

Discover and Serve

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**Extract from
Chapter 5. Spiritual Gifts
(pages 30-43)**

Definitions

Administration

A particular ability to organise/manage the affairs of the church or any part of its work, with skill and wisdom so that it reaches its goals safely, and functions effectively and smoothly.

Those who know me will recognise that I have often exercised this

gift. However, that is not the reason for it being first on the list - I am handling the gifts alphabetically!

Based on 1 Cor 12:28 the Greek word for administration is *kubernesis* which parallels with *kubernetes* in Acts 27:11 where it is translated as 'pilot' (nautically speaking - there were no planes in Biblical times!). A pilot is one who navigates the vessel using his knowledge of winds, currents, tides and potential underwater hazards. But he does not set the ultimate destination; that is determined by the captain (or the merchant who hired the vessel).

There are many biblical examples of good administrators eg Joseph, Daniel and even Jesus as he organised the Feeding of the 5000¹.

Celibacy

Abstaining from sexual relations or a particular ability to be single for the sake of the Kingdom.

This is not a negative gift, it is positive. It frees people to concentrate on the Lord's work. Paul wished all could have this gift, but recognised that all are not like him and that each has his or her own, different, special gifts from God (1 Cor. 7:7). Jesus also spoke of this gift being exercised 'for the kingdom's sake' (Matt 19:12).

Nevertheless, all Christians are called to be celibate at some stage eg before they are married, if married but away from their spouse, if widowed. Not having the gift does not mean you are free to sin!

The gift does not stand on its own but is combined with other gifts for the more effective service of the Lord. There are men and women who, through history, have given themselves to the advance of the kingdom in remarkable ways often through having more time available without the responsibilities associated with being married (1 Cor 7:32-35).

¹ I deal more fully with the gift of administration in companion booklets in the 'Feeding 5000' series: *The Gift of Administration* and *Event Management – Jesus style*.

Craftsmanship

The skill, ability and knowledge to work creatively in various materials to the glory of God, often for the practical advance of the kingdom.

During the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 35, 36 there are frequent references to skilled men and women using their gifts both to construct and decorate it. In Ex 35:31 we read '...and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship...'. Often there is also a heart element to this - '...the women whose hearts stirred them to use their skill...' (Ex 35:26).

In the New Testament Dorcas is remembered for the 'tunics and other garments' she made, presumably as a blessing to the community (Acts 9:39).

Other passages to study could include 1 Kings 7:14 (building Solomon's palace), 1 Chron 22:15 (building the temple).

Discerning of spirits

Ability to 'see' and identify/perceive the motivating spirit behind words, actions, events or thinking, and to judge whether such spirit is divine, human or demonic

This is one of the nine gifts Paul writes about to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:10). It is exemplified in various New Testament passages such as Acts 13:8-10 where Paul confronted the magician, Elymas, who was seeking to turn away the proconsul from following the faith and in Acts 16:16-18 where Paul cast the spirit of divination out of a slave girl who was 'greatly annoying' him.

This gift can serve to protect an individual or a church from deception and/or counterfeits of Satan. It is also used in conjunction with the exercise of deliverance/exorcism. However, the gift is not only for 'special' situations; all believers are urged to distinguish between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (1 John 4:1-3, 6).

Evangelism

The ability to share the gospel effectually, often accompanied by signs and wonders.

One of Jesus' final acts on earth was to commission the church, through the early disciples, to take the gospel into the world and make disciples (Matt 28:19), the often-called Great Commission. We are all called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and to be ready to give reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15).

However, there are some who have a burning passion, given by the Holy Spirit, to take every opportunity to witness. Most important, they also have a train of people who have come to faith through their witness. For a gift to be authenticated there must be conspicuous fruit.

The gift of the Evangelist, like the other four ascension gifts, is considered at the end of this chapter.

Exhortation/Encouragement

The ability to stimulate the faith of others and to encourage, comfort, strengthen, counsel and admonish them in such a way that they are helped to live a life worthy of God.

It is good for all believers to be alert to opportunities to bring encouragement and to exhort people to deepen their walk with God and to become more mature, thus building up the body of Christ.

In Rom 12:8, exhortation (or encouragement, depending on which Bible translation you use) appears in the list of spiritual gifts, which Paul exhorts the reader to make full use of. The root word carries the feeling of a person standing alongside another to support, help and motivate him to do his best. Sometimes this may involve a word of correction.

Faith

Total assurance that God can and will do certain improbable or impossible things despite apparent evidence to the contrary, and to

speak and/or act accordingly.

Faith is another spiritual gift mentioned in the 1 Corinthians 12 list (1 Cor 12:9). It is, of course, a frequently used word in the Christian context for many different situations e.g. a) Saving Faith. We are all saved by faith: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith' (Eph. 2:8). b) Faith to live by (trust). If we are to please God, we are all to continue having faith: 'And without faith it is impossible to please him ...' (Heb 11:6). c) Faith meaning a creed or doctrine. (Eph 4:13; 1 Tim 6:20, 21; Jude 1:20).

The spiritual gift of faith is typically applied in a particular situation or context such as Moses opening the Red Sea (Ex 14:21, 22), Jesus cursing the fig tree and then teaching on faith to move mountains (Mark 11:14, 20-24) or Paul exercising faith at the time of shipwreck (Acts 27:21-26).

Giving

Ability to give money, time or resources freely, generously and cheerfully to alleviate the needs of individuals and the church, and to further God's work.

Giving is listed as a spiritual gift in Romans 12:8. However, it is a quality which we are all encouraged to demonstrate as taught in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Indeed, giving and generosity (i.e. 'excel' in giving 2 Cor 8:7) reveal our hearts, a reflection of what Jesus did for us when he gave himself.

But, as a spiritual gift, there is an added dimension. I know of people, some on small pensions, who so love to give that they sacrifice their own comforts to be able to give to others. I believe that God is particularly pleased with such people who receive grace to exercise this gift in such a self-sacrificial way.

Healings

Ability to serve as an instrument of God's supernatural healing(s) (that is without the aid of natural means or human skill) - whether physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

In 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 we read of gifts of healings; this is plural. Therefore there can be various kinds of gifts and of sicknesses. Healings may be instantaneous, gradual, complete or partial. If partial, we may have to continue praying (Mark 8:22-25).

About two years ago a woman in our church was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The specialist told her to go away and put her affairs in order; there was nothing the medics could do after a full range of chemotherapy had been unsuccessful. A group of close friends, filled with the Spirit and compassion, gathered regularly with her, worshipping God, praying and following the lead of the Holy Spirit. Gradually she regained strength. After many months of persistent prayer, including the laying on of hands and the exercise of authority of the Word, she was declared healed (which included the disappearance of an implanted metal stent) by the amazed and unbelieving consultant who had sent her away to die!

'And these signs will accompany those who believe ... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well' (Mark 16:17-18).

Helps

Ability to give strong support and relief in practical ways to those in need, particularly the disadvantaged.

This gift is listed in 1 Cor 12:28 alongside miracles, healings, tongues etc. According to Robertson & Plummer's International Critical Commentary the Greek word means 'to take firm hold of someone in order to help, to share in or carry a burden, to take a burden on one's self'.

In Acts 20:35 Paul says that 'In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."' Perhaps the gift of helps is particularly related to those who notice people who are vulnerable and seek to get alongside them with loving care and support: '...I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matt 25:40)

Hospitality

Ability to welcome and to serve, perhaps providing food and shelter to guests or strangers, with love, liberality and graciousness, so that they feel 'at home'.

Hospitality is referred to in Rom. 12:13 shortly after the list of spiritual gifts. Although it is not explicitly listed as a spiritual gift, it is generally recognised as such and its specific mention in the context of gifts in 1 Pet 4:9-10 supports this view.

This is a gift that many do not recognise they have. They assume that everyone is hospitable, just as they are. And yet it is one of the most valuable gifts, especially at the 'front door' of the church, both literally and figuratively. It is a gift that communicates love and concern to the stranger and may well be the means of bringing them into the security the church should offer. And who knows; you might even find yourself entertaining angels (Heb 13:1-2)!

Interpretation of tongues

Ability to interpret the substance of what has been spoken in a tongue, though not necessarily to give an exact translation.

The gift of tongues is one of the more conspicuously 'supernatural' gifts and, for many, it is confirmation they have been baptised in the Spirit. And yet, by its very nature, it is the least easy to understand. And so, when tongues are used in the context of the church, Paul directs that either the speaker or another person should bring an interpretation (1 Cor 14:13, 28). If no one with that gift is present the speaker in tongues is instructed to restrain from using that gift.

Leadership

Ability to see ahead and to set direction in accordance with God's purposes, and to inspire, draw and lead others so that they work together to achieve those purposes.

This is another gift in the Romans 12 list (verse 8). Spiritual leadership is quite different from secular leadership, a manifest example of the 'upside down' Kingdom.

Jesus exemplified this and explained that spiritual leaders are to be servant leaders in contrast to the people's experience of secular leadership who impose their authority. He himself 'came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Matt. 20:25-28).

Attitude is vital. A leader goes ahead, but not too far. He draws, inspires and motivates; he does not push or drive from behind, nor drag, coerce or manipulate. He has foresight. He lays down his life for those who follow, seeking to help them achieve their full God-given potential.

Martyrdom

Ability to suffer voluntarily/willingly and joyfully for the Lord - even to death.

When Paul urged us to 'earnestly desire' spiritual gifts this would probably not be the top of many people's lists! And yet in 1 Cor 13:3 we read 'If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing'.

I think we would all be aware of people down the ages who have laid down their lives for the gospel and great blessing has resulted. I think of men such as Jim Elliott and Nate Saint whose deaths, along with two others, significantly contributed to the salvation of many of the Huaorani people in Ecuador. The story is told by Jim's widow Elisabeth in *Through Gates of Splendor*² and depicted in the film *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* (2005).

Is this a gift? These men certainly were aware of the possible dangers associated with evangelising the Huaorani people so I think that it can be justifiably stated as such.

Mercy

Ability to feel and demonstrate compassion and understand not just in strong feelings of sympathy but especially in a cheerful way with appropriate acts of kindness to bring relief to those who are suffering

² 1957. Republished by Tyndale House 2005, 2014.

and/or in need.

This is another in the Romans 12 list of gifts. Like Helps and Encouragement it is usually a quiet, hidden gift that people often do not recognise in themselves; they just love caring for people in need.

The attitude of heart is vital, as is a sensitivity to the feelings of those being helped. There is no sense of judgement towards those to whom the gift is extended but rather a deep concern to help them, however undeserved such help may appear to be.

Paul exhorts us to use this gift *cheerfully* (Rom. 12:8). This is perhaps particularly relevant with this gift as many of those being touched by it have suffered an undue amount of sadness and hardship.

From the gospels we can all gain encouragement: 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (Luke 6:36) and 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy' (Matt 5:7)

Miracles

Ability to effect acts/demonstrations of divine power which override, alter or contradict the 'laws' of nature

Referred to three times in 1 Cor 12:10, 28-29 Paul seems to want to emphasise the importance of this gift. Miracles are an authentication of the gospel, signs that cause people to wonder.

The gospels are of course liberally scattered with reports of the miraculous at the hands of Jesus - feeding 5000, calming the storm etc. These are then continued in the Acts record where the disciples perform mighty acts.

But they are not the exclusive property of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, too, there is an abundance of miracles at the hands of such as Moses and Elijah.

As a provocation consider what Jesus said: '...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do...' (Jn 14:12).

Pastoring

The care of people and the ability to discern how to help them fulfil their potential in God and lead life as He intended.

Psalms 23 encapsulates what pastoring is all about. 'The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. your rod and your staff, they comfort me.'

Pastoral gifting is expressed in an ability to bring someone into a place of security, ensure they are being fed and built up, that their soul is 'restored' and that they are walking a righteous path. Someone with this gift is passionate about helping people live healthy fulfilling lives.

Prophecy

Spirit-inspired communication of God's immediate heart, mind and counsel for the strengthening, exhortation and comfort of His people, and also, on occasion, to an unbeliever e.g. to reveal His knowing of them and His love, or to warn or convict of sin.

Paul's letters to the Romans and the Corinthians give us insight to this gift as used in New Testament times (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:2). It is one of the gifts most commonly referred to in scripture, one not to be despised, but weighed and tested in the light of Scripture (1 Thess 5:20-21), and by those able to discern (1 Cor 14:29). It may speak about the present or the future.

It is important to distinguish between the gift of prophecy, which all believers are to 'desire eagerly' (1 Cor. 14:1) and the gift of the prophet to the church as a person (Eph 4:11). The gift of the Prophet, like the other four ascension gifts, is considered at the end of this section.

Serving

Ability and heart to serve others and carry out practical tasks for them joyfully - seeing and doing what needs to be done.

Servanthood is at the heart of the Christian's walk. In Phil 2:6-7 Paul exhorts us to be like Jesus who 'made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant'. And in Gal 5:13 we are all called to serve one another. In Matt 20:25-28 and Lk 22:24-27 Jesus teaches his disciples the 'upside down' principle that greatness is demonstrated in servanthood.

Servanthood requires humility: 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all' (Mark 9:35). This gift is often exercised in a quiet, hidden way, doing what needs to be done 'behind the scenes' to help others. Someone with this gift will often identify a need and get on with the task of meeting it without being asked, and before others have noticed.

Teaching

Ability to instruct and to explain clearly to others the truths of the word of God in such a way that they grasp their meaning, and are equipped and provoked to apply them to their lives.

This is another of the gifts referred to by Paul in Rom 12:7. Teaching is not merely the giving of information for head knowledge but it is to bring about changes in people's lives. Someone who is well taught lives out what he or she has learnt; they do not just have a notebook full of good notes.

Teaching does not have to be in the form of a lecture; it may be in an informal or everyday setting, or one-to-one - 'apprentice' style. Jesus exemplified this as he taught the disciples on the move e.g. about prayer and how to pray (Lk 11:1-13).

The gift of the Teacher, like the other four ascension gifts, is considered at the end of this chapter.

Tongues

A Spirit-inspired ability to speak spontaneously in a language, whether human or angelic, without having learnt it.

This gift differs from all the others in that it may be used in two ways, one of which is for the benefit of the bearer of the gift. The other gifts

are for the benefit of others than the bearer. When spoken privately the gift is for self-edification; if spoken publicly in a gathering of the church, it is to be interpreted and is for the building up of the Church.

It is a gift to be prized and used. Paul said, 'Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy' (1 Cor. 14:5) and 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in the church ...' (1 Cor. 14:18-19) i.e. a public context.

Many would see speaking in tongues as a confirmation of being baptised in the Spirit. Although this could be considered the norm it cannot be incontrovertibly proved from scripture. In the reports of people being baptised in the Spirit in Acts there is usually explicit evidence they spoke in tongues, but not always e.g. Acts 2:3-13; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 9:17-19; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:1-6.

Voluntary Poverty

Ability voluntarily to give up money, material possessions and a comfortable lifestyle, and to live amongst the poor of a particular society in such a way as to be one with them in their poverty, in order to serve the Lord i.e. to be as Jesus to them.

Writing to the Corinthians Paul teaches of the over-riding importance of love, whatever the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 13:1-3). In this list of gifts he includes 'giving away all I have'.

Further, consider Jesus who, 'though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich' (2 Cor 8:9).

This gift is distinct from the gift of giving where, though having and continually using that gift, one may still be rich and so be able to continue to give liberally.

The gift of voluntary poverty is perhaps an intense example of a general teaching by Jesus in Luke 14:33 where he teaches that we are to count the cost of discipleship: '...any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.'

Word of Knowledge

Revelation, given by the Holy Spirit and not by ordinary means, of facts or information beyond the previous knowledge of the person to whom it is revealed concerning a situation, person or thing, for a specific purpose.

This is a gift that Paul refers to when writing to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 12:8; 1 Cor 13:2). It is a gift that often unlocks a closed or hidden situation e.g. Peter confronting Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). It is also used to identify people who have, perhaps, a need of healing; it raises faith and expectation since it gives the assurance that 'God knows about my situation.

Word of Wisdom

Insight, inspiration or revelation as to how best to apply given knowledge to a specific situation or need in accordance with God's mind and purposes.

This is another of the gifts referred to in the Corinthian letter (1 Cor 12:8). We are all told to seek God's wisdom e.g. James 1:5 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.' But there are times when God gives a 'peculiar wisdom' such as when Solomon was confronted with the need to judge between two women who had recently given birth where one of the babies died and both women claimed to be the mother of the living one (1 Kings 3:16-28).

Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher

I have not included these above as they have various distinctives that differ from those gifts already described.

First, these gifts are referred to in Ephesians 4 as Jesus' ascension gifts (Eph 4:8, 11-14). In contrast to the gifts considered so far these are expressed in the form of those whom God has appointed to the church to 'equip the saints (i.e. believers) for the work of ministry'.

Second, these spiritual gifts are embodied in people, and thus each becomes part of a person's identity, particularly in a context where that person is recognised as having one of these gifts.

Third, these are gifts that are recognised in someone as they mature and become involved in active ministry. Because of this they are not amenable to the treatment of this Discover and Serve Course which often is a starting point for someone who may only recently have come to faith.

Fourth, they are usually expressed trans-locally i.e. not only within one church. Clearly Paul, carrying an apostolic anointing, travelled widely in fulfilling the commission to bring the saints to maturity across many churches.

Do these gifts carry some implication of status? A resounding 'no'! They do not represent the top of the promotional tree or an office that is achieved in response to hard work. As we have seen above, a gift is a gift, and these gifts are entrusted to people to deliver as and through themselves, and through the abilities God has entrusted to them, such as the ability to lay a good foundation in the church (1 Cor 3:10).

For further reading on the ascension gifts, particularly the apostolic gift, I recommend *The Spirit Filled Church* by Terry Virgo³ and *Fathering Leaders, Motivating Mission* by David Devenish⁴.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of this section on Spiritual Gifts within the Discover and Serve series I would remind you that all gifts are from God as He wills; they are of no credit to the bearer who has the responsibility to deliver them for the edification and building up of the church. Let us be faithful in fulfilling the responsibility God has entrusted to us.

³ 2011 Monarch Books

⁴ 2011 Authentic Media

Administration in the church



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