

HOW TO RECOGNIZE, EXERCISE, AND DEVELOP YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT

Review:

1. Every born again believer has one or more Spiritual gifts.
2. A Spiritual gift is a supernatural Christ-ability received at the time of spiritual birth to do spiritual work in the life of the church and the world.
3. Spiritual gifts are not "merit badges" or proofs of spirituality; they can be used wrongly, in the flesh or satanically counterfeited.
4. Thus, it is very essential that we be Christ-filled believers so He can guide and empower our ministry.
5. YOUR GIFTS ARE YOUR MINISTRY. You are to be a good steward of your gift. (1st Peter 4:10)

A. A steward is one who received from his master the care of an estate while his master is away. He then is to give an accounting upon his return.

B. See 1st Peter 4:10, it tells us that God has placed His "*manifold grace*" in our hands; you and I are administrators of God's grace! What a staggering truth! Your gifts are in reality God's supernatural grace committed to your care and your stewardship! The point is that one day every Christian will give an accounting of the use of his or her gifts at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I. HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE MY GIFTS?

Explanation: You are your gift. Your "new self" in Christ is characterized by your gifts. Your gifts motivate and dominate your personality. If you have been obedient to Jesus in your daily walk, you have been exercising your gift whether you know what your gift is or not! You are your gift! Your gift is what you, as a Spirit-filled Christian, enjoy doing in kingdom service. You do not have to know what your gifts are to exercise them. Many Christians have faithfully served the Lord for years without knowing that they had a supernatural ability! The following suggestions are practical ways for the believer to recognize his or her gifts:

1. Through Personal Inclination - It seems that when God "gifts" His children that He gives one motivating gift. This gift seems to be the most influential and colors the use of any others that the believer might have. Paul gives us a good example of this. Paul was motivated as an "apostle to the Gentiles." This was his main ministry - that of apostleship. The word apostle means "one sent forth with a message". We call this gift today a missionary; one who goes to a new area and starts a work for God. The gift of apostleship (missionary) should be distinguished from the office of the Apostle which was unique (twelve men) selected personally by Christ. Paul had other gifts; prophecy, teaching, or even miracles; but these gifts served his apostleship to the Gentiles.

Questions to ask yourself:

- 1) What turns you on as a Christian? As a yielded, available child of God, what do you personally feel inclined to do? Your gift is evidenced by your spiritual passion.

It is the "fire in your belly." What do you really enjoy doing in kingdom service?

2) I suggest that you study the various gifts of the Spirit. Set aside a time for prayer and fasting. Seek God's leadership to reveal your ministry to you.

3) As you do this, you will feel inclined toward one motivating gift. This is your answer! Let's suppose that after a period of study, prayer and fasting you feel that teaching is your motivating gift. How can you test your inclination?

2. Public Recognition - If your personal inclination is led of God, your supposed gift will be affirmed by the public recognition of the church. That is, others will see your gift and desire to use it. This public recognition comes two ways:

1) The church will use it. Suppose you request a teaching position such as a bible study class, a Bible study group, etc. then you study and prepare to teach. If you get discouragement or no response from those whom you teach, then that is a pretty good evidence that you have not been given a teaching gift. If you are gifted to teach, the church will run to your gift. People will seek and use it.

Note this: Some teaching gifts are not "speaking/teaching. The gift may be in a strong desire to study God's word, to do research, even writing theology books. Some teachers do not speak well, but they teach well.

2) God will bless it. When you find your gift and begin to exercise it, there will be an anointing and blessing of God upon it; especially if you are a yielded, Spirit-filled Christian. God's Spirit will reaffirm your ministry. The church will seek your gift and God will bless and enlarge your effectiveness in using your gift.

3. Personal Exaltation: Another way of affirming your gifts is that there will be great joy in the exercise of your gift. If teaching is your gift, you will enjoy studying the Bible. Preparation for the lesson will be a joy and not a drag. You will get a personal satisfaction in a job well done and you will take heart that you have been used to communicate divine truth.

4. Proper Confession - Also, if your gift is of God there will be a proper confession as to the Lordship of Christ. Your ministry will bring glory to God and not the flesh. **Matthew 7:22, 23** says, "*Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'.*"

1) Here, Jesus declares that not all supernatural gifts are from God! These people could exercise gifts of prophecy, demon deliverance, and miracles; but Jesus never knew them. They were lost people; their gifts were satanic.

2) If your gift is of God, it will be used for His glory. **In I Cor. 12:3**, it says that no man can call Jesus Lord unless the Holy Spirit leads him. If a man's ministry is of the Holy Spirit, he will always allow Jesus His proper pre-eminence. His gifting, when properly exercised, will Glorify Christ, not self.

5. By Prophetic Declaration - In **1st Timothy 1:18** and **4:14** there are interesting statements. It seems that Paul, or someone else in authority, spoke a word of prophecy about Timothy. Later, the elders laid hands on Timothy to set him aside for ministry. Sometimes a person may come to

recognize his gift through a prophetic utterance. That is, someone tells you what your ministry will be.

1) When Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a small boy, about age twelve, a preacher visiting in his home told young Charles that he would be a great preacher someday. Spurgeon never forgot it, and of course the statement came true.

2) George W. Truett, the famous Baptist pastor of Dallas, Texas was studying law when a pulpit committee from his home church told George that God had selected him to be their pastor, even though George Truett had no desire to be a preacher. He obeyed the call and became one of God's great champions.

3) This kind of affirmation is very rare and must be carefully discerned. There is always some crazy person running around laying hands on people and telling them to get a gift! Watch out! Be careful about letting anyone lay hands on you unless you know and respect their spiritual life and authority.

4) *Laying of Hands*: This early church practice was symbolic of the following:

1. Act of Consecration = set aside for blessing or dedication
2. Act of Commendation = approval - we do this with young ministers, deacons
3. Act of Commission = set aside for a task, ministry or mission **Acts 13:2, 3**
4. Act of Communication = passing down apostolic power, communicating the Holy Spirit

II. HOW AM I TO EXERCISE MY GIFT?

Explanation: All the gifts are subject to misuse. This is evidenced by the Corinthian church mess in the first century! It is not enough to know what your gifts are. There must be a proper way to exercise your gifts.

A. *There must be a proper acceptance of your gift.* - Paul teaches us four things in **Romans 12:3-6** about accepting your gift.

1. There should be no boasting in your gift. - Verse 3
2. There should be no dissatisfaction in your gift. - Verses 4-6
3. God has measured out enough faith for you to exercise your gift. - Verse 3
4. God has given you enough grace for your ministry. - Verse 6

B. *There must be a proper assessment of your gift.* - **Romans 12:3**

1. There should be no superior attitude.
2. There should be no inferior attitude.

All gifts are equal in the sight of God. We each have job to do, a ministry to perform.

C. *There must be a proper application of your gift.*

1. We are told in scripture to not neglect our gift. **Ist Timothy 4:14**
2. We are told to stir up our gifts, to rekindle the fire!! **II Timothy 1:6**
3. We are told to minister to others through our gift. **Ist Peter 4:10**

- a. It is poor stewardship not to apply our gift.
- b. It is a sin not to be a good steward!

c. It is to be done all the time! (The verb "minister" in the Greek is present tense= continuous action)

D. *There must be a proper adjustment of the gift.* - **Ephesians 4:16** says that every member should be properly adjusted to the Head. So, every time you exercise your gift outside the Lordship of Jesus Christ, God will reject it for reward because it will then be a work of the flesh.

III. HOW CAN I DEVELOP MY GIFTS?

Explanation: Use them under the Spirit's control! There are two reasons why Christians do not develop their gifts:

1. No use

Some Christians never develop their gifts because they are not willing to serve the Lord in ministry to others. Neglected gifts wither like an unused limbs of the body.

2. Or misuse.

Some Christians fail to develop their gifts through misuse. If we fail to let the Holy Spirit guide our ministries, then they become abused through misuse, fleshly or selfish motivations.

CONCLUSION:

Seek the Lord, offer yourself to Him for service, ask Him to reveal your ministry to you. Follow your personal inclination, backed up by public recognition and personal exaltation.