

IV. Spiritual Gifts in Biblical Perspective
Discovering, Developing and Deploying our Spiritual Gifts
“Understanding the Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts—Part 2”

1 Corinthians 12:1–6

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I Corinthians 12:1-3 says [1] *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed (ignorant). [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.

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.

We are currently focused on the stewardship of spiritual gifts following the admonition of Peter that says in I Peter 4:10-11, [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.* This call to the stewardship of spiritual gifts brings us to study what God says to us about this.

There are a couple of texts in the Old Testament that are helpful but there are four key texts for us from the ministry of Peter and Paul. They are the two above from I Corinthians and I Peter, then Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. This past week as I was going over this that became obvious to me was the pastor's heart of Peter and Paul in this matter. It would have been easy for them to say to everyone else, ‘go do this, this and this’ but they aren't doing that. First of all, they are pastorally unpacking the old way of thinking that is preventing their proper understanding and use of spiritual gifts. Then they are giving them a Biblical understanding from the Word of God, a different world and life view and how it applies to spiritual gifts when the Gospel wraps up one's life. As we work through each one of these texts there will be some redundancy but I think that is in the Bible for emphasis so we don't miss things that are absolutely crucial.

As we get into this, I want to give you a little backdrop. Why would Peter and Paul be so concerned that we get our theology of spiritual gifts right, before we start the practice of spiritual gifts? I think there are a number of reasons for this but I'm just going to focus on two in this study. The first reason is, Satan loves when God's people are uninformed and God has given us the means of grace in worship, preaching, fellowship, discipleship and all of those things for us to be informed for the Christian life is not intuitive. It is built not on our imagination and intuition but it is built upon Divine revelation and the Holy Spirit's illumination. Even at Corinth they have written a question about spiritual gifts because their old way of thinking and living as pagans was getting in the way of their right thinking of spiritual gifts.

That wasn't the only thing they had messed up, for they had messed up the Lord's Supper and Biblical sexuality. They were even calling good a man having intimate relationships with

his father's widow who was likely his stepmother. In fact, they were telling others if they didn't understand that they hadn't reached into the depths of 'knowledge' in the beginning impact of what was called Gnosticism. This pagan world and life view which is devoted to the dramatic, exotic and ecstatic was impacting the way they saw everything, even to where their taking the Lord's Supper became times of drunkenness and demeaning others of not having what they had.

In the book of Corinthians there are these seven issues Paul is trying to correct and one of them deals with the matter of spiritual gifts. Paul doesn't want them to be uninformed so he wants to inform them from God's Divine revelation, because if Satan gets a foothold in any area of the Christian life particularly things that are so essential such as spiritual gifts, then he can take anywhere even to the damnation of souls. How can spiritual gifts lead to the damnation of souls? I would tell you to go read the Sermon on the Mount for at the end of it Jesus tells us there will be a Day of Judgment and at that Day in Matthew 7:22-23 Jesus says [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.'* In other words, they will come to the Judgment Seat deceived by Satan thinking that spiritual gifts administered is what saves them.

I pray God allows me to preach good sermons, but none of my preaching is going to get me to heaven. I pray that God allows my wife and I to have the gift of giving, but our giving isn't going to get us into heaven, but Satan can take these things and say 'hey, they are there for you' – the ecstatic, dramatic, and exotic. Or he might say 'If you do them then God owes you heaven' and notice in Matthew 7 that it isn't going to be just a few but many. So I think you are seeing a pastor's heart here with Paul and Peter. They are trying their best, captivated by the Word of God, asking the Spirit of God to do the teaching of the Word of God, go to work in the lives of the people of God.

Here is the second reason I believe Peter and Paul are so concerned about them getting the theology right on spiritual gifts. Why is the presence of Jesus in this world? He is at the right hand of the Father in His Incarnate body. How does He walk through this world? He does it through the body of Christ – each member gifted, functioning together, brings the presence and power of Christ to this world. So He wants the church to be able to run for Christ because the legs of the body are showing up. He wants them to go clearly and emphatically for Christ because the eyes of the body are showing up – the hands are showing up, the arms are showing up. All the members of the body of Christ are in place functioning – discovered, developed and deployed – so that now the body of Christ is going throughout the whole earth.

At our upcoming mission's conference, we find those who are gifted to plant churches not only here but cross culturally for our world missions and that's a special gift. That comes in the body of Christ, from the body of Christ, from the Lord that the power, proclamation and preeminence of Christ would go throughout the world through the body of Christ. So on the one hand he doesn't want them to be deceived to the damnation of their souls that spiritual gifts save and on the other hand he wants spirituals gifts to be fully enjoyed, deployed and used because with those the Gospel is proclaimed throughout the world through the body of Christ.

Pastor Peter, knowing we're going to be under assault takes the time to give us five framing principles but before I give these five, I want to remind you of our working definition on spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a God-designed and God-delivered ministry resource to be used in concert with other believers enabling Christ's church to effectively exalt Christ by staying on mission, on message and in ministry for the glory of God even in the midst of adversity. Hands

don't work alone for they have to be fastened to an arm that is fastened to a torso. We do not expect parades in this world, for we expect persecution, but the body of Christ continues to work together, even though Satan will do everything he can to divide it and detour it. As the body we are united in Christ with all the diversity.

Here are the five framing principles. Number one Christians have talent for each and every one has a spiritual gift. Number two spiritual gifts are received, they are not invented. Number three, Christians are to steward their gifts. We don't own them, we use them. He owns us and our gifts and we use them for Him as good stewards. Number four, these gifts are found in two interdependent categories – speaking gifts and serving gifts. Speakers have to serve and servants have to speak. Number five, there are two indispensable resources. When you speak you speak the Word of God and when you serve you serve by the strength which God supplies which is the Holy Spirit.

Then we were in I Corinthians 12:1-3 in the last study where Paul fills in the gaps from what we learned through Peter. The first thing he wants us to know is conversion clarity. Spiritual gifts are for spiritual people, you have to be born again to get them which means you will have the Holy Spirit who makes sure you know Christ has you. We aren't talking about natural talents here because everybody has natural talents.

The second thing Paul wanted us to know about was discipleship necessity. As Christians, this is our mission – to go and make disciples. For God's glory, Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. Some of you may feel a little bit of jagged edges here because most think of discipleship as one on one – life on life – and yes there is one on one but that's not all of discipleship in the body of Christ. It is one element of it. Discipleship includes attending the preaching of the Word, Sunday school, fellowship, small groups and one on one. The means of grace have been given to the body of Christ to carry out discipleship. Jesus shows us this in the multitudes, the 70, the 12 and the three and every once in a while for a reason and a season He pulls someone off one on one. Discipleship is a cascade of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

The cascade begins from the pulpit and that's what Peter and Paul are doing right now. This is a sermon recorded for us for the people of God on discipleship. Discipleship is where the life of Christ through the lives of others impacts our life so that it is lived only, effectively and passionately for Christ as it goes from preaching down to another level and another level etc. The church has been given the means of grace to use to win people to Christ and to send people into the world as salt and light for Christ. I understand there are parachurch ministries that will take certain aspects of discipleship that the church does but the church has a full orbbed cascading effect of discipleship in terms of information and relationships in the context of the body of Christ.

Thirdly, he says we are to be God-glorifying and self-denying. Spiritual gifts are not there to make something about us but for us to die to ourselves, by owned by Christ and use them for the glory of God. Spiritual gifts are doxological for they are there for the praise of God and that's why we have to die to ourselves so that we can properly use them to the glory of God and the benefit of others.

Fourthly, is the Trinitarian ministry of Christ's church – the body of Christ – with spiritual gifts. 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. God the Father is empowering all of them in everyone.

It is a Trinitarian theology. We have a tendency because of our humanity, frailties to bring focus sometimes as we serve our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – to get fascinated with the Father’s ministry, the Son’s ministry or the Spirit’s ministry and we forget to maintain the Trinitarian presence of God in our lives and in our ministries. The Holy Spirit is heart delivering our spiritual gifts but notice how Paul doesn’t just want us to look to the Spirit but through the Spirit we are to look back to Jesus. Jesus is the One who designed the ministries for those spiritual gifts to work. Then he wants us to look from the Spirit to Jesus back to the Father who sent Him for the effects of these ministries.

When we worship it needs to be Trinitarian. The Father seeks true worshippers and we worship through Jesus declaring His preeminence and we worship in the Spirit. When we are in the Spirit, He points us to Jesus and Jesus saved us to the glory of the Father. So, we are to think Trinitarian in worship.

We are to think Trinitarian in prayer. Jesus told us that when we pray we are to pray ‘Our Father...’ We pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. I know some are thinking ‘Can I worship Jesus?’ Yes. ‘Can I worship the Holy Spirit?’ Yes. But the warp and woof of Christianity is Trinitarian. There is not an imbalance in how we deal with the doctrine of God. As we rejoice in each Person of the Trinity we understand how the Trinity has worked in our life. In creation, the Father authored, everything came into existence through Jesus and for Jesus and the Holy Spirit hovered over the creation to bring order to it. In providence, the Father is going to cause all things to work together for good through the intercession of Jesus from the groanings of the Holy Spirit on your behalf.

I believe these hymns that have a shelf life of 100 to 300 years are not just testimonial or focused on one person, just notice how many of them are Trinitarian. Look at the great creeds, like the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, to name a few are Trinitarian and spiritual gifts are to be understood in Trinitarian theology. God has authored the effect of your gift. Jesus has designed the ministries for your gift. The Holy Spirit has brought those gifts to you and when you minister your gift it is a manifestation of the Spirit of God within you to serve Christ in His ministries for the glory of the Father. I want to give you one more statement where we will now have five of our ten principles of understanding.

The fifth one is spiritual gifts are God delivered, God designed and God directed. The Father, Son and Spirit are at work to deliver, design and direct the gift. The Father has directed the effects of your spiritual gifts. Jesus has created the ministries whereby our gifts function and the Spirit gives us the gifts as a resource to use in the Jesus designed ministries and the Father’s directed effects.

Take the parable of the talents. God has determined for whatever reason for His own purposes and His own glory that to some of His people He will give two talents, some He will give five talents and some one talent, but this is a sovereign act of a sovereign God. Why? We do not invent our gifts or originate our gifts. If you have a preaching gift that God uses to reach 10,000 people then praise the Lord. If you have a preaching gift that God uses to reach 100 people then praise the Lord – just use your gift for Christ for His glory. God has designed the effects of it. God will determine the breadth, depth and expanse of it. We have an unbelievable propensity to be jealous of those whom God has given greater effects of their gifts or we have unbelievable self-pity if we don’t have it to the effect we think it ought to be for us. If we’re Trinitarian focused and doxological in our gifts then we just give God the praise for that and

whatever God gives us we say ‘God, just let me use what You have given me to the best of my ability’ and not be envious of the person You gave more to. I need to thank the Lord He is using others and their gifts, not be envious of them and I need to stay focused on how I can use mine for the glory of God.

I’m spending time in how we look at spiritual gifts in a Trinitarian way simply to remind us that our job is not to originate the gift but to discover the gift He has given us. Then we want to develop that gift. Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 1:6-7 [6] *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame (stir up) the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,* [7] *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* Then thirdly, I want to deploy that gift.

A pastor wants to be assertive where God wants him to be assertive and he wants to not be assertive where God has not been assertive and I think what the Bible teaches us in the Great Commission is that each one of His has a special, unique gift and you are to put it within the ministries that Christ has place within His church. I believe there are four basic ministries that Jesus ordained. There is the ministry of upreach – worship. There is the ministry of outreach – evangelism. There is the ministry of inreach – enfolding and assimilation. There is the ministry of down reach – disciple making ministry. I’m willing to accept that there maybe more ministries that Jesus has designed than that but as I look at the life Jesus led here on earth – He worshipped, evangelized, enfolded (the coming together ones of His church) and then He disciplined as He kept teaching, modelling and mentoring that they would grow deeper in the Word of God in groups of three, 12, 70 and larger.

I want to take this one step further with you. Please don’t see this as repetition and redundancy. Every one of us is called to worship, amen? Every one of us are called to evangelize, amen? Every one of us are called to love one another, assimilate and enfold, amen? Every one of us are called to be discipled and disciple others, amen? Here is what we need to remember. Some people are gifted in worship and God uses them to facilitate our worship. Some are gifted in evangelism and God uses them to facilitate and assist us in our evangelism.

There was one guy I would meet with in Charlotte, North Carolina and while he was waiting for me, he would have already led three people to Christ before I get there. When I talk to people and they say can we talk later, I’ll say sure we can talk later but if they say can we talk later to him, he would say any reason you can’t receive Jesus right now and if they said no then he would say let’s pray. I had a uncle Edgar who was like that. He would go down the street and every person he would meet he would ask them if they were saved and if they said no, his next line was then let me tell you about Him. I go down the street and asked someone if they were saved and I would get hit in the head. These two people were amazingly gifted in evangelism so I believe that we all worship, evangelize, love one another and do discipleship but there are some that gifted in those particular areas that facilitate us in those areas and set the pace for the rest of us. That is what Jesus is talking about, I believe, with ministries.

Now, the Father has determined in His sovereign decrees the extent, the breadth, height and width of our ministries as we are faithful. One might think Peter was the one who preached to 3,000 but who was it who preached and got Peter to Jesus? It was Andrew. So praise God for Andrew. God has this tapestry of our effects so we want to nurture the gift by discovering, developing and deploying it in the ministries that Christ has called us to in the church. Some of those ministries are internal in the body of Christ and some of them are external reaching into the world as we move the body of Christ into the world. So God determines the effects of our gifts in Christ’s ministry in the body of Christ for His glory. It’s not about us, it’s about Him.

When the Lord gives you your spiritual gift, He expects you to use it for His glory and you need to be content in the effects even if you have a holy discontentment in your own performance. God help me do it better, but the effects are left to Him because it's from Him, to Him and are all things for Him.

Here is the takeaway from this study. Spiritual gifts are our God given resources to accomplish our God given mission as Christ's church, the body of Christ. Here is another way to say that; spiritual gifts are not for salvation, they are for the saved, to proclaim the Savior to the world as the body of Christ.

There is a wonderful passage of Scripture; Acts 1:1. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke, while Paul was in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea by the Sea and later while Paul was in prison in Rome, Luke writes the book of Acts. Luke writes this book to the same person, Theophilus, which could be a generic name because it means 'lover of God.' It could be a politician, a statesman because Luke gives him a statesman title when he says 'O most excellent Theophilus' in Luke 1:3. The opening verse in Acts 1:1 says *[1] In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.* Acts is the second volume and now we move from the Incarnate body ministry of Christ (the Gospel of Luke) to the book of Acts, the indwelt body of Christ, His church, which is what Jesus is continuing to do and teach.

How is Jesus, to be declared preeminent, prominent, proclaimed, who in His Incarnate body at the right hand of the Father, to be present in this world for His mission to be completed, His message to be proclaimed and His ministries to be implemented? It is through us and He has gifted us as individual members of His body to be joined together for the building up of the body in Christ until it all grows into the headship of Christ – mission accomplished. Not only in His Incarnate body did He secure our salvation, but now in His indwelt body He is sending the message to bring His people from every tribe and nation.

It's not right for us to send missionaries out from our church for their gifts and their ministries to the effects that God has ordained if we aren't using our gifts in the body of Christ to honor Christ and declare the preeminence and presence of Christ. We want people to feel, hear and come to Jesus through the gifts He has given us in the body of Christ, on mission, on message and in ministry. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Speak to the hearts of Your people, Jesus. May they see the glory of their Triune God in creation, redemption and providence. As they pray may they also see their Triune God as the Holy Spirit giving the gift, Jesus providing the ministry in the body of Christ and the Father ordaining the effect for each Christian in each church and it's all doxological to the glory of Christ. Today if you want to pray with someone about having a personal relationship with Christ as your Lord and Savior please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to talk and pray with about this relationship. If there are areas of your life either effected by this study or the challenges you are facing in your life, please feel free to call us about that as well. We have prayer partners who want to pray with you about these things. Now Jesus, guide us as we go into our communities and as we scatter into the world. Help us to enjoy the praise of our God in the Lord's Day morning and evening and may the body of Christ move powerfully for the preeminence of Christ, the proclamation of Christ and bring the presence of Christ savingly to this world. Lord, whether we eat or drink or use our spiritual gifts, may it all be for Your glory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.