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Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift Part 1

Text: Ephesians 4:11-13

While I was happy for him and proud as a parent, I had mixed emotions when our son was accepted into the gifted and talented class at his elementary school. I’ve always thought such a class sent a terrible signal to those who were *not* in the class. Are those students not *gifted*? Are they not *talented*? The truth is, every child is gifted and has some ability, some skill. There was a song that was popular in the 1970s, titled “To be Young, Gifted and Black” (Lyrics by Weldon Irvine. Recorded by Nina Simone on her album, Black Gold). A friend of mine mused aloud, “What if you're old, not gifted and White?”

Every person on the planet has some gift planted in him/her by our Creator God. However,

1. Some live in an environment which does not encourage the exploration or development of their gift.
2. Some have not the mental capacity to unwrap their gift.
3. Some have no interest in rising above average. They do not wish to operate on a high skill level.

In this series, I want to explore what the bible calls spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4). The Greek word is *charisma.*

There are, in the second testament, three catalogs of spiritual gifts. Over these next weeks, we will look at Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. As we pull those three catalogs together, we will have an understanding of the spiritual gifts listed, a definition of each and how we are to use those gifts in the church today.

**A temptation and a purpose**

There is a great **temptation** to discover your gift and then use it for personal gain or aggrandizement.

This text in Ephesians 4, however, tells us that the Spirit gives gifts for a very specific **purpose**.

1. **For the equipping of the saints** (v.12). Who are the saints? The saints are ordinary believers and followers of Jesus the Christ. Saints are not deceased perfect people. They are disciples of Jesus. We help fellow saints grow as we use our gifts.

Greek word for *equip* is kartartismos (*kart-ar-tis-mos´).* It means to bring an object or a person to a point of completion or perfection. We *tool* the saints.

2. **For the edifying of the body of Christ** (12). The *body of Christ* is the church. We build up the church as we use our gifts. The church is made more sound when we use our gifts.

3. **To insure a certain kind of future for the church** (v.13). That is, we labor for a mature and maturing body of people. We use our gifts and help people to grow spiritually so that they, in the words of verse 13, are unified in faith, exhibit a clear knowledge of the Son of God and measure up to a full Christ experience. We use our spiritual gifts to stamp out spiritual immaturity (v. 14)

**Definitions**

Let’s look at these five gifts listed in verse 11 and define them.

1. Apostles- Note the language of the text. These gifts are *given* by God the Spirit. You don’t call *yourself* to be an apostle. Cf. I Corinthians 3:5 (*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed,* ***as the Lord gave to each one?***) Apostles and prophets have been mentioned previously, in 2:20 and 3:5 of Ephesians. Greek word, *apostolos*, means messenger, ambassador, envoy, one on a mission, one sent as an authoritative delegate. Apostles, as a class, would include **the original twelve disciples**, **Paul** (1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Galatians 1:1), **Barnabas** (Acts 14:14), **Andronicus** and **Junia** (Romans 16:7). **An apostle is one sent out, with authority to speak on behalf of Jesus**. In the first century, an apostle was also normally someone who had actually been taught directly by Jesus. Let me at the beginning of this series introduce a term: cessationist. A cessationist believes that some spiritual gifts and the need for them, have ceased. A cessationist would say we no longer have or need apostles because we no longer have anybody on the planet who was directly taught by Jesus. Cessationists would say it is inappropriate to call anyone Apostle Johnson or Apostle Smith today. The cessationist would say that we, the Church, are *all* sent out as ambassadors to speak of Christ. In this discussion of spiritual gifts, there will be some differing viewpoints between those who are cessationists and those who are not. Apostles are those who are sent out.
2. Prophets- Greek is *prophetes.* A prophet is one who speaks for God or a deity and interprets that deity’s will. In the first testament, prophets often predicted the future, foretelling what God would do. In the second testament, the role of the prophet is not so much *fore*telling but *forth*-telling. The prophet is a proclaimer. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, the one who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort. Cessationists would say that the role of prophet, just as the role of apostle, has ceased. They would say that God used the apostles and the prophets to lay a foundation (Ephesians 2:20). Now that the foundation is laid, we move on to build the work, through the exercise of our spiritual gifts. Perhaps we have no need of a Prophet Johnson or a Prophet Smith.
3. Evangelists- Greek is *euangelistes.* This is one who announces good news. This gift is an example of a gift that is both general and specific. *All* believers are to announce the good news that God has sent Jesus to the earth to take our sin upon Himself and die in our places on the cross, that we might be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). In addition to *all* of us believers being announcers, *specific* individuals are given the gift of evangelism and will announce the good news at a higher level with significantly different results. Billy Graham was an evangelist of note. He shared the good news and so do you and I, but with different results. 2 Timothy 4:5:

*But you (Timothy)be watchful in all things, endure afflictions,* ***do the work of an evangelist****, fulfill your ministry.*

**Illus*.***

In his book, *Good News Is for Sharing,* Leighton Ford, Billy Graham’s brother-in-law (married to Billy’s sister, Jean), wrote,

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| I was speaking at an open-air crusade in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Billy Graham was to speak the next night and had arrived a day early. He came incognito and sat on the grass at the rear of the crowd. Because he was wearing a hat and dark glasses, no one recognized him.  Directly in front of him sat an elderly gentleman who seemed to be listening intently to my presentation. When I invited people to come forward as an open sign of commitment, Billy decided to do a little personal evangelism. He tapped the man on the shoulder and asked, "Would you like to accept Christ? I'll be glad to walk down with you if you want to." The old man looked him up and down, thought it over for a moment, and then said, "Naw, I think I'll just wait till the big gun comes tomorrow night." Billy and I have had several good chuckles over that incident. Unfortunately, it underlines how, in the minds of many people, evangelism is the task of the "Big Guns," not the "little shots."  Lieghton Ford, Good News is for Sharing, 1977, David C. Cook Publishing Co., p. 67. |

D. Pastors- Greek word is *poimen* (pew-mane). The sense of the word is *shepherd* or *one who tends a flock*. A pastor is one who serves in a specific place and serves a congregation or assembly as primary proclaimer.

E. Teachers- Some have suggested that pastor-teacher is one gift since the word *some* does not appear between the two offices. I maintain that these are two separate gifts. Every teacher is not gifted to be a pastor and every pastor is not gifted to be a teacher. The Greek word for *teacher* is *didaskolos.* In Greek culture, the *didaskolos* was the master, the instructor, the one who imparted knowledge. Ray Pritchard says that of the 90 times Jesus was addressed directly in the gospels, 60 of those times he was called Teacher. ([christianity.com](http://christianity.com). Why Was Jesus Called “Teacher”?)

John 13:13:

*You call Me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.*

At the beginning of this series, I’d like us all to pray that God show us, clearly, what our gift is or what our gifts are. Every believer has at least *one*. Some of us who have been in ministry for some years, who are growing, maturing saints are aware of what the Holy Spirit expects of us. Others of you are newer and this is not familiar territory. The Church is at its *best* when people are serving in the areas of ministry for which the Holy Spirit has gifted them. We are at our *worst* when round pegs are in square holes and people are out of place.

Amen