

# SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND MINISTRY

## IFTS

1. God demands that we use our gifts as stewards (I Peter 4:10; Matt. 25)
2. We will only come to **experience all the fulfillment** and meaning available in Christ as we exercise our gifts and our callings.
3. We will be able to **make better decisions about life goals** if we know our gifts. (Rom 12:3-8)

## THE NATURE AND PLACE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### GIFTS AND THE BODY OF CHRIST (EPHESIANS 4:1-6)

1. *Unity in differences.* Despite the fact that we are all different, Christians have a common experience. See Eph 4:3 - the unity of the church is always to be maintained, not attained. It is there to start with. Why? We all share the Holy Spirit. He has convicted us all of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). We are a living temple of the Spirit. In the Old Testament, the stones of the temple were shaped at the quarry, so at the building site, there was no sound of hammer or chisel. When the stones came together, they fit. So we are one in the spirit.
2. *Differences in unity.* The same agent that makes us one, the Holy Spirit, also makes us very different. The Spirit brings diversity in unity through spiritual gifts.
  - a. *Christ's ministry is through gifts.* (Eph 4:16; cf. 1:22). Spiritual gifts are all the ministry powers of Jesus Christ divided up and distributed to members of his Body. Spiritual gifts are powers of expressing, celebrating, displaying, and communicating Christ through the power of Christ. Through us, Christ continues to minister to the world. (See Eph 2:17 - "[Christ] came and preached peace to you".) Illustration: A mosaic is a glorious picture. But it is made up of tiny pieces of colored glass. Each one is pretty, but meaningless in isolation. So, all Christians together, show the world Jesus Christ in all the glory of his mediatorial ministry.
  - b. *Christ's governance is through gifts.* (Eph 4:11) If you could place all human forms of government on a continuum from total democracy to total dictatorship, where would the church be? Off the line altogether! In a democracy, the people choose the leader; in a totalitarian state the leaders choose themselves. In the church, Christ chooses leaders through assigning gifts. The people only recognize the gifts. And the blueprint for the church (the kinds of ministries God desires for it) are determined by the gifts assigned to the members. Discover the church's gifts and you have discovered the philosophy of ministry of the church. Truly, Christ governs his church through spiritual gifts.

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## GIFTS AND THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST (4:6-8)

The Kingdom of God is the renewal of the world through the introduction of supernatural forces (Eph. 1:9-10).

1. Sin has created alienation in all of life:
  - (1) *Spiritual alienation*. Gen. 3:8 We are cut off from God.
  - (2) *Psychological alienation*. Gen. 3:10 We are cut off from ourselves. Anxiety, lack of identity, meaninglessness, guilt
  - (3) *Social alienation*. Gen. 3:7, 16 Broken families, crime, injustice, war, poverty
  - (4) *Physical alienation*. Gen. 3:17-19 Sickness, pollution, death
2. Spiritual gifts are kingdom powers. They are abilities to minister in such a way as to bring people more under the Kingship of Christ which brings restoration. Spiritual gifts are powers to attack all the alienations caused by sin in every area of life.

## THE DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

What? An enablement to meet the needs of people...

How? ...given by the Holy Spirit on the basis of God's free grace...

Why? ...in such a way that people are brought more under the Lordship of Christ with the result that the Body of Christ is built up in quality and quantity.

"Ability to speak or act in a particular way -- performing ability, as we may call it -- is only a charisma if and as God uses it to edify. Some natural abilities [talents] that God has given he never uses in this way, while sometimes he edifies through performances that to competent judges seem substandard...What constitutes and identifies a charisma is not the form of the action but the blessing of God" --I. Packer *Keep in Step With the Spirit*, p. 84-85

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## THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

He gives gifts to every Christian (I Cor.12:7; I Peter 4:10)

Gifts are received at regeneration. (Paul can confidently speak in the past tense about gifts. To each has been given...)

Gifts apparently are life-long. There is no indication they are lost or removed (though they can be ineffective--see below). After all, does your hand turn into a shoulder or your foot into a kidney during your lifetime? Nor does Jesus' Body shift around like a kaleidoscope.

Gifts are given in clusters. Paul had several gifts. Some people are called "pastor-teachers" (Eph.4:11) though "teacher" exists by itself as a gift. Evidently, people can have several gifts.

Further diversity is seen in I Cor. 12:4-6. There are many gifts, many ministries (avenues for using gifts, e.g. some can teach children, some can teach large groups, some can teach cross-culturally, etc.) and many energizings (levels of power or effectiveness). In other words, every Christian is unique as a snowflake! Each person has a unique combination of gift clusters, ministry abilities, power levels, background experience, etc. There are some good works prepared for you (Eph.2:10) that only you can do.

Further diversity lies in the probability that the gift lists are not complete. Since each of the major lists (Romans 12, I Cor. 12/14, Eph. 4) is illustrative and not exhaustive, why should the combined gift lists be so? Probably, every Christian duty or ministry mentioned in the Scripture can be a spiritual gift.

## IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

### GIFTS ARE NOT JUST NATURAL TALENTS

Talents are given to all people to enrich creation. Gifts are given to Christians to edify the Body. God may adopt a talent and bless it as a spiritual gift, but not necessarily. It is critical that we do not automatically assume that a person with a talent for public speaking will have the gift of teaching, that a person with the talent for business management will have the gift of administration, etc.

### GIFTS ARE NOT SPIRITUAL FRUIT.

Spiritual fruit have to do with character--what you are. Gifts have to do with abilities and skills--what you do. Every Christian should have all the spiritual fruit. No Christian can have all the spiritual gifts.

Gifts without fruit is like a tire without air. Without holiness and godliness, eventually, gifts become ineffective. Beware, though! Gifts can operate when you are spiritually backsliding. You often will find a situation bringing out your gift; you will feel like you are close to God. But that is a gift-operation of the Spirit. Ministers can minister effectively for a good while after they have forsaken God in their heart for some sin.

The Bible even tells us that some non-Christians (see Judas or the people in Matt. 7:21 or Hebrews 6) have things that look like spiritual gifts. God uses them to do good things in his kingdom despite their own refusal to submit to him in their hearts. Beware of judging your Christianity by how much you do. "By their fruit (not gifts) ye shall know them."

### GIFTS ARE NOT CHRISTIAN DUTIES.

1. All the gifts are also Christian duties, things God commands us to do. Every Christian is commanded to witness, give, have faith, etc., but not everyone has the gift of evangelism, giving, faith, etc. This must be carefully born in mind to avoid two extreme mistakes:
  - a. *Gift cop-out.* That forgets all gifts are also duties or roles within the Christian life. It says, "I don't want to witness; that's not my gift."
  - b. *Gift projection.* That forgets all roles are not gifts. It writes books saying, "Since I can lead someone to Christ every week, so can you!" A person doing gift projection lays guilt on anyone who is not as enthusiastic or as successful for a ministry as he is.
2. People without gifts in evangelism, counseling, should get training in these areas and seek to minister in those areas, even if it will usually be in an informal way. If you have a gift, get advanced training and use the gift in a structured way through the church.

## DISCOVERING AND USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The basic outline is found in Romans 12:3-6: Look at yourself (v.3), look at how the Body works (v.4-5), try and use the abilities (v.6)

### LOOK AT YOURSELF

Check out your desires and inclinations. Are there some things you really enjoy doing?

Check out your perceptions. Are there some needs and problems that you are very sensitive to and burdened by?

### LOOK AT THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Learn what the gifts are. Read books on the gifts. Do Bible study on each gift. You won't be able to recognize gifts in yourself unless you have a clear concept of what they actually are. Learn about your church's current and future ministries. What gifts are needed right now? How could your efforts improve an existing ministry or guide a new ministry? Learn about your surrounding communities. What is strong or weak about the culture where you live? What do people need?

### USE YOUR ABILITIES. EXPERIMENT WITH NEW EFFORTS

1. Experiment with as many Christian roles as possible. Get all sorts of training and experience. It is just as important to find the gifts you don't have as the gifts you do have.
2. Evaluate your spiritual effectiveness. Be sure there are real spiritual results. Don't assume that a talent will be a gift.
3. Expect confirmation from the Body. You are not to rely on your own judgment.

## DEFINITIONS AND USES OF SPECIFIC SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### SCRIPTURAL SOURCES FOR SPECIFIC GIFTS

1. The three key Biblical lists of spiritual gifts:

*Romans 12:6-8*: prophecy, exhortation, service, giving, teaching, leadership, mercy  
*Corinthians 12:8-10, 28* (not mentioned above): wisdom, tongues, knowledge, interpretation, faith, apostle, healing, helps, discernment, administration  
*Ephesians 4:11* (not mentioned above): evangelist, pastor.

2. Other spiritual gifts appear to be mentioned which are not on the list of gifts:

for example, singleness? (I Cor. 7:7), hospitality?(I Pet. 4:9-10), missionary? (Eph.3:1-9)

Review: The gift lists are not complete; it is likely that any Christian duty or ministry can be a gift (e.g. prayer). We should be open to the possibility of other gifts not on the gift list.

### CLASSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Three Biblical categories:

1. I Peter 4:10 - "*lalein*" or *word gifts*. Gifts which require or center on verbalization.
2. I Peter 4:10 - "*diakonia*" or *deed gifts*. Gifts which require or center on actions, not talking.
3. I Corinthians 14:22; Heb.2:4 - "*sign gifts*". Tongues and miracles are pointers to the power and truth of the gospel. We believe these gifts ceased in that form after the end of the New Testament era, because they were no longer needed as foundational gifts. If something analogous to them exists today (i.e. apostleship = church movement leadership), they do not carry similar sign/wonders function.

## SUMMARY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND BASIC DEFINITIONS

<b>Speaking Gifts</b>	<p><b>Prophecy:</b> To apply the Word of God to people's situations in a way that is clear, direct, and relevant</p> <p><b>Teaching:</b> To communicate truth to others in such a clear and orderly way that people learn and retain</p> <p><b>Evangelist:</b> To share the gospel with people so that they become disciples of Jesus Christ.</p> <p><b>Pastor:</b> To assume the long-term responsibility for the spiritual growth and welfare of a believer or a group of believers.</p> <p><b>Exhortation:</b> To speak to troubled people so that they are comforted, encouraged, and helped.</p> <p><b>Discernment:</b> To know whether teaching, motives, and/or behavior is divine, human, or demonic in origin. To more easily understand motives.</p> <p><b>Apostle:</b> Class #1: To receive divine revelation from God and to exercise authority in planting the church in new areas. Class #2: To plant and/or exercise leadership over a number of churches.</p>
<b>Deed gifts</b>	<p><b>Leadership:</b> To set goals for a group of people and then to motivate the people to work harmoniously towards those goals.</p> <p><b>Administration:</b> To organize and execute plans to reach goals using resources in the most efficient way.</p> <p><b>Giving:</b> To contribute one's material resources with great cheerfulness and liberality, and to do so in such a way that bears spiritual fruit.</p> <p><b>Service:</b> To see and meet temporal needs, especially in such areas that are involved in tasks related to God's work.</p> <p><b>Helps:</b> The ability to invest time and talents into the lives of other Christians, thus freeing them to be more effective in their ministries.</p> <p><b>Mercy:</b> The ability to feel love and sympathy for people who are suffering, to alleviate the suffering through kind deeds.</p> <p><b>Hospitality</b> - The ability to generously and cheerfully open one's home for food and lodging to others in such a way as to minister spiritually to them.</p> <p><b>Faith</b> - The ability to understand and work for God's will and purposes with exceptional confidence.</p> <p><b>Wisdom</b> - apply truth and knowledge to concrete situations in such a way as to know the best course of action in any situation</p> <p><b>Knowledge:</b> To discover, organize, relate and classify information and ideas.</p> <p><b>Plus:</b> Prayer? Craftsmanship? Music? Missionary? Martyr? Celibacy?</p>

## SPEAKING GIFTS IN DETAIL

### PROPHECY

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The ability to apply the Word of God to people's situations in a way that is clear, direct, and relevant.

Biblical principles -

- a. Many people believe prophecy to be a direct revealing by God about information (often about the future) which would otherwise be unknown. It is sometimes claimed that this is a gift which largely had ceased in the church.
- b. However, the Bible tells us that prophecy is something all believers can and should do (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). A prophet was never in a trance or a frenzy, but was in complete control (I Cor. 14:32). As with other gifts, all Christians were expected to prophecy (Acts 19:6; I Cor. 14:1, 23-25, 31), men as well as women (I Cor. 11:5), yet not all people were called "prophets" (I Cor. 12:29).
- c. Although the prophets before and after Pentecost foretold the future, the essence of prophecy was to apply the truth of God to the people rather than to supplement the truth. (Ex. 7:1-2; I Cor. 14:3). In the Old Testament, prophets were "covenant lawyers". So in the New Testament, they preached the truth for conversion (I Cor. 14:24-25) and encouragement (Acts 15:32).
- d. Prophecy was not ordinarily considered new words from God. It was to be weighed and evaluated (I Cor., 14:29) according to the apostolic revelation (I Cor. 14:37-38) which was never to be weighed and evaluated! Thus an apostle was bringing new words from God, but a prophet was a preacher of the word given the power of the spirit to drive words home.

### TEACHING

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The ability to communicate truth to others in such a clear and orderly way that people learn and retain.

Biblical principles -

- a. Again, all believers are expected to teach (Heb. 5:12). An inability to impart truth to others is a sign of spiritual lethargy or backsliding.
- b. Nevertheless, not all are teachers (I Cor. 12:29). Teaching and prophecy are the only gifts mentioned in all three major gift lists. The only gift which Paul urges the church to seek is prophecy, but only teachers have a frightening responsibility laid on them (James 3:1). They will be judged more harshly.
- c. Teaching is the ability to make distinctions and to bring order out of confusion. See Leviticus 10:10-11.
- d. Teaching aims more at the understanding, while prophecy aims more at the will. Nevertheless, teachers aren't out to only fill up the intellect:

(1) Teachers seek to train people to discern good from evil (Heb.5:14; Eph. 4:14) so they can base their lives and relationships on it (Eph.4: 15-16).

(2) Teachers aim to train people how to minister using their own gifts (Eph. 4:11-13).

e. See also I Tim. 1:3-4; II Tim. 2:24-26; 3:15-17; 4:2,3; Titus 1:9-16; Acts 18:24-28.

## EVANGELIST

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The ability to share the gospel with people so that they become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Biblical principles -

- a. Every believer must witness (Acts 8:4-6), but not every believer has the gift of evangelism (Eph. 4:11).
- b. Philip was an evangelist (Acts 21:8). He did not necessarily preach to exercise this gift. (Acts 8). An evangelist shares the Word (v.4) and seeks to do nothing but present Christ (v.5). Besides preaching (v.4), the evangelist can initiate personal encounters with individuals through questions (v.30-31).
- c. An evangelistic gift is seen in its effectiveness. The evangelist is able to get people's attention (v.6) and bring many to a decision (v.12, 36-38)
- d. See also Rom. 10:1-17; Acts 5:42; 14:21-23; II Tim. 4:5.

## PASTOR

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The ability to assume the long-term responsibility for the spiritual growth and welfare of a believer or a group of believers.

Biblical principles -

- a. A "pastor" is a shepherd, one who feeds, protects, and raises sheep. A pastor may or may not be a teacher, a counselor, etc. The essence of pastoring is to foster growth, both negatively (healing a hurt, defending from enemies) and positively (leading to nourishment, guiding in a right direction). If a pastor cannot teach, he gets the sheep to someone who can. He assumes responsibility very effectively for spiritual welfare. Some today would call this the gift of 'discipline'. Pastors make better disciples than prophets, teachers, or exhorters.
- b. Acts 20: 18ff., Heb. 13:7, 17; I Peter 5:1-5; Psalm 23; John 10:1-18 all discuss in great detail the work of a pastor. There we see a pastor (1) is sure his people are fed from the word of God (2) protects them from spiritual error (3) shares time and inner life with people so as to teach by example (4) offers personal counsel and advice, etc.
- c. The gift of pastor differs from exhortation (below) in that a pastor may not be exceptional in crisis counseling or admonition/persuasion, but over the long run, has a significant impact on the course of a person's life.
- d. This gift is a qualification for the ordained office of 'pastor-teacher' in the church. But it is by no means a gift that can only be exercised in that office. In Titus 2:4, older women are told in effect to pastor the younger women. For more on pastoring, see II Tim. 4:11-16.

NOTE: Gifts are not the same as offices. An officer in the church (such as, say, a ruling elder) must have from God a set of gifts as well as a set of personal characteristics. So, for example, an elder must be a man (I Tim. 2:12; I Tim. 3:2).

## EXHORTATION

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The ability to speak to troubled people so that they are comforted, encouraged, and helped.

Biblical principles -

- a. The Greek for "exhortation" is really "encouragement". It is *parakaleo* meaning to "call alongside". To exhort is not to say either "get going" or "do what I've done" but "let's do this together". An exhorter is good at putting him or herself in another's shoes and understanding them.
- b. All Christians are ordered to exhort one another daily (Heb. 3:13; cf. Heb. 10:24-25). But, of course, all Christians do not have the gift of exhortation.
- c. One major difference between exhortation and prophecy is that exhortation does not seem as much to be used through public speaking. However, a gifted exhorter could effectively address a group of people (e.g. the writer of the book of Hebrews) and a prophet could do effective personal counseling.
- d. Exhorters are gifted to help people who are being mistreated (Acts 14:22-23), who are experiencing any kind of suffering (II Cor. 1:3-9), who are being disobedient (II Thess. 3:11-13), who are getting frustrated and impatient (I Thess. 5:1-11), who are resentful and having interpersonal problems (Phil. 4:2), or who are getting spiritually dead and hard (Heb. 3:13).
- e. An exhorter is patient (I Thess. 5:14), gentle, affectionate, and personal (I Thess. 2:7-11), respectful (I Tim. 5:1-2), positive and non-contentious (II Tim. 2:24-26). The exhorter bases his statements on the Word (Rom. 15:4; II Tim. 4:1-4).
- f. See also the entire book of Hebrews, which is "exhortation" (Heb. 13:22). Study all its techniques, especially the alternating of warning with comforting.
- g. Although the most obvious use of this gift is in counseling, keep in mind that because of the variety of kinds of problems and kinds of people, a variety of spiritual gifts can equip a Christian to counsel effectively. Prophecy is helpful when a person especially needs to be rebuked. Mercy is strong on sympathy, sensitivity, and listening. Discernment may be helpful in counseling a phony (!) or in guidance counseling. Often the counselee needs simple instruction in a particular area, and so a teacher is needed (but that teacher may not be able to listen!) A careful study of exhortation indicates that this gift equips a person best to confront and to comfort, so it is a great gift for a counselor. Nevertheless, no Christian is equipped to handle all kinds of persons or all kinds of problems. Only the whole Body of Christ can make that claim!

## DISCERNMENT

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The ability to know whether teaching, motives, and/or behavior is divine, human, or demonic in origin.

Biblical principles -

- a. In I Cor. 12:10 this gift is called "discerning of spirits", and at least once we seem to have an example where the gift detects demonic activity (Acts 16:16-22). But in I Thess. 5:19-22 discernment is something enjoined to all Christian people. It means to test and try everything to judge what is good and evil.(cf. Heb.5:12-14)
- b. The usual exercise of this gift is broader than this. In I John 4:1-5 (cf. I Cor. 14:29) we are told that discerning of spirits means to test the doctrinal soundness of teaching by the word of God. In I Cor. 6:1-6 Paul says the church contains people with discernment who can act as judges in disputes. Thus discernment can include insight into motives and the workings of the heart.

## APOSTLE

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Class #1 - The ability to receive divine revelation from God and to exercise authority in planting the church in new areas. Class #2 (Modern) - The ability to plant and/or exercise leadership over a number of churches.

Biblical principles -

- a. The "twelve" (and Paul) were eye witnesses of the risen Christ and were recipients of divine revelation as well as the high authority that went with such an ability. (I Cor. 9:1-2; 15:7-9; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 3:14; John 14: 7-10, 26; 15:15)
- b. Besides the twelve, there were other men who were called "apostles" in a more general sense. Silas (I Thess.2:6 with Acts 17:4), Barnabus (Acts 14:14), Apollos? (I Cor. 4:6,9), Andronicus and Junias? (Rom. 16:7).
- c. The function of these apostles was that of a missionary church planter. They initiated churches and then adjudicated matters of policy and personnel deployment (see Acts 15:22). The "apostle" gift today is seen in leaders who are exceptionally blessed not only in foreign missions work, but in breaking new ground in new fields of ministry with the gospel.
- d. See also John 13:16; Acts 8:14-16; 11:1-18; Matt. 10:2ff.; Eph. 2:19-22; II Cor. 8:23 with 8:18-19, 22; Rev. 21:4.

## HIGH VISIBILITY DEED GIFTS

### LEADERSHIP

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The ability to set goals for a group of people and then to motivate the people to work harmoniously towards those goals.

Biblical principles -

- a. In Rom. 12:8 the gift translated "leadership" is *proistemi*, meaning to move with speed. In Titus 3:8 and 14, the same word in the context means to "persevere" or to "maintain". This gift requires, Paul tells us, "diligence" or "zeal" (Rom. 12:8).
- b. A leader has three jobs, Biblically:
  - (1) giving the people direction, vision (Sheep without a leader wander aimlessly-Judges 17:6; Matt. 9:36). See Nehemiah 2: 17-18.
  - (2) helping each person to see what part he or she must do. See Nehemiah 3.
  - (3) solving problems and helping people get along harmoniously. See Neh 4-5.
- c. The spiritual gift of leadership is distinguished from the human talent of leadership by the leader's motives and attitude (Mark 10:42-45; I Peter 5:2-3).

### ADMINISTRATION

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The ability to organize and execute plans to reach goals using resources in the most efficient way.

Biblical principles -

- a. I Cor. 12:28 lists a gift called "administration" using different word than that used for "leadership" in Rom. 12:8. This word is also used to describe the pilot of a ship (Acts 27:11). Notice that the pilot is not the chief officer of the ship. The centurion is the real leader. The pilot gets directions from the leader and decides the practical ways to direct the ship to the appointed goals.
- b. It appears that an administration gift by itself equips a person to operate very efficiently, especially in getting things done. Read Exodus 18:13-26 to see Moses' gift of administration in handling the problem of two many legal cases within the nation of Israel. (Moses had the gift of leadership, too!)

NOTE: What gifts equip a person for the Gospel ministry? Although men need not be equally gifted in all these areas, no man who is weak in the required skills should be admitted to office.

1. Ruling elders must have the gift of pastor (I Peter 5:1-5; cf. Acts 20:28) and leadership (I Tim. 5:17; Rom. 12:8).
2. Preaching elders must have these two gifts plus the gift of speaking and teaching (I Tim.5:17).

## LOW VISIBILITY DEED GIFTS

### GIVING

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The ability to contribute one's material resources with great cheerfulness and liberality, and to do so in such a way that bears spiritual fruit.

Biblical principles -

- a. Every Christian is held responsible to give liberally (II Cor. 8:3) and cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7). God promises to bless people and you through such giving (II Cor. 9:12).
- b. We can probably be safe in assuming that these characteristics would be even stronger in a person with the gift of giving. The person:
  - (1) Gives great proportions of his/her income
  - (2) Gives with great joy and without fear and anxiety often accompanying sacrificial giving.
  - (3) Gives with the result of unusual spiritual blessing to those individuals and organizations chosen. Some people with this gift seem to have increased discernment to spot needs.
- c. A person does not have to be wealthy to have this gift (II Cor. 8:2).
- d. As one example of how financial giving can have spiritual impact, study the effects of the Philippians' gift on Paul (Phil. 4:16-19).

### SERVICE

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The ability to see and meet temporal needs, especially in such areas that are involved in tasks related to God's work.

Biblical principles -

- a. The Greek word used to describe this gift is *diakonia*, a word meaning to wait on tables. It has to do with meeting the most humble, basic needs of a person: food, clothing, shelter.
- b. Onesiphorus exercised this gift in II Tim. 1:16-18 when he brought Paul necessities in prison. The effects were spiritual blessing ("he often refreshed me"). A person with this gift does not care about the dignity of his service ("he was not ashamed of my chains"). No need is beneath him to meet; no helpful errand is too menial.
- c. In Matthew 25:34-36 we are told that we are to feed, clothe, doctor, visit, shelter people with physical needs. This is the ministry of service. See also Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 6:1-6.

## HELPS

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The ability to invest time and talents into the lives of other Christians, thus freeing them to be more effective in their ministries.

Biblical principles -

- a. It is difficult to distinguish between this gift and "service", but the overall use of this word tends to indicate that it is more specific than *diakonia*. It seems to refer to a "one on one" ministry in which the helper meets the temporal needs of someone else to free him up to use his gifts. It means, literally, to "take for" someone else.
- b. In Acts 20:34-35 Paul says "I worked with my hands to supply my own needs...by this kind of hard work we must support the weak" Here the word is used to mean "support".
- c. In Luke 8:1-3, we are told that a group of women attached themselves to Jesus and the apostles to provide them with food and other necessities. This was a supportive ministry which freed them up to minister their own gifts.
- d. In Numbers 11:16-17, certain elders are chosen to help Moses carry out administrative duties to free him up from the burden. It is clear that this was a person-centered (Moses-centered) ministry which was spiritually endowed (v.17).
- e. Persons with these gifts are excellent at aiding and supporting leaders in ministry.

## MERCY

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The ability to feel love and sympathy for people who are suffering, to alleviate the suffering through kind deeds.

Biblical principles -

- a. All Christians are to show mercy to the helpless and the suffering (1 Thess. 5:14). Yet not everyone has the gift of mercy.
- b. The attribute of God called "mercy" refers to the fact that God is moved by the sight of suffering to compassionately relieve it. So, in man, mercy is the deep capacity for sympathy for the suffering.
- c. Notice that in Luke 17:11-14; Matt. 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52, Jesus' response to suffering lepers and blind men is called "mercy". He had compassion on the disfigured and unlovely people which the world shuns and ignores. The classic example of mercy is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37, see v. 37).
- d. A person with the gift of mercy can stand to be in the presence of persons or situations that most people would find unpleasant.

## HOSPITALITY

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The ability to generously and cheerfully open one's home for food and lodging to others in such a way as to minister spiritually to them.

Biblical principles -

- a. It is possible that I Peter 4:9,10 could be read like this: "Exercise hospitality; and whatever your gift is, use it."
- b. All Christians have the duty of hospitality (Romans 12:9-13). Church officers must not be weak in hospitality (Titus 1:8). But experience shows that some people have a special ability to bless people spiritually even while refreshing them emotionally and physically through an open home.
- c. The Greek word for hospitality means literally "love for strangers". This means that:
  - (1) We should share our home with anyone: strangers (Heb.13:2), needy brethren (Rom.12:13), brethren (Romans 12:10), traveling Christian workers (III John 5-10). NOTE: We are to refuse it only to people who are propagating false religion. (I doubt this means we cannot invite cultists into our homes. It means that we cannot give such people the kind of support and strengthening which will encourage their ministry.)
  - (2) Lev. 19:33,34 tells something of the actual nature of hospitality. The stranger must be treated "as one of your own". This is a basis for the important distinction between "entertaining" and hospitality. In hospitality, the guest is treated and accepted as part of the family. Obviously, a healthy home life is a tremendous foundation for the gift of hospitality. Again, godliness increases the effectiveness of a gift. However, some persons exercise a hospitality gift with an unsaved spouse and children.
  - (3) A clear mark of hospitality is that it is done "without grumbling" (I Peter 4:9). That is, the person with a hospitality gift does not find it wearing to have his/her privacy disrupted and living space encroached upon. (This is not to say that everyone does not need privacy, but people without the gift of hospitality are more quickly exhausted by hospitality.) It is the hospitable Christian's love and openness that is so spiritually refreshing.
- d. See Genesis 18:1-8 for an example of hospitality. Gen. 18 is the reason for the warning of Heb. 13:2. See also Acts 16:15; Romans 16:23.

### SPECIAL NOTE:

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The gifts of service, helps, giving, mercy, and hospitality are gifts that exist in large numbers throughout the Body of Christ. It is very possible that persons with these diaconal gift clusters outnumber other kinds of gifts and gift clusters. Yet churches seldom have many established offices and programs which can harness the tremendous potential of these members of the Body. The standard positions for "church workers" are for teachers, leaders, and administrators.

But Jesus was mighty in word and deed (Luke 24:19). He came to proclaim and to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). In the church, ministry to the physical-material needs of people was given to the deacons, who were to mobilize the gifts of the Body for ministry inside and outside the church.

1. Inside the church there is the need:
    - a. For workers to do the innumerable errands and tasks surrounding the ministries of the church, such as set-up, maintenance or facilities, food preparation, etc. (Gifts of service)
    - b. For workers to stir up, encourage, and undergird the ministry of stewardship in the congregation. (Gifts of giving and administration)
    - c. For workers to meet physical-material needs of individuals in the church, such as the elderly, the sick and shut-in, the disabled, the single-parent family, the institutionalized, the unemployed, the bereaved, or the victims of any other financial or natural disaster or mishap. (Gifts of service, helps, mercy, giving, hospitality)
  2. Outside the church, diaconally gifted workers need to be teamed with evangelistically gifted workers in ministries to the general community, namely, to the poor, the prisoners, the aged, the widows and orphans, the refugee, the mentally and physically disabled, and disaster victims. Child care services, problem pregnancy counseling, meals on wheels, big brother/sister programs, clothing exchanges, job placement/counseling, economic cooperatives, substance abuse counseling, financial counseling, health clinics, community centers are just a few of the ways in which churches may use the multitude of diaconal gifts in our midst.
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## DECISION MAKING DEED GIFTS

### FAITH

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The ability to understand and work for God's will and purposes with exceptional confidence.

Biblical principles -

- a. Obviously, faith in Jesus Christ is something all Christians have (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-25), yet Paul says that not all Christians have the gift of faith (I Cor. 12:9).
- b. The Bible tells us that faith has these effects on us:
  - (1) Romans 4:18-21 tells us that faith enables us to persevere in obedience to God when public opinion, folk wisdom, and even common sense militates against it.
  - (2) Matt. 17:19-21; Mark 11:22-24 indicates that prayer gives us confidence for the success of even big "mountain" ministry tasks. The apostles could not drive out demons for their lack of faith.
- c. If these are the effects of faith in all of our lives, we could expect a person with the gift of faith to have them in greater proportion. When a person uses faith as a gift it encourages and strengthens individuals, groups, and can galvanize the whole church into action.

### WISDOM

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The ability to apply truth and knowledge to concrete situations in such a way as to know the best course of action in any situation.

Biblical principles -

- a. All Christians can attain wisdom (James 1:5-8), yet there is a spiritual gift of wisdom (I Cor. 12:7,8; Deut. 34:9)
- b. In the Bible, there are a large number of words all translated as "wisdom". All are related to the basic definition of wisdom, namely, to know the most practical means to achieve godly goals. One word for wisdom, shakal, means "to be successful".
- c. In I Kings 3:5-28 we see Solomon asking for the gift of wisdom. Solomon in the incident recorded, is able to devise the best plan for revealing which person was telling a lie. Notice, he did not have spiritual discernment directly into who was telling a lie; he used wisdom to find out. Wisdom is problem-centered; discernment is people-centered.
- d. Wisdom is a natural companion to administration, though they are not identical. A wise person may not be terribly organized! Acts 6:3, and 10 show that church officers can use the gift of wisdom. See also II Pet.3:15; I Cor.2:1-13; James 1:5-6.

## KNOWLEDGE

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The ability to discover, organize, relate and classify information and ideas.

Biblical principles -

- a. All Christians have knowledge (Rom. 15:14), but not all have the gift of knowledge (I Cor. 12:8).
  - b. In I Cor. 13:2, the person with knowledge can "fathom mysteries". He or she is able to "get his mind around" big ideas or a lot of ideas. He can create helpful intellectual constructs that enable him to process lots of information in a comprehensible form.
  - c. We must be careful to distinguish a naturally brilliant mind from the spiritual gift of knowledge. In Matt. 16:13-17, Peter "puts it all together". He had received a lot of pieces of information about Jesus over a period of time, but finally he sees how they all tie together. Jesus tells him that this knowledge is a gift of God.
  - d. Eph.3:14-19 says that the spiritual gift of knowledge helps the person to comprehend the "height, width, depth, and breadth". For more on this gift, see Col. 2:2-3.
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## OTHER POTENTIAL SPIRITUAL GIFTS OR TALENTS

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER

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The ability to have special perseverance and joy in intercessory prayer and to have significant effectiveness in answered prayer.

Biblical principles -

- a. Intercessory prayer is strenuous (Col.4:2; Luke 22:40-46). When done properly it takes a great deal of physical and spiritual energy. Prayer is "wrestling" (Col. 4:2)
- b. Intercessory prayer is time consuming (see how the church prayed for Peter when he was imprisoned -Acts 12:1-17, esp. v. 5, 12)
- c. Intercessory prayer is to be specific (Col.1:9-12)
- d. Although we have no mention of prayer as a spiritual gift, experience indicates that some persons do have such a gift. When they pray in public, they make all around them better at prayer too!

### CRAFTSMANSHIP

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The ability to use hands and minds to further the kingdom of God through creative, artistic means.

Biblical Principles - In the Old Testament we are told that God can inspire artistic abilities in people which function as a spiritual gift. See II Chron. 34:9-13; Ex.30:22-25; 31:3-11.

### MUSIC

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The ability to use music to enhance the worship and joy of other believers in the Lord.

Biblical principles - Possibly, David's ability to musically banish Saul's depression was a spiritual gift (I Samuel 16). See also I Chron. 16:41-42; II Chron. 5:12-13; 34:12; Deut. 31:22.

### MISSIONARY

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The ability to minister in a culture which is not native to the gift-bearer.

Biblical principles -

- a. Paul claims to have this gift, though it is not mentioned in any of the gift lists (Eph.3:6-8).
- b. In I Cor. 9:19-23, Paul describes this gift in some detail. A missionary voluntarily (v.19) humbles himself (v.19) to become a servant to people who are very different from him. He adapts his ministry to each culture (v. 20-22). And he bears fruit in that culture (v.23)
- c. This gift like the other "heavy duty" gifts (missionary, martyrdom, celibacy) are actually the ability to use other gifts in difficult situations.
- d. Study also Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:21-28 for more on the work of the missionary.

## MARTYRDOM

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The ability to be undaunted by physical danger and to minister joyfully in such a context, through suffering and even to death.

Biblical principles - Paul mentions martyrdom along with a list of other gifts (I Cor. 13:3). All Christians who are grown in grace should be able to face suffering and death (Romans 5:1-4), but it is possible that martyrdom is a special calling for some (see Acts 7:54-60; Acts 8:1-4)

## CELIBACY

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The ability to minister as a single person with cheerfulness and without much sexual temptation.

Biblical principles - Paul describes another gift which is simply an ability to use other gifts in certain difficult situations. Celibacy (I Cor. 7:7-8) is also mentioned by Jesus (Matt. 19:10-12) that can be done for the sake of the kingdom. Of course, all Christians who are single can minister. Though you may not have the gift of sexual abstinence, it is still your duty (I Cor. 6:13-20)!