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“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” I Corinthians 12:7.

The Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts

Central Truth: The believer’s God-given abilities should be used.

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Topic: Holy Spirit: Gifts of; Stewardship.

You are gifted! You have been gifted of God since the day of your spiritual birth. You are gifted with grace gifts that enable you to serve effectively in the work of God. You are a steward of those spiritual gifts.

Remember that a steward is one entrusted with the management of that which belongs to another. He is like the manager of a business who must answer to the owner or the board of directors.

Spiritually, a steward is one who has been entrusted by the Lord with resources (material or spiritual) which can be used to promote human welfare and the kingdom of God on earth. Our primary stewardship is of the gospel. God has given us resources to help get the gospel to all the world. He has given us spiritual gifts in our personal ministry of the gospel.

Spiritual gifts are misunderstood by most, ignored by many, and abused by some. Yet, they are essential to effective spiritual service. It is imperative that each Christian identify his gift, cultivate his gift, and devote himself to serving God in the area of the gift. That is “The Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts” and the subject of this study.

I. WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

A. A spiritual gift is not a natural talent. A natural talent comes by physical birth; a spiritual gift comes by spiritual birth. A natural talent relates to physical things; a spiritual gift deals with spiritual things. A lost person may have a natural talent; only a saved person can have a spiritual

gift. Be careful that the two are not confused. Service based on natural talent is never as fruitful or personally satisfying as service based on one's spiritual gift.

B. A spiritual gift is not spiritual fruit. The "*fruit of the Spirit*" is discussed in Galatians 5:22, 23. The fruit provides various expressions of Christ-likeness produced in the life of the Christian by the indwelling Holy Spirit. "Fruit of the Spirit" relates to character; the "gift of the Spirit" is a divine enabling for service. Fruit is what you are; gift is what you are able to do.

C. A spiritual gift is not an acquired skill. One may learn to play a musical instrument, or train the voice to sing pleasantly; but that is not a spiritual gift. A lost person may play an instrument or sing, but only a saved person can have a spiritual gift. One may develop his skill in order to exercise his spiritual gift more effectively, but training alone does not confer a spiritual gift.

II. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

A. The Holy Spirit confers the gift. The gift of any divine enabling is always "*by the same Spirit*" (I Corinthians 12:9), who divides the gifts to each individual as He chooses. We do not select our preferred gift. The Holy Spirit confers upon each one according to His great wisdom and divine design. All "*gifts of the Holy Ghost*" are "*according to his own will*" (Hebrews 2:4). He acts in total sovereignty in the distribution of spiritual gifts.

B. The Lord Jesus directs in the exercise of the gift. There are many different ministries involved in the list of gifts, but the same Jesus is Lord over all (I Corinthians 12:5). As "*head of the body, the church,*" He is the control center from which all bodily activity flows (Colossians 1:18). The teacher, evangelist, administrator, encourager, and every other worker in the kingdom of God is subject to the same Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The Father empowers each gift. Whatever our form of spiritual service may take, God puts the power in our service to get the results He desires (I Corinthians 12:6). His power enables us (Hebrews 2:4). His power "*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*" (Ephesians 3:20). God is involved in your spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit conferred the gift upon you. The Lord Jesus directs you as you exercise that gift in serving people. God the Father puts His power in your service when you follow in using your spiritual gift. That is the way to serve God effectively.

III. WHO RECEIVES A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

A. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. *“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man. . . . All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”* (I Corinthians 12:7, 11). *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (I Peter 4: 10). Who has received a spiritual gift? *“Every man”* (that is, every true Christian whether male or female) has been endowed by the Holy Spirit for spiritual service. Each saved person has a spiritual gift.

B. The spiritual gift is received on one's “spiritual birthday.” The moment one is joined to Christ, placed in Christ at conversion, he is enabled to serve God in some place of spiritual ministry. The believer has been gifted since the day he was saved, even if he has never known it before. He can serve God effectively as a member of the body of Christ.

IV. HOW MANY SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE THERE?

There are four distinct lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible. Romans 12:6-8 lists seven gifts: prophecy, ministry (serving), teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling (administration), and showing mercy. First Corinthians 12:8-10 lists nine spiritual gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, languages, and interpretation of languages. First Corinthians 12:28-30 lists nine gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments (administration), languages, and interpretation of languages. Ephesians 4:11 lists five gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Look for your gift in those lists.

The four lists together give a total of thirty spiritual gifts; however, there are duplications in the lists. (Prophecy or prophet occurs in each of the four lists.) When the duplications are taken into consideration, nineteen spiritual gifts are clearly identified in the Bible.

Those nineteen gifts should be identified as “sign” gifts (to prove that the message and the messengers are from God) and “serving” gifts. The sign gifts are temporary, while the serving gifts are permanent. God may give or remove sign gifts as He wills, but serving gifts are present at all times. Look for your spiritual gift among the “serving” gifts.

V. HOW DOES ONE DISCERN HIS SPIRITUAL GIFT?

There is no formula given in the Bible on how to discern which spiritual gift the Holy Spirit has conferred on you. But sanctified wisdom, based on the Bible, will guide you.

A. Knowledge — Know what the Bible says about the nature, number, purpose, and exercise of spiritual gifts. This is the first essential.

B. Faith — Believe that God has gifted you for service, whether you understand it or feel like it or not.

C. Prayer — Ask God to reveal which gift you have received. It is His will that you know and use the gift, so you can be sure He will answer your prayer (I John 5:14, 15).

D. Commitment — Be available to serve God in any area of service for which He may have gifted you. Do not try to bargain with Him concerning the gift of your choice. Follow the principle of Romans 12:1.

E. Involvement — “*Find a need and fill it.*” Look for an area where you are concerned that a ministry be done. Do it to the best of your ability and then evaluate what God did through you and the inner impressions He put in you. Were people helped? Did you find an inner joy in it? Would you be content if you never did it again? Do you feel that is the area in which you should serve regularly? Trust God to answer your questions. If you get a negative response in one area, try another. Do not stop until you know your God-assigned place.

VI. HOW DOES ONE USE HIS SPIRITUAL GIFT?

A. Use the spiritual gift to serve others, never for personal glory. When 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,*” it means that each person is endowed with a spiritual gift to use it for the common good, for the profit of all the rest, and for the benefit of others. Therefore, never use your spiritual gift for personal reasons, but always to serve others. There is a personal benefit in the use of a gift, but it is primarily intended “*not to please ourselves. Let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification*” (Romans 15:1, 2).

B. Use the spiritual gift in the context of the church. That does not mean that it must be used within the four walls of the church building. Most gifts will be used outside the place of meeting. But use your gift as a part of the ministry of one of the Lord's churches. God has set the gifts in the church (I Corinthians 12:28) and for the ministry of the church (Ephesians 4:12). Your gift can help the work of the church, and other gifts in the church can help you.

C. Use your spiritual gift with a sense of stewardship. “*As every*

man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (I Peter 4:10, 11). Do you see the stewardship obligation accompanying spiritual gifts?

D. Use your spiritual gift in dependence on the power of God. A spiritual gift does not have inherent power. It is empowered by the heavenly Father. He will not use an unclean vessel. So the power in the exercise of one's spiritual gift is dependent upon his personal relationship with God. Stay close to God if you would serve effectively.

E. Use your spiritual gift faithfully. Paul found it necessary to admonish Timothy, a preacher and missionary of long experience, to do that. *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee. . . . Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee”* (I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6). Having a spiritual gift does not mean one will use it. An unspiritual person may neglect a spiritual gift.

The body of Christ needs the ministry of each spiritual gift. You need the opportunity to serve God in the area in which He has enabled you. Your church can operate without your gift. But she will be like a person with only one hand, or without sight, or without hearing. She can continue to function, but her ministry will be limited by the loss of that one part of the body.

Get involved in service, even if you are not elected to an office in your church. Serve God by serving people in the name of God. Use the divine gift the Holy Spirit has conferred upon you. You are accountable to God. Find a need and fill it.

Questions

1. What is a spiritual gift?
2. How can you distinguish a spiritual gift from a natural talent?
3. How does the Holy Spirit confer the gift?
4. Why is Jesus director of the gift as “head” of the church?
5. How can you be sure you have a spiritual gift?
6. Which gifts are “sign” and which are “serving” gifts?
7. How can you discover which gift is yours?
8. How can you use your gift in your church?
9. What does I Peter 4:10, 11 teach about your spiritual gift?
10. What can you do this week to use your spiritual gift?