christ, “and from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace” (Jn. 1:16).

GRACE FOR SALVATION

Ephesians 2:8-9 reads, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Even while we were enemies, God loved us and sent His Son to be crucified for sins, raised on the third day, and exalted to the right hand of the throne of God.⁶ Then Jesus received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father and poured Him into believers (Acts 2:33). This rescued us out of Adam and placed us into Christ, and it placed Christ in us by the indwelling Holy Spirit.⁷ This gospel is the “word of his grace” (Acts 14:3, 20:32, cf. 20:24). “Through him [Jesus Christ] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (Rom. 5:2). We all receive grace for salvation that is the same and equal and amazing.

GRACE FOR GIFTINGS

We also receive grace for giftings. This grace is not identical for all. Romans 12:6 explains we have “gifts that *differ* according to the grace given us.” (The relationship between “gifts” and “grace” is more evident in the Greek: *charisma* and *charis*, respectively.) Each believer is given a personal endowment of grace that is unique to him. Each grace-gift is a dimension of Christ’s being. We all receive the fullness of Christ at salvation, but a disciple with a gift of prophecy, for example, has received a concentration of that aspect of Christ, the ultimate Prophet.⁸ A disciple with the gift of mercy has received an accumulation of that characteristic of Christ. The one with a gift of prophecy can and should still experience and express the mercy of Christ, but his strongest “flavor” and inclination will be prophecy. Every believer can prophesy – in other words, hear from God and share it with others (Acts 2:17-18, 1 Cor. 14:31, Jn. 10:27). Yet this is especially true of a disciple with a grace-gift of prophecy; he or she will do so instinctively and frequently.

⁶ Rom. 5:8, 10; 1 Cor. 15:4; Heb. 1:3

⁷ 1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 1:13, 2:6; Col. 1:13, 1:28

⁸ Fullness (Col. 2:10). Prophet (Deut. 18:18-19, Acts 3:18-26). This booklet is based upon the foundational belief that God still intends disciples to operate in all the miraculous gifts today. Sadly, not all agree. See projectOne28.com/gifts for Scriptural justification.

We believe Romans 12 lists seven spiritual gifts that are always resident because of grace, whereas 1 Corinthians 12 lists manifestations of the Spirit (v. 7), which come and go with opportunities (see pg. 7). Read this list in Romans 12 with excitement, because you are in there! Every believer has at least one of these gifts, possibly more, but not all the gifts. Jesus alone is the perfect, complete Man with all seven gifts. Yet when the Church, the Body of Christ, functions with all seven giftings in unity, then she most fully manifests the Person of Christ on earth.

ROMANS 12:3-8

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if *prophecy*, in proportion to our faith; if *service*, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his *teaching*; the one who exhorts, in his *exhortation*; the one who *contributes*, in generosity; the one who *leads*, with zeal; the one who does acts of *mercy*, with cheerfulness.

The Greek in this passage is particularly crisp. It could be freely rendered, "If service, serve! If teaching, teach!" and so on. The language shows God's energy: "Do it! Use your gift!"⁹

DEFINING THE GIFTS

We must avoid a cookie-cutter mentality concerning these gifts. One gift of teaching may look different from another. Also, one disciple with a grace for teaching may also be flavored by a grace of leadership, whereas another disciple may have teaching and prophecy. In the clustering of gifts, we often see one grace be more dominant than the other(s), according to God's purposes. And so, even with only seven grace-gifts, we are still unique. The graces may differ, and so will the believers' personality, maturity, anointing, authority, and assignment. Still, identifying gifts will be immensely helpful and foundational, if we paint with broad enough strokes and consider the other factors. The order of the list in Romans 12 does not seem to indicate level of importance or authority. Here, we will simply follow Paul's order.

⁹ *Young's Literal Translation* actually punctuates the main text with exclamation points.

PROPHECY: hearing and sharing God's current word

As we distinguished earlier, everyone can do this. Nevertheless, to some God gives grace to be especially sensitive to His many forms of communication, such as dreams, visions (in the form of still pictures or movies in the mind's eye), audible and inaudible words and phrases, inner sensings, and prophetic events.

Prophecy can be distinguished from teaching in that prophecy delivers words for a specific occasion or season, whereas teaching breaks down and makes understandable the written words of God, enduring in every season. (And yet prophecy must be consistent with the Scriptures, informed and governed by them, never contradicting them.) We need both. Scripture instructs Joe Christian to make disciples of all nations as a general truth, but it does not tell Joe whether or not he is personally commissioned to Egypt or Ghana or both or neither (cf. Acts 16:6-10). Joe can hear from the Spirit for himself, and disciples with a gift of prophecy can help.

SERVICE: acting practically to meet the needs of others

The grace of service stirs a disciple to do something on behalf of others, often without being asked and without expecting anything in return (Lk. 6:35, 14:14). This grace often comes with the wisdom about how to perform the task, and it often leads people to develop practical skills for various kinds of handiwork. This is a glorious piece of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve (Mt. 20:28). Even at His Second Coming, Jesus will serve us (Lk. 12:37).

TEACHING: understanding and making understandable the truths of God

The grace of teaching enables the disciple to first comprehend and interpret the truths of God in the Scriptures. The disciple sees how specific words are chosen to convey truth in each section and to connect it to the bigger picture. The grace then empowers the disciple to communicate truth effectively, helping other believers understand and apply the truths to their lives.

EXHORTATION: urging and encouraging faith and obedience

The grace of exhortation appeals to truths already shared and strengthens the resolve of others to act upon it. Teaching grace often leads with specific Scriptures and instruction concerning them, whereas exhortation often leads with principles. It often reminds. "You know this, and you can do it. God will do it through you; just

believe!" Caleb and Barnabas¹⁰ provide great examples, reinforcing previously established truth and imparting courage to remain faithful to the Lord with purpose of heart (Acts 11:23, 14:22; Num. 13:30, 14:6-10).

GIVING: supplying money or possessions generously to those in need

The grace of giving detaches the disciple from money and possessions, so there is cheerfulness in giving them away. Often the grace will manifest through supernatural leading about the amounts or forms of the giving, which increases faith in the receivers.

LEADERSHIP: empowering individuals and groups to fulfill their callings

The grace of leadership enables the disciple to see God's will and the steps to accomplish it. Others respond to the grace of leadership and follow. A leader can unify and utilize variously gifted people to accomplish a specific mission. The leader does not do everything himself; he serves others (Mk. 9:35, Lk. 22:24-27, Jn. 13:14). He discerns the roles others can play, and he helps position them to do their best.

MERCY: sharing the heart of Jesus, full of compassion and empathy

The grace of mercy reacts to needs with kindness. English translations weakly state that Jesus "had compassion," but the Greek literally says His guts went out for those people.¹¹ The disciple instinctively feels these deep-seated emotions, coming from a place beyond the soul, from the Spirit of Christ. The disciple is often sympathetic, assuming the best even in the worst. This grace often enables him to discern a hidden wound that needs mercy, even when others have not noticed.

All believers should generally exercise all seven grace-gifts, though some gifts will appear stronger than others, as apportioned (Rom. 12:6). For example, even if giving is not a primary grace-gift, every disciple will be led by the Spirit to give, even out of poverty (2 Cor. 8:2, 1 Jn. 3:17-18). What a glorious Jesus who fully embodies all of these graces!

¹⁰ Barnabas' real name was Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, meaning "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36).

¹¹ The bowels (intestines, heart, liver, etc.) were considered the seat of the intense emotions of love and mercy. H.H. Esser offers the literal as "his heart contracted convulsively." "Mercy," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, Ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971) 599.

SECTION TWO: MANIFESTATIONS, OFFICES, OBEDIENCE, AND TALENTS

Spiritual gifts have become confusing to many because of a lack of distinction between actual gifts and other dynamics. We hope to bring some practical clarity in this section.

MANIFESTATIONS

We believe the key word in the section of 1 Corinthians 12 is *manifestation*: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (12:7). This shows the subject is different from the indwelling grace of Romans 12. These gifts *come out* in specific moments as determined by the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 reads:

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (NASB).

Receiving a manifestation of a word of knowledge does not mean the disciple possesses the indwelling grace to always speak supernatural knowledge in the same manner someone with grace for teaching can always operate within that grace. A word of knowledge is given in a specific moment and may not be given in other moments. Jesus demonstrated this with the woman at the well in John 4:16-19. The Spirit manifested knowledge into the human soul of Jesus¹² in that moment: she had been married five times and was living with a man outside of marriage. Jesus manifested a word of wisdom when He answered the trick question about taxes (Lk. 20:19-26). The image of Caesar on Roman coins showed they should give the money to Caesar, just as the Image of God in Man means that men belong to God and should give their lives to Him.

¹² Commentators often mistake these things as evidence of Jesus’ Godhood. To be sure, Jesus was always and is still fully God the Son, even as He is fully Man. Jesus’ Godhood possessed all knowledge of this woman, but He had voluntarily submitted to never act out “of Himself,” but completely depend upon the Father’s revelation and power through the Spirit. Jesus’ divine mind did not communicate this word of knowledge to His human mind. The Spirit imparted the knowledge. See projectOne28.com/God-Man for Scriptures.

The momentary nature of these manifestations is also evident with the gift of faith. Generally, every believer must live by faith, trusting the unseen realities of God.¹³ Yet some are given a Spirit-manifestation of faith for a specific moment or issue. A believer may sense unique confidence in his spirit that God wants to accomplish a specific task, such as save a person or heal a person (see Paul in Acts 14:9). This is a unique faith given to provide a vessel for a specific work of God, and this differs from abiding faith.

We notice these manifestations often appear in congruence with resident grace. For example, one with the grace of prophecy is likely to receive a manifestation of a word of knowledge. One with the grace of teaching is likely to receive Spirit-manifested clarity for a word of wisdom. One with the grace of mercy is likely to receive a manifestation of healing, because he is especially in tune with the compassion that motivates Jesus to heal.¹⁴ So there is some overlap, but *it is helpful to maintain the distinction between always-resident grace and come-and-go manifestations.*

May we “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 14:1, 12:31), as both graces and manifestations, praying for them regularly.

OFFICES

Another point of confusion is the gift language in Ephesians 4:7-13.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men’ (Ps. 68:18)....And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the [works of service], for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ....

This passage does not state that apostleship is a spiritual gift given to an apostle. Apostleship is an office, a position in the Body of Christ (every office un-elected, commissioned by the Spirit; Acts 13:2, 4; 20:28). The gift is the apostle himself – Jesus gives apostles as gifts *to the Church.*

¹³ 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20, 3:11; Heb. 11:6

¹⁴ “So in nine out of eleven occurrences where this verb [*splanchnizomai*] is used of God’s compassion it refers to the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ as his motivation for healing!” Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: Discovering How God Speaks and Heals Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993) 279.

The apostle probably will have a combination of resident gifts of grace, such as leadership and teaching. He uses the grace-gifts to fulfill the commission to be an apostle and equip the Body.

The same goes for the others. A prophet obviously will have a grace-gift of prophecy from Romans 12, but in this passage, the gift is the person himself, given to the Church to help her with her own services. We frequently see evangelism listed as a spiritual gift, but the gift is not to the evangelist; the gift is to the Church. The evangelist will have some combination of grace-gifts from Romans 12, such as teaching, prophecy, or leadership, so that he can clearly and powerfully preach the gospel *and* equip the Body to also preach the gospel. Shepherd and teacher are combined with a different Greek conjunction than the others, which hints that they are one and the same person.¹⁵ A shepherd teaches, a teacher shepherds, and this office is also identified in Scripture with elder/overseer.¹⁶ Again, the person will have various grace gifts, but the position is a role in the Body.

This distinction also appears in the office of a deacon. The grace of service (*diakonia*) and the office of deacon (*diakonos*) are formed from the same Greek root. A deacon is a servant with a grace of service (and probably leadership, too [Acts 6:3]). Yet it is possible to have a grace of service, but not be appointed to the office of deacon (cf. 1 Tim. 3:10). Similarly, it is possible to have a grace-gift of prophecy, but not hold the office of a prophet, set apart to equip the Body. Such disciples still benefit the Body greatly, but they differ in anointing, authority, and assignment.

We need to discern this difference between gifting and office, because the Scripture says that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers are supposed to continue until the full measure of Christ at His second coming (Eph. 4:13). And we must remember these offices are gifted to the Church to equip the Church for her own works of service. No Scriptural division exists between professional clergy and secular laity. Man poorly invented that. Truly, every believer has ministry because every believer has a gift of grace and works prepared in advanced for them to do unto the glory of God in Christ (Eph. 2:10).

¹⁵ ESV footnote: Or *the shepherd-teachers*. Traditionally translated “pastor” only this once, from the Latin, inconsistent with every other translation as “shepherd” (e.g. 1 Pet. 5:4).

¹⁶ 1 Pet. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17; Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17, 28

OBEDIENCE

Frequently, certain demands on disciples are listed as spiritual gifts, which can be a damaging teaching if it frees others from the responsibility. For example, intercession is listed often as a spiritual gift, as if some have it and some do not. The Scriptures do not say this. On the contrary, the Scriptures say every believer should pray without ceasing on all occasions with all kinds of prayer.¹⁷ Every disciple is an intercessor because the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, and *He* is an intercessor.¹⁸ Hospitality is another example. Scripture does not call it a spiritual gift, so neither should we. Disciples with a grace of service or a grace of mercy may prove better at hospitality than others because of the motivation of their resident grace, but all believers are commanded repeatedly to practice hospitality.¹⁹ The safest approach, for the sake of all disciples obeying everything Jesus commanded (Mt. 28:20), is to call something a gift only if the Scriptures call it a gift.

TALENTS

Similarly, talents developed in the soul and body are often confused for spiritual gifts. For example, a gift of worship is not taught in the Scriptures. Someone motivated and equipped to lead worship probably has grace for leadership or service flavored with grace for exhortation or prophecy - combined with an inherent ability to hear pitches and to sing that has been developed into skill. It is worth distinguishing this, so the person is not pigeon-holed into an institutional position. He or she can have a more Scriptural foundation for identity that gives broader understanding of the services and activities that grow out of it (1 Cor. 12:4-6, more on page 14).

¹⁷ Eph. 6:18, 1 Thess. 5:17

¹⁸ Rom. 8:26, cf. 8:34, Lk. 22:32

¹⁹ Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:2, 1 Pet. 4:9

SECTION THREE: DISCOVERING YOUR GRACE GIFTS

We have so much more glory in us than we know we have. Christ in us is unending riches, treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the fullness of God!²⁰ The process of discipleship is allowing the words of God to divide soul from spirit (Heb. 4:12), so the Spirit can unpack Christ's glories into our souls and give understanding of what we have freely received (1 Cor. 2:12). Our gifts of grace are one such glory – in us before we recognize their presence. We typically manifest our grace-gifts before knowing we have them. Through discipleship, we learn to do it on purpose! We learn to be crucified with Christ and no longer live, but Christ lives through us (Gal. 2:20). We learn to recognize opportunities to give our grace away, and we grow in our ability to cooperate with the Spirit of Christ in us (2 Pet. 3:18).

It has been popular to identify gifts by taking a test or assessment that asks questions and formulates results. These surely can be helpful, if they are Scriptural (but they often make the mistakes covered in the previous section). However, it is difficult to arrive at an honest assessment because the questions are often so leading that we know what the result would be if we answered one way or another. Tests require cerebral analysis in a sterile vacuum, which is not the best way to discern the life of Christ in us. The best way is on the job, in the field, with needs before us.

RELATIONSHIPS AND NEEDS

Gifts of grace flow in the context of relationships and needs that put a demand on the Christ in us. Jesus responds to the needs of people through His disciples (e.g. Mt. 14:16, Gal. 6:2). In a Sunday morning equipping meeting, during a series on spiritual gifts,²¹ we presented an off-the-cuff skit to demonstrate the expression of graces in the relational setting of a house church. One sister shared her family's current (hypothetical) struggles with finances, in the midst of which a car also broke down. She also shared that the anxiety and tension affected her spiritual relationship with her husband.

In our hypothetical house church, the leader orchestrated order in the responses. The brother with the gift of mercy reassured her of the Father's compassion in her trials. The one with the gift of exhortation

²⁰ Col. 1:27, 2:2-3, 9-10; Eph. 3:8, 2:7

²¹ Sam McVay, Jr., "Cooperating Gifts" (8 Feb 2009). ProjectOne28.com/gifts contains audio and notes of the series.

shared she had been through a similar trial and saw God's provision, encouraging her to expect the same. The gift of prophecy relayed a vision that comforted and edified. The gift of teaching read two relevant Scriptures and applied them to her life to obey and experience God. The gift of service offered his time and skills to help fix her car. The gift of giving knew a specific amount of money to personally give to her and also drew in others to give. Through one small house church, the troubled saint had her needs met – and more importantly, she experienced a full measure of Christ, and her faith was strengthened. This cannot happen with an audience on Sunday mornings; this only happens with disciples in real relationships.

Therefore, to discover your spiritual gifts, you need to be in genuine relationships with other believers, learning about their lives and seeing their strengths and weaknesses, successes and struggles. Then, pay attention to what stirs inside of you. The Spirit of Christ will eagerly desire to respond to them. After multiple situations where a believer senses overwhelming compassion, for example, and releases it and blesses others, he could realistically think, "I probably have a gift of mercy."

Affirmation is important because we do not want to presume to have or to be anything apart from what God apportions us. A believer may want to have a gift of teaching and try to teach, even though he really has a gift of service. If others cannot affirm that he regularly brings clarity to the Scriptures for them, then he should reassess. But a believer gains confidence if he can hear, "Brother, you are such encourager. It really meant a lot to me when you shared that, and I've seen the impact your encouragement had on Jack and Diane." That kind of "Atta, boy!" from the Father motivates us to continue giving His grace away.

All that is above is likely primary in discovering gifts, but we ought not short-change the role of the prophetic. Through two letters Paul instructed Timothy to minister "in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you" (1 Tim. 1:18). Paul exhorted, "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim. 4:14).²² Some may benefit from a Timothy-like experience, in which elders lay hands on a believer in prayer and receive prophetic revelation of the person's gifts. Sometimes the Lord may want to speed up the process of discovery, so the disciple can get to work!

²² The gift was still given by the Spirit, revelation through the elders. Timothy's gift was probably teaching, given its emphasis in the immediate context (4:11, 4:13, 4:16) and in the whole of Paul's two letters (1 Tim. 1:3, 4:6, 5:7, 6:2; 2 Tim. 1:13, 2:2, 2:14-15, 3:10, 3:16, 4:2-3).

THE GLORY OF TRI-PART DESIGN

We are created three in one (spirit, soul, and body) in the Image of the Three-in-One God (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; Gen. 1:26-27, 2:7). The grace-gift is imparted into the human spirit by the Holy Spirit when the sinner becomes a born-again believer (Jn. 3:3-8, Eph. 1:13). But before the believer is born again, before he is born into the world, and even before the foundation of the world, God foreknew each one of us. He knew how He would knit together the body in the womb. He knew how he would fashion the soul's personality. He knew the combination of grace gifts He would impart in the spirit. He knew all the days of our lives written in His book (Ps. 139:13-16, cf. Jer. 1:5, Gal. 1:15, Eph. 2:10).

Our all-wise Creator built each of us with strengths in our souls to complement and magnify the grace in our spirits, and our bodies provide the platform of manifestation. God knew He would impart a gift of service in a certain brother, so He fashioned his soul to be able to acquire service skill sets. We see so many brothers who always loved mechanics, electrical work, or carpentry before they discovered God gave them grace for service, and that testifies of God's glorious plans in creation. A gift of teaching fits in a soul with ability to comprehend, retain, and regurgitate teaching. It is intelligence, but it is not merely intelligence; plenty of smart people have no desire to teach. That desire, also, is built into the soul by God.

We should sense destiny on our lives. A good God created us to enjoy works that He prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:10), and He equipped us from the womb to accomplish these works. When we discover our gifts, fan them into flame (2 Tim. 1:6), and step out in obedience, then we align our spirits, souls, and bodies with God's pleasing will, and we can experience His creative pleasure. He delights in heaven, "Yes, this is what I created him for! He is acting like My Son!"

**SECTION FOUR:
DIVINE ORDER, JESUS BUILDING A GIFT-DRIVEN CHURCH**

Jesus said, "...I will build My church..." (Mt. 16:18). Men do not plant and grow churches.²³ Church is not an institution to which we belong, nor a building we enter, nor a meeting we attend. The Church is people assembled in Christ. Jesus builds His Church as a spiritual house of living stones, which means people in relationship with Him and with one another. This community is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of Christ on earth. The Church is the greatest and only hope for the world today.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 shows the difference between the Church Jesus builds and what Man builds:

Now there are varieties of *gifts*, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of *service*, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of [*workings*], but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

Here is divine order: God imparts *gifts* of grace that enable disciples to *serve* others in practical *outworkings* of their grace. It begins with gifts. Jesus builds His Church by spiritual gifts, but Man (with sincere intentions for good, yet not led by the Spirit) is inclined to build by tasks and talents. The order is completely opposite.

God's Order

1. Gifts
2. Services
3. Outworkings

Man's Order

1. Activities and Work to be Done
2. Ministry Positions
3. Recruits who Fill the Positions

We know of program-based churches with a central committee to fill the other committees. The logic: "Surely we should do these good things! We need people to fill positions to make sure the good things get done!" Rarely do such churches consider spiritual gifts as foundational. The recruits may or may not be gifted to do the services and activities because what is desired is a warm body with a willing attitude. These people may serve faithfully in the institution for years and accomplish much good, but so much more is available for them. Individuals and churches can do better than determine ministry activities by the Tree of

²³ 1 Corinthians 3:6-17 is not "church-planting" in the popular sense. Paul sowed the word of God into human hearts and planted disciples on the foundation of Christ, teaching them to source life from Christ. This is much more impossible and much more glorious than incorporating a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

the Knowledge of Good (Gen. 2:17, 3:6, 11). That Tree gave everyone since Adam the ability to do Good apart from God. God does not want our good religious efforts. He wants faithful relationship, so His Spirit can bear fruit (Jn. 15).²⁴ Instead of inventing our own ministry activities, we discover God's pre-ordained will as the Spirit of Life unfolds Christ's grace and leads the way (Rom. 8). Ministries should resolve not to create positions based upon good ideas of what we should do for God. The believers we disciple will initiate their own pre-ordained ministry services when we help them recognize the grace of Christ already inside them.

SPIRITUAL WAR AGAINST A GIFT-DRIVEN CHURCH

The enemy hates us because we bear the Image of God, not because of our souls' strengths and ideas. The enemy can actually work with those. In the Garden, as the serpent, Satan attacked the divine alignment of spirit-soul-body. Eve's mind (soul) was led astray (2 Cor. 11:3), and Satan used her soul's unspiritual desires and strengths for his purposes. The enemy does not fear our Knowledge of Good (cf. 11:14), but it does fear a Man dependent and empowered by the Holy Spirit (e.g. Lk. 4:34).

Jesus' anointing overcomes the enemy (Lk. 4:18), and that anointing is placed in us by the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 2:20, 27; 4:4, 5:4-5). A major expression of this anointing is spiritual gifts. Therefore, the enemy schemes and strategizes against individuals and communities to quench the Spirit's expressions of grace-gifts.

Sometimes the particular warfare and the angle of attack a believer has experienced can confirm the gift at stake. Again, this is a limited list of examples, but we offer it in hopes that the Church will not be unaware of the enemy's schemes, giving it an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11).

PROPHECY: The enemy, sadly with the help of some church doctrines, tries to convince prophetic people they are crazy and need to keep their craziness to themselves. They can also be tempted to seek manifestations rather than the Spirit Himself. Then some can "go beyond what is written" after displacing the priority of Scripture as the rule of faith (1 Cor. 4:6; cf. 4:16-17; 11:2, 16; 14:33; 2 Thess. 2:15).

SERVICE: The enemy may try to persuade servants that they are being taken advantage of, so they will not freely serve.

²⁴ See the booklet *Spirit, Soul, Body* at ProjectOne28.com for in depth treatment.

TEACHING: The knowledge required to operate in this grace can so easily puff up the mind into arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1). Teachers can become religious Pharisees, demanding black-and-white agreement with their views and producing division in mean-spirited arguments that care more about facts than people.

EXHORTATION: Those gifted to inspire faith can be tempted to fear and discouragement.

GIVING: God makes some wealthy to give their money to the poor and ministers in Jesus' Name, but the enemy uses the American Dream and our culture to lure givers into wasting their money on toys and endeavors toward which God has not led.

LEADERSHIP: Leaders can be tempted to pride and criticalness of followers or lack thereof, at the risk of lording it over others and doing everything themselves, instead of delegating and helping others play their role with excellence.

MERCY: Sometimes mercy people can be so wired into their emotions that they become emotionally imbalanced. Then they can second-guess and try not to cry so much, quenching the grace.

We need to be alert and stand with the armor of God against these schemes (Eph. 6:10-18). In recognizing any of these types of hits from the enemy, we should never give up on the gift; we just need to mature in them holistically, benefiting from the Scriptures and genuine community to bring balance, truth, and loving expression of gifts.

ENVY AND INSECURITY, INDEPENDENCE AND DIVISION

Paul's psychology around giftings in 1 Corinthians 12 shows the enemy also exploits our souls' propensity toward envy and insecurity (12:14-20), independence and division (12:21-26).²⁵ We are often so quick to compare ourselves to others. Some may be proud after assessing themselves more highly than they ought (Rom. 12:3). But more often, in the area of gifts, comparisons cause us to want to be more like someone with a different flavor. It leads to insecurity about the worth of our own gifts and roles. However,

...if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the

²⁵ Sam McVay, Jr., "Cooperating Gifts" (8 Feb 2009). ProjectOne28.com/gifts

whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? (1 Cor. 12:16-17).

What a perfect analogy! Teaching grace is often the most visible of the Romans 12 gifts. Does that make it more important? No way! Teaching is vital, but what a boring, imbalanced, imperfect Church without the other gifts. Those up front need to be careful, and those behind the scenes need to take seriously God's pleasure and purposes in their gifts. Every gift is valuable and indispensable (1 Cor. 12:22). Every grace is Jesus.

People with the same giftings often gather. This is a significant contributor of factions and denominations, because we can deceive ourselves into independence from the other gifts. However, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ...But God has so composed the body... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." (12:21, 24-25). Relating to different personalities with different gifts can be challenging, but we must make every effort "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). We need each other. Every gift makes the other gifts better when we work together.

Every one of you: you are gifted in God. There is nothing more fun than fellowship with God and dispensing His grace. You are made to be a pipeline, not a collecting pool. Receive Christ's life, and then pour it out. Jesus wants to show Himself to the world, so He put Himself in the Church by grace. Link arms with brothers and sisters in Christ who have the other gifts, and we will begin sensing the manifest presence of Jesus Christ on earth for His glory and our good.

CONCLUSION: A MORE EXCELLENT WAY - LOVE

Paul followed his teaching on spiritual gifts to the Corinthians²⁶ with this, “Earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 12:31-13:3).

Every gift must be expressed through love. “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal. 5:6b NIV). The gifts are not ends in and of themselves. Jesus revealed, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The gifts are not given only for us to feel good about ourselves. The gifts are given so we can love others with them. We must care more about others than we care about our gifts. The gifts will cease, but love will remain forever (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

The fruit of the Spirit must be emphasized above the gifts of the Spirit, or the result will be the mess of Corinth - gifted carnality. The Corinthians had every gift (1 Cor. 1:4-7), but they were soulish and unloving (2:14, 3:1-4, 11:17-30). So Paul stressed love, the preeminent fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Religious people are concerned with the outward appearance, but Jesus, with the heart (Mt. 23:25-28, cf. 5:8, 6:19-21, 6:24, 12:34; Prov. 4:23).

We experience the Kingdom by first receiving the rule of God into our hearts.²⁷ Then we express it. First, we receive the love of God, and then we love God in return (1 Jn. 4:19). And therefore, we love those God loves with the love of God in us (1 Jn. 3:14, 4:12). That love will appear in the form of prophesying, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, and showing mercy. What is more, that love will appear in the form of laying down our very lives for them (1 Jn. 3:16).

²⁶ Paul also followed the gifts section in Romans with, “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (12:9-10).

²⁷ Sam McVay, Jr., “The Kingdom Within Hearts,” Parts One and Two at NewLifeEquip.com/The_Kingdom_Within_Hearts

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