

# An Overview of Gifts and Ministries

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Part II

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In Part I of this teaching on the gifts and ministries, we began by examining Ephesians 4:11-13.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (NIV)

These verses are what I call the job description of the church. They tell us that God has called everyone to a ministry in order to serve the church so that the body of Christ may be built up and the gospel proclaimed throughout the earth.

We then examined the gifts of 1) exhortation, 2) serving in the church, 3) giving, and 4) those who are called as helpers to someone already in the ministry. These gifts and ministries are found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

Let us continue now with the remaining gifts.

## 5. Those With Gifts of Administration

"... those with gifts of administration. . ." (1 Co 12:28 NIV)

The Greek word for administration here is **κυβερνησεις**, or *kubernaseis*. *Kubernaseis* has been translated into such English words as governments, gifts of administration, office of a governor or director, pilot, helmsman, and to steer.

Different Bible translators have used the following: administrators (RSV), organizers (Phillips), power to guide them (NEB), wise guides (BAS), those who get others to work together (Taylor), and managers (Beck).

To arrive at a Biblical sense of the word, here are two Scriptures that use *kubernaseis*.

But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the **pilot** and the owner of the ship.

(Act 27:11 NIV, emphasis indicates *kubernaseis*.)

"Every **sea captain**, and all who travel by ship . . ."

(Rev 18:17 NIV, emphasis indicates *kubernaseis*.)

The most common, and most narrow, view of the gift of administration is someone who administrates the church and its business affairs. These tasks include writing letters, maintaining records, overseeing payroll, ordering of supplies and equipment, and so on. A gifted administrator is also able to oversee and direct major church projects such as large outdoor crusades, building construction, and so forth.

However, there is a broader application of the Greek word as used in the New Testament. Theologian Hermann Wolfgang Beyer said of *kubernaseis*, "The reference can only be to the specific gifts which qualify a Christian to be a helmsman to his congregation, i.e., a true director of its order and therewith its life. What was the scope of this directive activity in the time of Paul we do not know. . . the importance of the helmsman increases in a time of storm. The office of directing the congregation may well have developed especially in emergencies both within and without. . . It is the grace of God to give gifts which

equip for government."<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus, believers with the gift of administration also seem to know the exact course or direction a church needs to follow. They know when a course change is due and how to effect it. Most often the pastor fulfills this role but a prophet, ruling elders, or others can also have and exercise this gift.

## 6. Mercy

"... if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (Rom 12:8 NIV) The Greek word for showing mercy is **ἐλεος**, or *eleos*. Kittel says of *eleos*, "It is an original sense of oneness with another, especially between parents and children or brothers and sisters. Since it is specifically evoked when the other is in trouble, it often amounts to pity or sympathy, though this is not the precise meaning. Love is a better rendering. It is typical. . . [to] denote the act or expression of love rather than the emotion. . . to denote gracious action rather than emotion. . . . The *eleos*. . . is found in Lk. 10:37 to describe the act of the Samaritan, and in concrete cases it denotes the showing of love and the act of mercy."<sup>(2)</sup>

*Eleos* is the word Jesus used when he said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Mat 5:7 NIV)

God has set some in the church who are genuinely merciful. That is their gift. These people extend the very hand of the Lord through acts of love, mercy and kindness. Of course, we are all to be merciful, but those with the gift of mercy go beyond this general call. Pastors usually have this gift as part of their ministry. It is what makes them nurturing servants of the Lord.

Paul even tells us that, when mercy is shown, it is to be done **cheerfully!** The word for cheerful in the Greek text is *ilarotati*, from which we get the English word *hilarious!* Therefore, those who minister mercy are to do so hilariously! And not surprisingly, those who show mercy also enjoy the additional benefit of receiving mercy for themselves in time of need. (See Mat. 5:7.)

## 7. Leadership

"If it is leadership, let him govern diligently; . . ." (Rom 12:8 NIV) I believe that the word *leadership* as used here in Romans is not to be regarded as a separate ministry function. Careful examination of the Greek text tells us that Paul is specifically referring to the leadership aspect of ministry of those who are *already* leaders in the church. His statement appears to be an exhortation to those who are in leadership to be diligent and faithful in their charge.

The Greek word for leadership is **προϊσταμι**, or *proistami*. *Proistami* is used eight times in the New Testament in its various forms. Its verb form means "to lead, to care for, to rule, to take care of." Kittel's dictionary states, "According to the context the task of *proistamenois* is in large measure that of pastoral care . . . In this case the reference is quite definitely to official leaders in the churches. . . If a man know not how to rule (*prostanai*) his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? (1 Tm 3:5)"<sup>(3)</sup>

Thus, I conclude that leadership is simply a function of those in church government and is not a separate service ministry.

**Spontaneous Gifts** - Let us now focus on the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12. All of the gifts listed there operate at the spontaneous leading of the Holy Spirit with the cooperation of willing human agency (with minor exceptions previously noted in footnote 5 of Part I). Paul writes,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Co 12:4-11 NIV)

Often these nine gifts have been divided into three groups: 1) vocal gifts, 2) power gifts, and 3) revelation gifts. I agree with this division.

**1. Vocal Gifts** - The three gifts in this category are called vocal gifts because they all involve speaking. These gifts are different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy.

Notice that I have not listed the private, personal, devotional use of tongues available to anyone who asks Jesus for it (Lk 11:13) as one of the gifts. Although most pentecostals refer to all speaking in tongues as using the gift of tongues, from my research, I do not believe that the personal, private devotional use of tongues is ever called a "gift" in Scripture. For that reason, I will not address it here.

Thus when I speak here of the vocal gifts, I mean the exercise of a gift which requires a speaker and at least one hearer and which is given for the benefit of the church. In this context, the three vocal gifts are, a) speaking in a language which has not been learned, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, (such as what happened on the day of Pentecost), b) a spoken message, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to be given publicly in a meeting of believers which is to be interpreted, and c) prophecy.

#### **a. Different Kinds of Tongues**

". . . those speaking in different kinds of tongues . . ." (1 Co 12:28 NIV, see also 1 Co 12:10.)

The clearest example of the operation of this gift is found in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit fell on the 120 who were gathered. After they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, they went into the streets speaking in the new tongues the Holy Spirit had given them.

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears

them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites . . ." (Act 2:6-9 NIV)

The operation of this gift of the Holy Spirit, of speaking in different kinds of tongues, is the supernatural ability to speak in a known language without having learned that language. Clearly that is what happened in the Scripture above.

I know people who have operated this gift. One man I know, under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, began to carry on a conversation in an unknown tongue with a perfect stranger. When her interpreter arrived, he found out he had led her to Christ by conversing with her and telling her about Him in her native language, a language he had never heard of before. This true story is a wonderful illustration of the operation of this gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### **b. The Interpretation of Tongues**

Occasionally the Holy Spirit will move on someone in a service to audibly speak forth a message using an unknown language, or tongue. This message has been prompted by the Holy Spirit. (see 1 Co 14:13,26.) When this happens, the Holy Spirit is the source and the message is to be interpreted.

One of the nine spontaneous gifts of the Holy Spirit is imparting to someone present the ability to interpret the message that has been spoken. Paul encouraged those who bring such messages to pray that they might also interpret them (v 13). However, the Spirit may lead anyone present to interpret the message. When the message spoken in tongues is interpreted aloud in the known language of the hearers, that is the operation of the interpretation of tongues.

#### **c. Prophecy**

". . . If a man's gift is prophesying let him use it in proportion to his faith." (Rom 12:6 NIV, see also 1 Co 12:10)

God has placed in the church people who operate the gift of prophecy. Paul wrote, "But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." (1 Co 14:3 NIV) Anyone may operate the gift of prophecy, for Paul also tells us that ". . . you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged." (1 Co 14:31 NIV, emphasis added.)

In its simplest form, prophecy is God speaking to people through a human agent. Webster's dictionary defines prophecy as "in [the] New Testament, [the] gift of speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit; predictions of the future under the influence of divine guidance; [the] act or practice of a prophet. Specifically, the divinely inspired utterance or utterances of a prophet."<sup>(4)</sup>

But I want to make one point clear. The operation of the gift of prophecy *does not mean that the person speaking is a prophet*. Obviously prophets also operate the gift of prophecy from time to time, but the mere operation of the gift of prophecy does not make one a prophet.<sup>(5)</sup>

**2. Power Gifts** - The power gifts are so named because their operation demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, no praise is ever to be given the vessel through whom the Holy Spirit chooses to move. All praise and glory always goes to Jesus.

**a. Faith** - “. . .to another faith by the same Spirit. . .” (1 Co 12:9 NIV) Faith as it is listed here is to be considered differently from the faith mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. There are two kinds of faith, 1) growing faith, and 2) the gift of faith.

Growing faith is that measure of faith God has given every believer. (See Romans 12:3.) As every Christian uses it properly in the kingdom, it grows. The parable of the mustard seed speaks of this kind of growing faith.

The gift of faith is different. It is that supernatural impartation from the Spirit of God to an individual to believe God for miracles. For example, when Peter and John looked on the crippled beggar in Acts 3, Peter believed God was going to heal the man. I don't think Peter woke up that morning and said, "God is going to heal that beggar by the temple gate today." I believe that faith came to Peter at the moment he encountered the beggar.

Thus, the gift of faith comes to a believer in a point in time, for a specific purpose. If the believer steps out in that faith, God performs a miracle. It may be healing, financial, relational, or whatever.

**b. Gifts of Healing** - “. . . those having gifts of healing . . .”

God, by the Holy Spirit, has distributed this gift to various people in the church. This gift is usually first manifested by a strong desire to lay hands on and pray for those who are sick.

The use of the plural, "gifts" implies that there is more than one operation of the gift. Many believe that the plural was used to indicate the various means God uses to heal people. By that I mean someone may be instantly healed, or healed supernaturally fast, (in days or hours rather than weeks or months), or is simply healed in spite of all known medical predictions that the sick person would not recover. Finally, I do believe God uses medication to heal. He has certainly called some of His people into the medical profession.

**c. Miraculous Powers**

Anyone to whom the Holy Spirit gives ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, *energamata dunameon*, may become a "worker of miracles" as the Holy Spirit leads.

The biblical example of this gift that comes to mind is when Paul witnessed the gospel to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Paphos.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. (Acts 13:9-11 NIV)

Here Paul exercised the Holy Spirit gift of working of miracles *to remove an obstacle to the gospel*. As a result of Paul's working a miracle, Sergius Paulus was saved. I know an African apostle who, on several occasions, has raised the dead. As a result of this apostle raising the dead, thousands of African Muslims have received Jesus as Savior.

I believe this gift is available to Christians today who are very mature and who are moving in their ministry call. These miraculous powers are the signs and wonders of their ministry.

**3. Revelation Gifts** - These gifts are called revelation gifts because the Holy Spirit *reveals* information to the believer. These gifts come to the believer as information or knowledge, rather than power, or a message to be spoken.

**a. Distinguishing Between Spirits** - Man is primarily, and eternally, a spirit. He has a soul which gives him his intelligence, emotions and will, and he lives in a body which allows him contact with the material world. But from God's perspective, man is primarily a spirit. Everyone has, or rather is, a spirit.

This natural world we live in is also inhabited by invisible, spirit beings. The Bible calls them demons. Demons often invade the human race in order to promote their own agenda to help them fulfill their evil ambitions. They try to rob, kill, and destroy anyone they can. (Jn 10:10)

Demons can influence people to speak and act according to the demon's will. But to the observer, it is the person that he *sees and hears* doing the speaking and acting. This same, subtle demonic influence can even be involved in what appears to be everyday life such as the work place, or the family environment, or church life, or wherever.

The gift of discerning of spirits is the supernatural ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to perceive the presence and activity of demonic spirits. This gift gives someone the ability to distinguish between human and demon spirits. For example, when a parent is dealing with a stubborn or willful child, this gift allows the parent to know if he or she is dealing with a stubborn child or a demon spirit.

This information, or revelation, is given for a specific purpose. We are to learn how to act and how to pray about what the Spirit has revealed. If demonic forces are involved, we have authority over them and can expel them. In Luke 10:19 Jesus gave us authority over all demons. This gift of discerning of spirits is a very valuable tool which I am afraid has been largely lost in much of the church today.

**b. Word or Message of Wisdom** - There are times in the life and ministry of a person when circumstances have you in a corner and you simply don't know what to do. Remember when the two prostitutes brought a living child before Solomon, each claiming to be the mother? (1 Kings 3) Scripture tells us that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. It also tells us where he got his wisdom, from God.

Using the wisdom God gave him, Solomon proposed to cut the living child into two halves, giving a half to each woman. His God-given wisdom knew that the real mother would not agree, and that the deceiving mother would. The same Holy Spirit who gave Solomon this wisdom lives in each of us and is fully capable of speaking such wisdom into our lives when the occasion arises.

In short, a message or word of wisdom is that wisdom that comes directly from God as to what to do, what to say, or how to act, in a given situation.

### c. Word or Message of Knowledge

One day Jesus was talking with a Samaritan woman who was very taken with His words. (Jn 4) He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." (Jn 4:16-18 NIV)

This is a Scriptural example of a word of knowledge. I define a word, or message, of knowledge as facts or information, from the mind of God, transmitted into the mind of a believer. It usually occurs at the precise time of need. It is information that one suddenly knows without having learned it by natural means. This information, or knowledge from the mind of God, provides immediate guidance.

Once a missionary friend and I were in a taxi entering an ancient section of a city in Africa. We had scarcely entered the gate when I began to sense immediate danger. Without a word being spoken, suddenly my friend grabbed the driver's shoulders and shouted, "Driver, stop! Our lives are in danger! Turn around and get us out of here NOW!" To which I said, "Amen!"

To this day I don't know what the enemy had waiting for us in that old city, but I do believe that the Holy Spirit, through a word of knowledge about a present danger, saved our lives.

### How to Discover and Develop Your Call

Of course it is not enough just to study the various gifts. The Lord wants us to find out what our gifts are and then to develop them for the benefit of the church and the lost. So let's look at the question, "How do you know what your ministry call is?"

The answer is, at least in part, and however subjective it sounds, that the Lord will show you your call. Usually, a recognition of the call comes from certain inner characteristics present in one who is called, combined with the leading of the Holy Spirit, as well as confirmation from the spiritual leaders around you. In other words, it is usually a combination of factors which will ultimately confirm your call. And as you begin developing that call, it will be more and more confirmed to you.

But how do you develop your call? First, and most important, you must pursue Bible knowledge. You must get to know Jesus. This is foundational to every ministry call. Pursue good, solid Bible knowledge from whatever means available to you. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." (NIV)

Then, while you are doing this, begin to involve yourself in your local church in such a way that your gift can be expressed. For example, if your gift seems to be mercy, volunteer to visit the sick, or join a hospital ministry. If it is administration, begin to help run programs at the church or in your community. If it is giving, begin to look for ways to give, allowing the Holy Spirit to point out needs to which you can contribute.

Another very effective way to develop your gift is to apprentice yourself to those around you with the same gift. Learn from them. Ask them questions and then listen to their answers. And remember, don't be discouraged. It takes years, even decades, to develop our gifts into full maturity.

I close with a verse from the parable of the talents. (Mat 25:14-30) This parable teaches us that the Lord's will for us is to develop our talents and gifts so that they multiply for the benefit of His church and the world around us. As we are obedient to this call, we will place ourselves in the position to hear those wonderful words, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Mat 25:21 NIV) Amen, Lord, let it be so!

1. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Fredrich, editors, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich., Volume III, page 1036.

2. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Fredrich, editors, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich., Vol. II, Pages 481,483.

3. . *Ibid.*, Volume VI, Pages 702,703 and *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Page 344.

4. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, Second College Edition, David B. Guralnik, Editor in Chief; World Publishing Co., Inc.

5. For a full understanding of the difference between the prophet and one who operates the gift of prophecy, I refer the reader to our book, *Prophets and Prophecy In Today's Church*, by Jim and Carolyn Murphy.

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