



“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24).

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit guides each believer in discovering and using his spiritual gifts.

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You want to be effective in the service of God, don't you? You will be effective in exact proportion to the extent that you discover, develop, and deploy your spiritual gift. That is why this week's study deals with discovering your spiritual gift.

You are gifted by the Holy Spirit. You can serve God in a way that will please Him and bring fulfillment to your own life. But you must discover which gift is yours and where you are to serve in the kingdom work.

Of all the lessons in this quarter of study, this is probably the most important. It matters not what you know about spiritual gifts if you do not realize that you are gifted and if you do not identify which gift is yours. Please pursue the study with careful attention. You might read these comments more than one time. You can come from this study with guidelines that will enable you to identify your area of service for God in view of how the Holy Spirit has gifted you to serve. What greater contribution could a study make to your Christian life?

As you study, keep the central truth of this lesson in mind: “The Holy Spirit guides each believer in discovering and using his spiritual gifts.” There is no magic formula, but the following guidelines will aid you in identifying your spiritual gift.

I. KNOWLEDGE

A. Know what a spiritual gift is. A spiritual gift is not a natural talent, though it may coincide with the ability of a natural talent. A natural talent comes by physical birth; a spiritual gift comes by spiritual birth. Neither is it an experience or an emotion. One does not “feel” a spiritual gift. It is not a developed skill, as one would learn how to play a piano or be trained in the techniques of good writing.

A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity to serve effectively in the service of God. It is God making us capable. It is an ability which we would not have apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

B. Know how a spiritual gift is received. A spiritual gift does not come because we seek it, pray for it, or discipline our lives until we merit it. Therefore, we cannot select which gift we choose and receive it. The Holy Spirit acts in total sovereignty and gives to each believer the particular spiritual gift He chooses for each to have (I Corinthians 12:11). Prayer and discipline are involved in our developing our spiritual gift, but not in our receiving it. The Holy Spirit confers our spiritual gift at our conversion, before we know anything about it.

C. Know what spiritual gifts are available. Study the lists of spiritual gifts, noting each one as named in the Bible. Romans 12:6-8 lists seven gifts: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy. First Corinthians 12:8-11 lists nine gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues. First Corinthians 12:28-30 lists nine gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, tongues, interpretation of tongues. Ephesians 4:11 lists four office gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/teachers. There are nineteen gifts clearly identified in those lists. Look among those for your gift.

Be aware, however, that not all of those gifts are operative today. Some gifts ceased upon the completion of the writing of Holy Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Look at the list of serving gifts in Romans 12:6-8, and you will find your gift there.

II. FAITH

Believe that you are gifted. Believe it, not because you feel like it or have seen evidence of it, but because God said it. He said that the Spirit manifests himself through the spiritual gift He gives to every Christian (I Corinthians 12:7). He said that the Spirit gave a gift to each believer personally (I Corinthians 12:11). He said that every one of us has received a gift and should use it as a good steward of the grace of God (I Peter 4:10).

Would God have said it if it were not so? Would He have said it over and over if you had no gift? Believe it because God said it.

It is natural for you to look at yourself and say, "I don't feel like I have a spiritual gift." But feelings are in the area of the flesh, and spiritual gifts are in the area of the Spirit. A noted musician may not feel gifted (as if his fingers tingled with his talent), but that does not change the fact. Take God's Word for it and do not depend on your feelings. The devil can influence your feelings. The Holy Spirit confers your spiritual gift.

III. PRAYER

Ask God to show you which gift He has given you. Ask Him to make clear what is your area of ministry in His kingdom. He will answer that prayer.

"This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14, 15).

Can you serve God most effectively apart from your spiritual gift? No. Does God want you to serve Him effectively? Yes. Is it God's will for you to discern and develop your spiritual gift? Yes. Then you can ask Him to show you which gift is yours and He will do it.

Do not pray, "If it be Thy will; show me Thy gift." The issue is already settled concerning His will. Such prayer is not a sign of humility but of doubt or perhaps even rebellion. Knowing that it is His will for you to know and use your gift, pray with full confidence that He will answer.

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). The problem does not lie in God's will but in your desire and your faith.

But in your praying, keep your motive pure. James wrote, *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss; that ye may consume it upon your lusts"* (James 4:3). Is that possible in praying about your spiritual gift? Tragically, yes. One may desire to use his spiritual gift for personal promotion, to show superior spirituality, or to prove a theological point. There is only one motive in discerning and deploying one's gift: that God may be glorified through the ministry we render to people in the name of God. The Christian must no longer live for himself but for Him who died for him and rose again (II Corinthians 5:15). God will respond to the prayer which has that as its motive in asking.

IV. COMMITMENT

Pray with this spirit: “Lord, show me which gift is mine and I will serve You in that ministry whatever it might be.” Anything less than that is not true humility and will not be heard. We have no choice in the selection of our particular gift. We have no choice in the area of spiritual ministry where we are to use our gift. So the spirit of commitment required is to “sign the contract” with God before He writes in the terms. It is to be willing to serve Him in any ministry, to any people, in any place, at any time. That is true Christian commitment.

“But how can I know when I am committed to God?” someone asks. Romans 12:1-8 gives the finest answer to be found in the Bible. Christian commitment has five elements.

(1) I am committed when I am available to God. *“Present your bodies a living sacrifice”* (verse 1). (2) I am committed when I am separated from the evil world system. *“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (verse 2). (3) I am committed when I am humble in spirit. One is *“not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think”* (verse 3). (4) I am committed when I am participating as an active member of the body of Christ. *“We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”* (verse 5). (5) I am committed when I am involved in using my spiritual gift. *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, . . . let us . . .”* (verses 6-8).

Commitment means to be available and obedient. If you meet that standard, you can expect God to reveal your gift.

V. COMMON SENSE

Evaluate your life and Christian work objectively and completely. Look first at your personal desires. What do you desire to do for the Lord? To what area of service are you drawn? What ministries appeal to you and what ministries are definitely not yours? God will work through your commonsense if you will give Him opportunity. Ask Him to guide your mind as you evaluate your Christian life.

Second, look at the needs of others. Are you moved to help the sick and lonely (the gift of mercy or serving)? Are you motivated to get things organized and working smoothly (the gift of administration)? Are you burdened to see people saved (the gift of evangelism)? Are you desirous to help those who lead (the gift of helps)? Are you inspired to support those

who serve (the gift of giving)? God works through your desires.

Third, evaluate your experience of ministry. What type of spiritual service do you enjoy most? Where is your greater spiritual success? In what areas do people look to you for help? Where do you bless others the most? Let God lead you through affirming your work to the area of your gift.

VI. INVOLVEMENT

Get involved in some area of spiritual ministry where you feel God has directed you. Try it over and over. Then ask questions concerning that type of ministry.

“Did I find a sense of fulfillment and joy? Would it be difficult for me never to serve there again? Did it benefit others through their spiritual growth? Did it contribute to the unity of the body?”

The witness must be twofold: you must have an inner witness of divine approval, and those to whom you minister must have an inner witness of blessing through you. The question is not whether you were nervous or whether you did the best possible job. It is whether God approved your work in that area of ministry.

If you get a negative response in one area, try another. Remember this principle: “It is no disgrace to fail in an area of Christian ministry for which the Holy Spirit has not qualified you.” Don't give up. God can and will use you.

When you have determined which gift is yours (where you are to serve God), cultivate your ability in that area. Attend training classes, read books, and listen to tapes. Become all you can be in that area of service. And devote the rest of your life to serving God in the ministry He has assigned you. Do not stop with this study. Discern, develop, and deploy your spiritual gift in ministry through your church.

Questions

1. How are spiritual gifts related to your service for God?
2. How is knowledge related to your using your gift?
3. How is faith related to your using your gift?
4. How is prayer related to your using your gift?
5. How is commitment related to your using your gift?
6. How is common sense related to your using your gift?
7. How is involvement in serving related to your using your gift?

8. What do you feel your personal spiritual gift to be?
9. How will you determine for sure the area of your gift?
10. What will you do about this subject now that this series of studies is ended?