

IX. Spiritual Gifts in Biblical Perspective  
*Discovering, Developing and Deploying our Spiritual Gifts*  
“Spiritual Gifts – Unity in Diversity, Part 2”

Ephesians 4:1–16

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This is God’s Word for the people of God to the glory of God, by the grace of God in the hearing of the people of God. Ephesians 3:20-21 says [20] *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

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 in our ninth study on spiritual gifts on how to discover, develop and deploy them in the body of Christ, for the cause of Christ as each of us our good stewards. We have identified four texts and they aren’t the only texts for there are three other key texts – one in the Old Testament (the account of the building of the tabernacle and how their gifts were used to accomplish the building of it) and two more from the teaching of Jesus in the parables (the parable of the minas, the parable of the talents).

From the four texts we have been looking at there are two authors – Peter and Paul. We looked at I Peter 4:10-11 where we had these five framing principles. Then we began looking at what Paul has written in three texts of Scripture – I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, where we are now. For me Ephesians 4 has been a life changing passage in terms of my calling as a pastor/teacher in the body of Christ. I wish we could do much more justice to this text than we’re able but I do believe we can distill some things that will help us in our stewardship of spiritual gifts. In our study of these four texts here is a statement that puts it all together. A spiritual gift is a God designed, God delivered, ministry resource to be used for God’s glory in concert with other believers enabling Christ’s church to effectively exalt Christ in word and deed.

As we get into this text in Ephesians 4, I want to give you a couple of thoughts. In a great part of my life, I have studied leaders to try and learn from them and here is something I’ve noticed from every effective and great leader I’ve studied – they do not live their lives serendipity for they live their lives intentionally and it shows up as them being very predictable. They have prioritized what makes them effective as they embrace that and that becomes the foundation in the rhythms of their life.

It makes me think of my granddaddy (my father’s father) who was up every morning at 5:30 praying. I know he prayed for me because God used him to pray me into the Kingdom. At 6am he had is cereal and milk and I always knew what was happening at that time of the morning when I would stay with them because he was the loudest cereal eater that has ever existed for every time he went in for another spoonful he would hit the inside of the bowl each time. I would typically be up by 6:10am after hearing him eat his cereal. Then he would go on with what was next in his schedule – they were the routines of life. He had this regularity about him and that is something I’ve noticed about people who are maturing in life for there is a regularity in life.

Paul is no different. Whenever Paul picks up a pen, unless a church has sent some questions to him (I and II Corinthians) or writing to individuals (Titus, Philemon, I and II Timothy), he will take the first half of the epistle to tell you who you are in Christ as he communicates the secured Gospel blessings in Christ for you. This is our identity in life as a believer. I am in Christ, Christ is in me. All that I am and will be has been secured by Him, rooted in the saving work He did on the cross and affirmed in the resurrection on the third day. Then he will end that first section with a doxology because of what Christ has done, which is what we read at the beginning of this study from Ephesians 3:20-21. Now we're ready to live for Christ so then in the last half of the epistle Paul talks about what believers do for Christ, your Savior and Lord. It is not what you do for salvation.

There was a man who was a wonderful discipler and when I heard the acronym he used when discipling which was know-be-do, I first thought it was some Star Wars character, but it's not. It is 'know' who you are in Christ because of Christ. When you know that then you are ready to 'be' who you ought to be for Christ, which means you can now 'do' for Christ. Jesus came in your place to do it for you as He wiped away the penalties for what you had been doing. Jesus gives you His righteousness and now He gives you the Holy Spirit so you can be what you know you are in Christ and do what you do for Christ. It's so important to understand this and that's why Paul repeats it constantly.

What is the first thing Paul wants you to know about what you do for Christ? It's not be happy, it's be holy. We aren't looking for the world's definition of happiness for we are blessed and that is secured. Ephesians 1:3 says [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.* That's what he does in Romans. For 11 chapters praise God for everything that is to Him, for Him and in Him. Then Romans 12:1 says [1] *I (Paul) appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* Notice it is not 'for' mercies. Now let's look at what Paul does in Ephesians.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul repeats in some fashion the phrase 'in Christ' and 'accepted in the beloved' 28 times and after giving the benediction in Ephesians 3:20-21 he says this in Ephesians 4:1, [1] *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...* You can't do it for in Christ is your only Hope so now that you have the power and salvation of God, now you can walk in a manner worthy.

The Pauline Gospel is the first thing Paul gives to us in Ephesians 4:1-3 which says [1] *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Paul wants us to be holy, not to be saved but because we're saved. The call is to belong to Christ in life, to holiness, now do what you are because of who you are in Christ. We can see the list of the wonderful works of Christ that we studied in the last study starting with humility. We don't create the unity in Christ but we are given the power to maintain and mature it in the body of Christ.

That brings me to the second thing we looked at in the last study which was unity with diversity. We have a God given unity and it's not in us, from us or because of us. Our unity is in Christ. We are unified in the Trinity for the Father has authored our creation and redemption, the Son has accomplished it and the Holy Spirit has and is applying it in our life. We see this in Ephesians 4:4-7 which says [4] *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the*

*one hope that belongs to your call— [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

We have unity and diversity. We are not saved in a group plan. The gate is narrow into the Kingdom of God and only one fits through at a time. You have to make a personal commitment to Christ – born again. I know whom I have believed, but you're not saved to live alone, in the arrogance of isolation or the fears of withdrawal. We are saved individually but we are saved to live interdependently. This is why Paul is using this picture of the body here in Ephesians.

Paul's word pictures for the church are the same pictures used in the Old and New Testament – all except one and that is the body of Christ. I think Luke, the doctor, probably proofread all of Paul's writings. Luke knew Paul did well in history and law, but perhaps he wasn't sure when it came to biology. So, Paul doesn't get carried away in his biological declarations but he does make a clear point. There is one body of Christ. There are local churches manifesting it there is only one body of Christ that is serving Him. Jesus in His ascended body is working through the body Christ now until He comes again for us and that body is made up of every believer with every believer having a spiritual gift and no part of the body can say they can function on their own, in arrogance and pride and no part of the body can withdraw out of jealousy and envy of someone else's gifts in ministry because every ministry, every gift is important. So, we have God given unity and God enabled diversity as God has put a constellation of spiritual gifts into your life that are constantly developing, and each one is uniquely gifted to serve the body of Christ. This is why we are studying this matter of spiritual gifts.

Secondly, to operate with your spiritual gifts, we need contentment in the Lord and we need commitment in the body of Christ. We need to be engaged and content with what God has given to us. We don't necessarily be status quo for we want to be developing our gifts so that we are more effective with it but it's not that we pick and choose because God is the one who gave us the gift. Remember the internal gifts are more important than the external so the things that usually get a lot of attention aren't usually as important as the ones that people don't really see, even as this is true in your physical body. I can almost imagine Luke and Paul having a discussion about that.

Thirdly, is our benevolent Redeemer who we need to praise – the risen ascended Jesus. Ephesians 4:8-10 says [8] *Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."* [9] *(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [10] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)* Paul is telling us that Jesus descended to become a Man, even to the point of an atoning death on the cross, and then to the grave. Satan thought he had won the victory yet on the third day would be the declaration that Christ had won the victory. Jesus would ascend back into heaven as He is leading a host of captives and then He is giving gifts to men.

If you lived in the first century you may not have ever witnessed this but you would know about this for this is what they did with kings. As kings would leave the throne to put on their armor for battle, descend into the valley to fight the battle and when the king won, he'd return with prisoners tied to his chariots that he had taken – the captives – as he ascended back up to his throne. The best historical record of this is from the Emperor of Pompeii. Pompeii was so powerful and victorious that they even had a slave stand in the chariot with him to remind him

that he was just a man, but we have the Christ who became a Man without giving up His deity. Now He ascends, fully God and fully Man, victorious, having defeated His enemies – sin, Satan, death, hell, and the grave. Jesus is leading captive a host of captives. They were captive but He emancipated them and now they have been captured to Him and for Him which is the body of Christ. We were His enemies but when He defeated all His enemies that He will destroy when He returns, you He saved. You are His and you have been captured by His grace. He is yours and when He ascended you have already ascended with Him for you are in Christ. You have been bought with His blood, you belong to Him and all whom He has captured by His grace, He loses not one.

The king would also have all the booty of his campaign. Some of it would be piled in the chariot and as he rode through the street ascending to his throne, he would throw the booty from the chariot out to the people – gifts given to the people whom he has secured in his victory from the battle. Jesus has ascended and now He gives gifts, but there is a problem here in this analogy. Psalm 68:18 says *[18] You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in Your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there.* It says here He was receiving gifts from men, did Paul make a mistake? No.

Paul wrote that He is giving gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8) and the Psalmist wrote that He was receiving gifts from men. Is He receiving or giving? Is the Bible inerrant? No, the Bible cannot contradict itself. So, what is the answer? This is the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is pointing to Christ and the New Testament is pointing back to what Christ has done and is doing. Here is the prophetic and here is the fulfillment. In the Old Testament there is coming a King and when He has won the victory, He will receive the fruits of His victory which is His people and His authority as Messiah, as King. Hasn't Jesus always been King? Yes, but not as a Man.

He has always been King over everything but now He is the Messiah King. Now He has descended and humbled Himself as He has taken upon Himself humanity. Now He takes our place as He redeems us and now ascends as the Father gives Him His people and His Kingdom. Jesus **receives** that from the Father as the perfect God Man Messiah and Redeemer. Now He rules not just profoundly as the Son of God but now even more profoundly as the Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah, having not just creation dominion over everything but now redemption dominion. He has captured His people for the Kingdom of Light, redemption and grace. Now as He has received this Kingdom from the Father, He is ready to give.

That is why when He sees His people, He says in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." He has received it. Now He gives us authority and power through the Holy Spirit as the Gospel and the Word of God is given to us. The mission, message and ministries are being given to us and the gifts to empower and direct us are going to be given to us. Our gift came from Christ who received authority to give it to you because of what He did on the cross so how can we not steward that gift and use it that was purchased for us? So, we have this glorious benevolent King who has secured our redemption and give gifts to man. Then Paul starts to name some of these gifts.

Ephesians 4:11-12 says *[11] And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds (pastors) and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*

Fourthly, the body's foundational and functional leadership, gifts and individuals. He not only gives gifts but He gives people. He gave us real people to be Apostles, Prophets and then there is Timothy, with the gift of evangelism. How many gifts are listed there? I know some

would say five but I think there are four due to the construction of the Greek here. In the Greek translations it translates this way; He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers. It doesn't say again after pastors, some as. In other words, pastors and teachers is a dual responsibility that they have to shepherd and feed the flock to equip the saints.

One on one discipleship is important but the Bible is clear that one to a small group is also discipleship. I'm trying to unfold the Scriptures here for you and it's also important that discipleship is apart of the gathered worship on the Lord's Day. The pastor/teacher pulls the trigger on discipleship by equipping the saints and that's discipleship. Then it cascades into the congregational communities, then to a small group and then whenever necessary to one on one for a season and a reason.

Is the listing of gifts here in Ephesians 4 chronological? No. If it was chronological then prophets would have come before apostles. It is a functional listing and not a chronological listing. Let me put it this way; can an apostle be a prophet? Yes. Can an apostle be an evangelist? Yes, and yes to pastors and teachers. Can a prophet be an evangelist or a pastor/teacher? Yes, but can a prophet be an apostle? No, because an apostle is one who has been with Jesus. Apostles and Prophets give us the foundations of God's Word revealed (Ephesians 2) while they do evangelism and equipping (pastor/teacher work). The evangelists spread the Word (pioneers). The pastor/teachers equip (homesteaders). How do you tell the difference between the pioneers and the homesteaders? The pioneers have arrows in their backs and the homesteaders have them in their chests. These are not all the gifts that are given but are the Word leadership gifts that are foundational and functional which is how Paul lists them for us.

Fifthly, with this foundation of the leadership gifts around the Word of God, how does this body function? Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 4:13-16, *[13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

Thank you, Lord, for the apostles and prophets through whom You gave the Word, for the evangelists who spread the Word, and the pastor/teachers who do the equipping so we can grow up. We have a child like faith but we don't act childish. There is maturity that takes place. There are no temper tantrums. Christian temper tantrums dishonor Christ and the ramifications of it are just astonishing. Let's grow up, be built up and get engaged in each other's lives. This is why all these gifts listed here which are foundational gifts are so crucial.

Then we speak truth in love. As Bishop Ryle said, 'Truth without love is barbarity, love without truth is cruelty.' We don't sacrifice love in the name of truth and we don't sacrifice truth in the name of love. Only the Spirit of God can give us that kind of lifestyle and only the process of discipleship can mature it in our life so that we are stewards of these glorious gifts that have been given to us in and through the Lord.

Notice another thing Paul points out in this Ephesians passage, we are no longer tossed to and fro for these is stability. There is also maturity, faithfulness and effectiveness for Christ. I was doing some study for the sermon series on Sunday nights on the challenges of parenting and

this man said of this family that was pretty poor and never had a vacation so they told their children they were going to have a vacation. While they were getting packed one of their kids went out back to this ditch where they played in this stagnant water and all. The parents said 'come on we're going to the ocean to have fun.' The kid just started screaming 'I don't want to leave; I don't want to leave' as he sat in that filthy ditch as the parents are trying to get him to the ocean to enjoy. The child had no idea and he couldn't comprehend it.

Our Lord has so much for us to grow in grace, maturity, to be effective, stability and so many times we're playing in a ditch instead of receiving God's given Word through evangelists, teaching, pastors, preaching and discipleship. We are to busy with other things that we think are important and yet the Lord is ready to wash us, refresh us, renew us, encourage us and empower us.

Here is my takeaway. I got this from two pastors, one is Alister Begg and the other I can't remember his name. So, what do we do to be good stewards of our spiritual gifts? We show up. I am so grateful for technology for those who are shut in, those who are vulnerable, and those who are providentially hindered, for us to get to you the worship services for you to watch where you are, but it's not worship for worship is full contact. It is speaking to one another, greeting one another, confessing to one another, singing to one another, praying with one another. Hebrews 10:24-25 says [24] *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] **not neglecting to meet together (assembling together), as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Show up!***

I hope you will give me the judgment of charity here. I want to disciple you and my number one way to do that is expositional preaching and then praying for you, but I can't do it if you are not there. The beginning point to discipleship is very crucial. Pastor/teachers are trying to preach/teach the Word to equip you but if it's not important to you then it can't get done. I'm just exhorting you not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the habit of some. Again, show up.

Secondly, eat up, just devour God's Word while you hear it, read it, sing it, confess it and hear it preached. Eat up God's Word!

Thirdly, let's grow up and act like men of God and women of God in the body of Christ, speaking truth in love to one another.

Fourthly, let's stand up, stand up for Jesus.

Fifthly, speak up. This is what I go through with every high school senior. I meet with them in the spring of their senior year and these five points is basically what I share with them from Psalm 1. I tell them when they get to college, I will give them three months to find a church and then I'm going to track you down. Then I tell them to show up and while they are there to eat up. Then we need to grow up and we need to stand up in a world that is telling us to sit down. Then you don't just stand up but you speak up. Jesus is Lord!

Let's all show up in our gifts. Let's eat up in the ministry of our spiritual gifts. Let's grow up through the Word and the Spirit to maturity and stability. We want childlike faith but not childish lifestyles. Stand up and let's speak up. The world needs to hear His voice – let the earth hear His voice for He speaks through you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for Your blessings and encouragement in our lives and thank You Father that we could assemble today

and give You praise, honor and glory. Take all my inadequacies Lord and let the majesty of Your Word speak to the hearts of Your people. Take a few moments in silent prayer with the Lord. You might even be praying 'Lord, change my life so I might show up. Give me a hunger for the Word that I would eat it up. Let it do its work in me that I would grow up, to stand up and speak up for Christ.' O Lord, the night is coming when the work of the day is done so help us to be faithful as the body of Christ together, gifted and committed, in Jesus' Name, Amen.