

V. Spiritual Gifts in Biblical Perspective  
Discovering, Developing and Deploying our Spiritual Gifts  
“Understanding the Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts—Part 3”

1 Corinthians 12:7–11

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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This is God’s Word. It is inerrant, infallible and sufficient for all the matters of life in Christ. I Corinthians 12:1-3 says *[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed (ignorant, agnostic). [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [3] Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.*

*[4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service (ministries), but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities (effects), but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. [7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [8] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This has certainly been a challenging season for me in my walk with the Lord but in these last couple of weeks there is one thing I keep coming back to in ministry and that is the preparation for God’s Word to be preached. These expositional series around this thematic series of spiritual gifts has been so refreshing and invigorating for me to get back in the Scripture regarding this subject and how reclaiming it has been in my spirit and soul. This matter of spiritual gifts has been so invigorating to me in contrast to much that goes on in serving Christ in this broken world, for one is because I know it’s so relevant because every Christian has a spiritual gift that they are supposed to steward for the Lord and a lot of us are just like Paul said – ignorant about it.

Secondly, I know that the use of our gifts is directly related to the effectiveness we have to accomplish the Great Commission and live the great commandment with a great commitment. In other words, He has given these gifts so that the body of Christ indwelt can carry out the mission of the ascended Incarnate Christ who has accomplished redemption and is now sending us out with the mission of this glorious gospel to go to the world. Therefore, our effectiveness in evangelism, worship and discipleship is directly related to these spiritual gifts being discovered, developed and deployed.

The third reason it struck me as to why this matter of spiritual gifts is so important, is because when we exercise these gifts under the Lordship of Christ for the glory of God as we love the Lord and one another, we now are set up to present a counter cultural testimony to this world. I believe cultures are transformed when sinners are transformed to the glory of God and that’s our mission, message and ministry. I hear this all the time – if you want to accomplish the mission you have to be attractional. I think that is true in a certain setting but the attraction to

Christianity is not how much alike we are but how different we are, not trying to be obnoxiously different just functionally different dominated by the love of Christ toward Him, each other and the enemies of God to win them to Christ. In the world you cancel your enemies, but in the Kingdom, we win them. In the world, we step on and over people for our own desires, but in the Kingdom, we bring them to Christ that they may be lifted up by His grace.

A fourth reason has to do with the weight of Scriptures. There are many passages from the Old and New Testament that teach us about spiritual gifts and the weightiness of the Scripture itself that is given to us.

One more reason, is that Satan doesn't want us to be informed about this. If we get informed then we can implement it and he doesn't want us to implement it so Satan will do everything he can to stop us from understanding and implementing spiritual gifts. Satan has three strategies – intimidation, infiltration and imitation. He loves to shame Christians into silence. He loves to imitate in order to present a false testimony to the world of an apostate church to the world. He loves to infiltrate leadership with leaders who are self-absorbed, instead of self-sacrificing and to twist the Scripture through this leadership. He also loves to infiltrate the people of God with the grumbling, slandering and murmuring that debilitates the body of Christ. So, Satan does not want spiritual gifts used where we build of the body of Christ in love.

So, it invigorates me to get into this matter of spiritual gifts. The weightiness of this matter is pretty much in the hands of the Apostle Paul, also helped by Peter. Peter realized the importance of this when he was trying to pastor a group of churches in Galatia that likely he had never visited but were upon his heart, because of what they were experiencing in adversity and persecution.

The working definition of the stewardship of spiritual gifts is a spiritual gift is a God-designed and God-delivered ministry resources to be used for God's glory in concert with other believers, enabling Christ's church to effectively exalt Christ by staying on mission, on message and in ministry (even in the days of adversity). We are to function as the body of Christ taking the glory of God and the Gospel of grace throughout the whole world as the body moves empowered by the Holy Spirit and the use of its spiritual gifts.

Peter says to us in I Peter 4:12-14, *[12] Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. [13] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. [14] If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* Peter basically tells us that every believer will be persecuted to some degree in some way and some place if we live for Christ Jesus.

In I Peter 4, Peter gives us seven things that are crucial as pilgrims to be faithful to Christ in the day of adversity and the sixth one we find in I Peter 4:10-11 which says *[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

In these couple of verses Peter gives us five framing principles. One is Christians got talent – each one and every one. Everyone has natural talents but only Christians have spiritual gifts and talents. Spiritual gifts will determine how you use your natural talents. Here is an illustration of this. There are two singers, one I grew up listening to and the other I listened to more in my adult years. The one I grew up listening to was George Beverly Shea and after I became a Christian in my early 20s I was drawn to the singing of Michael Card. Both of those

men have a natural talent in singing. George Beverly Shea has a spiritual gift of evangelism and he uses his natural talent of singing to support the proclamation of the Gospel. Michael Card has a natural talent in music and singing but he is a teacher. He will take a text of Scripture and develop five or six songs out of that one text, the way I would do five or six sermons out of one text. One of them uses their natural talent for evangelism which is their spiritual gift and the other uses their natural talent for teaching which is their spiritual gift. Your natural talents will be used in the context of spiritual gifts as you discover, develop and deploy them.

The second framing principle is that spiritual gifts are received as they are God designed and God delivered. Spiritual gifts are not invented by us. We received our spiritual gifts from God as a stewardship. The third framing principle is that Christians are to steward their gifts. The fourth framing principle is spiritual gifts fall under two interdependent categories – speaking and serving. We see this reflected in the offices of the church – elders are mentors, teachers and shepherds and deacons serve. Ministries show up in word ministries and deed ministries. Speaking gift people have to serve and serving gift people have to speak and that’s why word and deed are so important in ministry as the two combine together in and through the Lord.

The fifth framing principle is that there are two indispensable resources – God’s Word and God’s Spirit. The speaking gifts are to speak the Word of God and the serving gifts are to do so by the strength which God supplies. The lifelines from heaven to us are His Word and His Spirit in all of the Christian life including our spiritual gifts.

This brings us to the text for this study from Paul in I Corinthians 12. This is a letter Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and he had pastored them for 18 months. After he is gone for a while, he gets a letter from this church and they have numerous concerns. They send him their top seven but my guess is they had more than that. The Lord’s Supper was messed up. Sexual ethics was messed up. Minister and the proper honoring of leadership was messed up. Each of these issues they were having as Paul has responded to them begin with the phrase ‘Now, concerning...’ Another thing that was messed up was spiritual gifts.

In order to help them understand, Paul first gives them conversion clarity. This is the first principle for you can’t have a spiritual gift unless you are converted – unless the Holy Spirit has given you the ability to say ‘Jesus is Lord.’ I Corinthians 12:3b says [3b] ... *no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.* This right here solves a problem we have in theology today. We have one branch of the church that says ‘come to Jesus and you can be born again.’ The Biblical answer to that, I believe, is not accurate yet I understand why they say that. The other branch of the church says ‘you can’t come to Jesus by faith, repentance and surrender as Lord unless you have been born again.’ We are spiritually dead and spiritually dead people can’t bring themselves to life. To be spiritual you have to be born again and when you are born again you are converted.

Therefore, spiritual gifts are not given for salvation. Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23, [21] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?’ [23] And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’* There will be people who say they are Christians and their affirmation and confidence comes from the fact they were doing things with their spiritual gifts yet they were never saved to begin with and they didn’t have true spiritual gifts but they had mimicked spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given to the saved, not for salvation. You can’t have a spiritual gift until you are spiritual and you’re not spiritual until the Holy Spirit gives you new

life. “No one can say...” now anyone can say for you have permission to say ‘Jesus is Lord’ but you can’t say it. Whosoever will may come but no man can come to Jesus unless the Father draws them (John 6:44) by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Number two, discipleship is necessary. There is no one single track in paganism and in unbelief for Satan provides multiple -isms. There is materialism, pragmatism, and all kinds of them for Satan has all kinds of pathways to idolatry to capture the hearts and minds. So however, you were led, the fact is paganism is the worship and service of mute idols and that was our old way of thinking. When you become a Christian, you get a new heart (born again), a new record (justified), a new life (indwelling of the Spirit), a new family (adopted in the family of God), and a new home (new heavens and new earth) but you don’t have a new mind. You do have the Word and the Spirit to renew the mind and that’s why He has given pastor/teachers, teachers and disciplers so we can disciple – teaching them to observe all that He has commanded. Every morning the old man comes up and wants to take over your day but you have to kill it for you have to put off to put on – not to be saved because you’re already saved, but to live for your Savior and use your spiritual gifts you have to kill the old man daily.

I’m giving credit to Allister Begg when I say paganism always emphasizes the ecstatic, exotic, dramatic, and often the erotic. If you read through the letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians as he addressed the seven things they sent him you will see all of those areas of emphasis in paganism being addressed. There are times we want to make it about ourselves with drama. Ecstasy is our next experience. Exotic being ‘look at what Jesus has done for me!!’ Sexual sins under the area of erotic. That’s why we need disciplers. Discipleship is a cascading event in the church using the means of grace and it starts from the pulpit, goes to the lectern of the community, to the small groups, Bible studies, and one on one for a season and reason. It is a constant overflow whereby informationally and relationally we go life to life in order to help one another grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

The third principle is it is God-glorifying and self-denying humility. In other words, it has to be Jesus is Lord, not me. It has to be Jesus is Lord which means you have to die to yourself and live to the glory of God. Do you believe John the Baptist had a gift, a ministry and effect? Amen! John the Baptist told us about profiting a ministry that He must increase and I have to decrease.

The fourth principle is that spiritual gifts are a Trinitarian ministry of Christ’s church, the body of Christ. I Corinthians 12:4-6 says *[4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the **same Spirit**; [5] and there are varieties of service (ministries), but the **same Lord**; [6] and there are varieties of activities (effects), but it is the **same God** who empowers them all in everyone.* Here we see the Trinitarian dynamic in spiritual gifts where the Holy Spirit brings these gifts to us and then they are to be employed in the ministries of Christ to the glory of God. The four ministries of Christ cover the areas of upreach (worship), outreach (evangelism), inreach (assimilation, enfolding and loving one another) and downreach (disciple making). These ministries are outlined for us in Acts 2 and Matthew 28:16-20. We all worship, evangelize, love each other (enfolding) and disciple but some are gifted specifically in these areas. Those who are gifted carry those things forward. So there are gifts, ministries and effects and the Triune God are working these in the body of Christ.

The fifth principle is that spiritual gifts are God-delivered, God-designed and God-directed. I Corinthians 12:7-11 says *[7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [8] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit,*

to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills. Here are three more understanding principles from this text.

Number six, is spiritual gifts are given to be used – not unused, misused or abused. Spiritual gifts are to be stewarded. I Peter 4:10 says [10] *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.* In the next few studies on this I will deal with the lists of spiritual gifts given in this passage and some others appropriately, Biblically and lovingly. You will not find a comprehensive listing of the gifts in the Bible. I have found 19 gifts mentioned but I believe there are more than that because every one who is a Christian has a gift and it's a unique gift so how could there be a list of all the unique gifts of all of the elect? We know that there are two categories of gifts – speaking and serving. We know that they are Trinitarian – designed, delivered and directed – and they are different, unique. While we can point to the lead dynamic in our spiritual gifts, it's backed up with a constellation of gifts. He has given you multiple gifts but He has so framed it that it is unique and has a lead element to it.

The main thing I want you to know is that He gave you the gift to use and the best way to start discovering and developing is to go ahead and start deploying. He gave them to us to be used in ministries for the effect and I love the way Romans reemphasizes this same thing. Romans 12:6-8 says [6] *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; [7] if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; [8] 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.* We look further into this passage in the coming studies but the point is the gift is given to use. None of the list of gifts we'll look at are exhaustive because everyone has a unique gift. You will not discover and develop your gift without deploying it so employ your gifts in serving the Lord and one another.

Number seven, is spiritual gifts are given to used for God's glory ultimately and for the common good functionally. Spiritual gifts are not given to operate independent of the body of Christ, His church. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal gratification, they are given for others edification. The gift is not about us. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal exaltation but for Christ's proclamation. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal fulfillment but for ministry fulfillment. When I hear about spiritual gifts it's almost always about the steward of the gift and not about others and Christ. If we start living where our gifts are not about us but about others and God it will be so gratifying in ways you can't imagine. It will be so honoring to our Lord and we have yet to find that out.

Spiritual gifts are also not to be ignored or idolized. The only illustration I could come up with on this has to do with Christmas gifts. When I give a gift to someone what brings me the greatest satisfaction is to see them using it or wearing it, but for some of us the gift becomes an idol and we don't use it because we're too busy worshipping it or we get a gift and it goes to a shelf and is ignored. They're not even regifted. Spiritual gifts are to be used for the work of the Kingdom and for the common good for one another.

Number eight, is spiritual gifts are sovereignly given and empowered by God. The sovereignty of God just breaks through in I Corinthians 12:11 which says [11] *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.*

Just as we are saved by sovereign grace we are gifted by sovereign grace from the work of the Holy Spirit. So, let's get to our takeaway from this study.

The takeaway is our God designed and delivered spiritual gifts if ignored or idolized actually assaults the glory of God and cripple the body of Christ but if discovered, developed and deployed will us on mission, on message and in ministry for God's glory and the common good. I want to give an illustration of what this best communicates to us where there is diversity because everyone has a unique gift, but together in unity of being on mission, on message and in ministry with everyone using their gift that God has designed so were moving forward – not missing a leg or an arm – but everyone in their place on the battlefield, manning their position.

So, my illustration of this comes from a symphony. Almost all symphonies have four movements and it has to do with the variety of instruments. All of the members of that symphony have their own instrument and all have their own musical score that has come from the composition. As each one embraces and use their instrument with the notes that have been provided for them, all of that diversity comes together with incredible energy, but if they don't have a conductor it will end up a cacophony. The Holy Spirit gave us our instruments. Jesus has provided our four movements – upreach (worship), outreach (evangelism), inreach (loving one another/enfolding), downreach (discipleship). We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Then the Father brings the glorious effect of His glory.

This is why I believe all four texts that we are studying on spiritual gifts are packaged with love. Ephesians 4 reminds us to speak truth in love and build each other up in love as we use our gifts. I Corinthians 12 gives us clarity on spiritual gifts and I Corinthians 13 follows which is the love chapter. I Peter tells us to do this by keeping fervent in our love for one another. Romans 12 calls us to be all the more diligent in our love for one another. We can't do this unless we love God, one another for the common good and the lost. It's not about us. Those loves have to fill us, otherwise we'll become a cacophony.

I don't remember who this article I recently read was written by but it just struck me as I was preparing for this study. Ultimately the body of Christ is on mission, on message and in ministry with every member supplying what God has designed and delivered and it's all to be done saturated with the love of God and one another, but we finally realize this is doxological. We are not in a cultural war but this article says we're in a glory war. Is the world going to decimate the glory of God? Are we going to make it about our glory or is it about His glory? Glory to God for the gifts, ministries and effects all come from Him – glory to God in the highest! Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, take Your Word and speak to the hearts of Your people. Lord, it is only when Your glory fills our soul, the love of Christ compels us, the Spirit of God empowers us, the ministries of Christ attract us and the glory of our great God obsesses us that diversity becomes unity, cacophony becomes symphony, therefore O God on this journey of being informed from Your Word about spiritual gifts we simply desire to praise God from whom all blessings flow. Today you have heard that this Jesus has died for your sins gifts you and the very first step is your salvation and Jesus sovereignly saves. You can have a glorious life for His glory so today let's stop falling short of His glory and come to Christ who left glory that you might have everlasting life now and into eternity. If you would like to talk and pray with someone about this decision to come to Christ, please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to help you with this decision. Please don't let this moment pass in your life. If you are also burdened about

anything we'd be happy to talk and pray with you about it as well. God we praise Your Name. Glory be to God in the highest. May our salvation be for Your glory, to the praise of Your glory and may our spiritual gifts in ministry be for Your glory. May You keep us together on mission, on message and in ministry and the glory war won, praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.