

## GIFTS FOR GIVING

A study in three groups of gifts  
in the New Testament  
and their relevance for us today

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## Conclusion

Gifts don't replace fruit (Gal 5:22,23), which in many ways are more important! Gifts must never be used divisively—Paul warns his readers frequently against those who bring a divisive spirit into a church. We are also warned that God's gifts can be counterfeited, and we are to be careful not to be led astray by those who perform spectacular signs but are unfaithful to the Scriptures. We are to be discerning.

However, we are also told to 'eagerly desire the greater gifts' (1 Cor 12:31) in such a way that God is glorified, people are served and love prevails! Gifts are given for giving!

Paul makes it clear that every one is gifted, that everyone is included in this list. He also thinks that a reasonable self-assessment is possible. No gift is superior or inferior to another, but just as a body needs a variety of members to function, we need each other, because we need all of these gifts to work together interdependently.

Identifying our gifts can set us free from false guilt and help us to accept the perspectives and contributions of other gifts without being threatened. None of us is able to meet all needs. We need to complement each other rather than compete, and to encourage each other to act with integrity.

However, the identification of gifts is not an excuse to avoid areas of weakness. It is not acceptable to say 'I should not sweep the floor because I am not a server!' The call to compassion and obedience is stronger than the call to assess our gifts! The temptation to bury our weakest talents is as strong for us as it was for the servant who was given the least (Luke 19:11-27). We are to be responsible with all that we have been given.

All of us are called to share spiritual insight, to serve, to teach, to encourage, to contribute, to facilitate and to show mercy. However, some of these will come more naturally and spontaneously from the core of our being.

Perceivers are concerned that motives and hearts are right, servers that the practical details are covered, teachers that the facts are correct, exhorters that we really experience things, contributors that we make sure needs are met, facilitators that a good plan is made and followed and mercies that feelings are cared for. All of these concerns are God-given and needed in the Body of Christ; without the balanced contribution of all the gifts, important areas are neglected and the Church is imbalanced.

### **Pastor**

A pastor shepherds God's flock. Jesus called Peter to feed his lambs and sheep (John 21:15–17). Jesus is the model for shepherding in God's way (John 10:1–8), in contrast to the bad shepherds of Israel in the days of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34:1–16). Later, elders were called to be shepherds of God's flock (1 Peter 5:1–5).

Not all of those who are designated 'pastor' today have this as their leadership ministry gift. Pastors are to protect, oversee, care for, nurture, support, strengthen, heal, manage, assemble, feed and restore their 'sheep.' They assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. They are concerned about spiritual and physical needs that relate to maturation and participation in the body of Christ. Their preaching tends to focus on peace, harmony, common goals and fellowship.

### **Teacher**

Some people see 'pastor' and 'teacher' as one gift, but it seems best to recognise the particular strengths of each separately. Teachers have the ability to clarify and illuminate biblical truth in such a way that people learn. Apollos is a NT example of a godly teacher (Acts 18:24–28) who teaches with great fervour on the basis of his thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. There is a warning that not many should become teachers because of the stricter judgment they will be subject to (James 3:1). The word of Christ (Col 3:16) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13) are given to teach us, and lead us in wisdom as we teach one another. There is a warning against false teachers who quarrel about words (1 Tim 6:3–5) and introduce destructive heresies (2 Pet 2:1–3).

often misunderstood. In personal conversation they often speak in great detail because they have learnt at an early age that others don't always understand them. They often seem to speak from sudden inspiration that gives them increased understanding. Sometimes they are called to speak a message that requires considerable courage. Then they may speak with great boldness, but later go home and weep.

They need inspiration to speak and are hesitant otherwise, but do function well up front when they are there. They speak persuasively with frankness and conviction and without frills, desiring spiritual growth.

They are imaginative in relation to seeing potential in people or ministries and can often help others to discern their gifts. They are generous and patient and will give time, help and advice sacrificially. They are strongly motivated to encourage and will still see hope when others have given up.

They are loyal, even in the midst of adversity. Intense, close relationships can be draining. They are not keen on jokes because they are usually at someone's expense. Alongside a strong sense of justice, there can be a great depth of compassion.

As children, they tend to anticipate what is needed to make things work and do something about it. They are talkers who don't like to be alone. They are not so keen on 'let's pretend' games or toys but can be creative. They prefer to participate in outdoor sports rather than to observe. They read if they are interested in the subject and prefer stories with morals rather than enjoying fantasy for its own sake. They are responsible and outwardly brave but inwardly tender; they are shattered when accused unjustly. They can be hesitant.

### **Apostle**

An apostle is one sent out. In the New Testament the twelve disciples of Jesus are called apostles (Matt 10:1-4). The church is built on the foundation of these apostles and the prophets (Eph 2:19,20). Paul is also called an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-5); like Matthias (Acts 1:21-26) he has seen Jesus. Others are also called apostles—Barnabas (Acts 14:12-15), Andronicus and Junia(s) (probably a woman, Rom 16:7), Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1 and 2:6). Jesus Himself is even called an apostle (Heb 3:1). It is possible to have false apostles (2 Cor 11:13-14 and Rev 2:2).

Today we do not usually call people apostles, but there are those who function in apostolic kinds of leadership. Some of these are church-planters, some are missionaries. They usually have a pioneering spirit and start new areas of ministry. They are multi-gifted leaders who evangelise, preach, teach, shepherd and organise the people until the work is established and others can take over. Sometimes they exercise leadership over a number of churches.

### **Prophet**

Prophets receive and communicate immediate messages of God to his people. In the NT, as well as in the OT, there are some who are called prophets. Jesus calls John the Baptist a prophet (Luke 6:26). Anna is called a prophetess (Luke 2:36). In the early church, Agabus is a prophet who speaks of the future (Acts 11:27-28); Judas and Silas are prophets who encourage the Christians (Acts 15:32); in Antioch there are prophets and teachers in the leadership group (Acts 13:1); Philip's four unmarried daughters are said to prophesy (Acts 21:9). As in the OT, there are false prophets also in the NT times (Matt 7:15-20; 24:24).

They work best if given a delegated area and trusted with it. They will usually do the job very well, and will often put beautiful finishing touches on things. They can be very creative and artistic. They don't like to be hustled to fit into a limited time, e.g. by facilitators, and need to be able to fulfil their ministry in their own way, their own time and at their own pace. However they can easily lose sight of the overall perspective of where their job fits in.

They always need to be shown appreciation for their ministry—too often it is taken for granted. They often struggle with the question: 'Am I appreciated for who I am or because I minister by giving practical assistance?'

To others they can appear to be legalistic, stubborn or aggressive with their insistence that every detail be adhered to.

They can be quite vocal about what they see, but they are also willing to do something about it personally. They can find it difficult to say 'no' to serving people and allowing others to serve.

When they talk, they will tend to take time with details, but can be witty. They are often good actors.

As children, servers are usually energetic, busy and happy. They are good at imitating others and will often imitate parents in their chores. They are rarely bored, easily finding things to do. They have dexterity of hands and can often pick objects up very early. They notice things left undone or details which need attention. They may be very creative and able to spend hours making or fixing something. They have good memories for detail in things of interest. They are not leaders of groups but usually get on well with others and have a happy sense of humour.

Justin Martyr (mid second century) taught Christianity as the only safe and profitable philosophical system. He writes this about the gifts of the Spirit: 'Some are receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illuminated through the name of this Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of fore-knowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God. It is possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God.'

Montanism (soon after 170 AD) was a Christian movement in which prophecy played a leading role. However, the kind of prophecy that was encouraged leant towards a pagan concept in that the prophet engages in a kind of ecstasy and is passive during the prophecy. This movement came to be considered as somewhat heretical.

Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons in the late second century) was a scholarly theologian. He gives a list of spiritual gifts still seen in the church then. These include 'the ability to cast out demons, knowledge about the future, visions and prophetic speech.' He also speaks of the dead being raised.

Hippolytus (Bishop of Rome in the early third century) in writing about the ministry of lay people, says: 'if anyone among the laity appears to have received a gift of healing by a revelation, hands shall not be laid upon him, because the matter is manifest.'

Novatian (third century, from Rome) writes that the Holy Spirit 'appoints prophets in the church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, brings into being powers and conditions of health, carries on extra-ordinary works, furnishes discernment of spirits, incorporates administrations in the church, establishes plans, brings together and arranges all other gifts there are of charismata and by reason of this makes the Church of God everywhere perfect in everything and complete.'

They are not usually quick to share about their personal lives and are not usually spontaneous in new relationships. They prefer one-on-one relationships to groups.

They will generally not thrust themselves forward to speak, but when they speak, they like to be prepared and to have researched a subject before sharing about it. They tend not to use personal illustrations and resist using any illustrations that are out of context. When teaching they are not so concerned about people's reactions as with the material that is being presented.

They have a thirst for knowledge but are not necessarily brilliant students. They like to double check things for accuracy and security. They like words and enjoy using more unusual words with accuracy. They often insist on right definitions, correct pronunciations and derivations. However there is a danger that they can become legalistic, dogmatic, argumentative and unteachable.

When people disagree with them or reject their teaching they can mistake this for personal rejection.

They often don't remember much of their childhood, and will often need help in getting in touch with their emotions and integrating this with their mind strengths.

As children they are faithful, orderly, neat, diligent, questioning and inquisitive. They desire to please and are usually good attenders at school. They enjoy being by themselves and can tend to be loners. They are usually happy and uncomplicated, although they enjoy complicated puzzles and intricate toys. They like books and prefer real life stories, biographies, adventures and history. They can be stubborn but can usually be reasoned with. They distrust their emotions from an early age.

A severe drought had devastated the area and the village was on the verge of extinction. The Christians prayed and God spoke to the group through a message in tongues. He told them to go up on a hill that was owned by the Christians and dig a well. It seemed to be one of the most illogical places to do it, but they obeyed, even in the face of the ridicule of the unbelievers in the village. The ridicule changed to astonishment, however, when they soon struck an abundant supply of water and the entire village was saved. Many unbelievers also were saved when they saw the power of God.

Carter (p. 93) gives an example of a Scotsman speaking a message in tongues and an Englishwoman interpreting. An American missionary was present and recognised the tongue as the language of the Kifiole tribe in Africa; she confirmed that the interpretation was correct.

### **General comments**

It is the Spirit who determines to whom gifts are given (1 Cor 12:11); our responsibility is to be open to his working within us in whatever ways he considers are most appropriate. The image of the 'body' in 1 Corinthians, with its differently functioning parts being held together in organic unity, illustrates how the gifts are to work together. Most importantly, these gifts are to be given away for the good of others, and are not to be regarded as 'ours'.

### **Did these gifts continue in the early church?**

Many Christians are not sure whether these manifestation gifts were only intended for the very beginning of the church, in New Testament times. Some even go further; they regard any contemporary claims of experiencing any of these gifts as necessarily false. It is interesting to see that Christian writings soon after the New Testament period give evidence of the presence of charismatic, spiritual gifts in the church until about

Exhorters are usually generous and impulsive. They have good imaginations and can get excited about people, causes and ideas. They can become so enthusiastic or positive (rightly or wrongly) about something that they can, however, begin to impose their will upon other people.

Some can be a little overwhelming because of their excess verbiage and can tie people up in words until they cannot think straight.

While they can be strongly encouraging, they can also refuse to 'weep with those who weep' and instead simply urge them to 'buck up.'

They like to establish relationships quickly and use teasing to probe where people are at. Sometimes their humour is cruel. They usually have many casual friends, but can withhold themselves from deep emotional relationships.

They can become opinionated and overly self-confident, poor in listening and too ready to interrupt.

As children, they are generally loving and amusing. As toddlers they are loud and laugh a lot. They are teasers and play with words in humorous ways, e.g. inventing nicknames, making up rhymes. They learn to talk their way into and out of situations. They can act as the 'class clown', and are capable of leading a class astray or towards some positive goal. They also tend to raise the noise level as they find it hard to work quietly and alone. They are imaginative and make up stories, telling them with great detail and colour. They usually like drama, but may have difficulty with Math. They will usually readily volunteer for things, some of which may be beyond their capabilities.

Donald Gee tells of an experience that John Wesley recorded in his journal on December 24th, 1739:<sup>1</sup>

Towards morning, one of them was overwhelmed with joy and love, and could not help showing it by strong cries and by tears. At this another was much displeased, saying, 'It was only nature, imagination, and animal spirits.' O Thou jealous God, lay not this sin to her charge; and let us not be wise above what is written!

### **Tongues**

This is the gift of speaking in an unknown language that has never been learnt. This is evidenced on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12) and when the first Gentiles believe (Acts 10:44-47). Although it is not to be elevated in importance above love or even prophecy, and it is to be used in an orderly manner that does not put unbelievers off (1 Cor 13:1,8; 14:1-28,39), Paul says that tongues are not to be forbidden (1 Cor 14:39) and that he would like everyone to speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:5). He regards tongues as speaking to God and uttering mysteries with his spirit (1 Cor 14:2). Tongues and the interpretation of tongues are the only two gifts of the Spirit which are not found in the OT, nor is it mentioned that Jesus exercised them.

There are many stories of missionaries being 'given' words in an unknown language that turned out to be understood by local people. Sometimes they are in situations of danger; sometimes they serve as a sign. Howard Carter (p.92) tells of praying for the healing of a deaf man in Wales:

'The power of the Spirit came upon me, and I felt it tingling through me. I went straightway to him, laid my hands on him, and God opened his ears. I was speaking with other tongues at the time, and later he gave his testimony. He said, 'When God

They are not gullible and have a keen sense of value. They also have an ability to bargain for things at cheap prices. They often buy extra of everything, 'just in case'. They will often get to give, but can also become hoarders. They can be threatened when they are the recipients of someone else's giving and can sometimes give with strings attached.

They are practical and often restless as they like to be busy doing things. They also like those around them to be busy or occupied and may think that no one else is doing anything practical. Sometimes they like to get the job finished at the expense of excellence. They can also be content for relationships to stay at a fairly superficial level.

They can over-extend themselves by responding to too many needs, wear themselves out and complain that others are not responding.

Because they tend to want to contribute something extra to everything, they can over-contribute, causing embarrassment to others, or imbalance, for example, in a recipe.

They can be aggressive with those close to them if their own needs are frustrated, and can have difficulty in receiving counsel, advice, correction or guidance unless they ask for it.

As children they play well and dislike missing out on things. They like to share, as they dislike others missing out. They respond to firm, just correction and limits. They are friendly and practical and make good team members. They are quick to respond to causes. They are stubborn when being encouraged to do something which is not familiar to them or when they are not coping emotionally. They delight in telling stories.

<sup>1</sup> *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1972) p. 57

are closer to those faced by the early church. It is possible for the person through whom the miracle is worked to be unaware of the miraculous result.

Howard Carter tells this miracle story:<sup>2</sup>

I was ministering in Wales. I tried to go to sleep but outside my window was an oil lamp. There was evidently water in the pipe, for the light went up and down. This worried me. I could not sleep. I prayed fervently, 'Oh, Lord, you know how bad my nerves are; please stop that thing outside.' Nothing happened in spite of all my praying. I decided that if it is all right to talk to the wind and the waves, I could talk to the lamp. I waited until the unction of the Spirit was upon me, then I took a deep breath and cried out, 'In the name of the Lord, stop!' It did!

### **Prophecy**

Prophecy is an 'inspired utterance.' Agabus speaks two prophecies of prediction (Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-11); while the leaders of the church at Antioch are fasting and praying the Holy Spirit speaks (presumably through a prophecy) to direct them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a mission (Acts 13:2). Prophecies are intended to edify the church, to strengthen, encourage and comfort (1 Cor 14:1-12). They are to be encouraged, but they are to be given in an orderly way (1 Cor 14:29-33). At Pentecost, prophesying is extended to 'sons' and 'daughters' (Acts 2:17,18). In the OT, prophecies announce either judgment or salvation and sometimes have a futuristic element.

Although prophecies may be more frequently given by people with strong prophetic gifts, any Christian can, at least in theory, be given a 'prophecy' to speak (1 Cor 14). Sometimes

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<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual Gifts and their Operation*, p. 67

They tend to lead the work from behind rather than up front, and will often not volunteer to lead, but accept leadership if it is given them.

They usually have a wide range of interests and knowledge, and glean information from many sources. They are not 'black and white' people, but tend to merge ideas and have a broad perspective on life.

Because they are goal-orientated, they can tend to plough ahead and be unaware of the feelings of the people involved in the project. They can be insensitive to the opinions of others and stubbornly ignore advice. However they are not malicious and are usually amazed when people are upset with them.

They tend to be frugal in their estimation of quantities and use of resources, and will be always on the lookout for ways to save money.

They can be quiet people who need to be 'discovered'. When placed up front they can then be effective in their conciliatory approach in drawing a group together for the project at hand. Their gift enables things to function more easily for others.

However, they can overstep their responsibility and begin to organise for personal motives, with corresponding hardness in dealings with people and blindness to God.

As children they are inquisitive and like to know how things work. They have the ability to see how things can be done more efficiently, and may suggest improvements to adults! They can have difficulty playing with other children because they want to organise rather than play with them. They can often become frustrated. Sometimes they will try to avoid their own responsibilities by facilitating their siblings to do their work for them.

he has baked two loaves of bread and cannot dispose of both loaves, so he wants to know if we can use a whole loaf of bread for the children.'

This gift of faith is not to be confused with making an assumption that God will perform the same kind of miracle or act in the same way that he has done in the past. There is a sad story of a group of Chinese Christians who wanted to cross a flooded river. They prayed and assumed that God would enable them to walk on water, just as Jesus enabled Peter to do. Unfortunately, they drowned.

### **Gifts of healings**

These are gifts through which God brings healing beyond or apart from the use of normal means. The twelve apostles become known for healing many in the name of Christ (Acts 5:15, 16); in Philip's evangelistic ministry many paralytics and cripples are healed, and evil spirits come out of many (Acts 8:7); Paul commands a cripple to stand and he begins to walk (Acts 14:10). He later prays for and lays hands on a man sick with fever and dysentery and he is healed (Acts 28:8).

Gifts of healings (note the plural) are for physical, emotional and spiritual conditions (see Jesus' understanding of his own ministry in Luke 4:18). On some occasions there is a connection with confession and forgiveness (Mark 2:1-12; James 5:15, 16), but at other times there is clearly none (John 9:1-3). Healing is a sign of God's kingdom, and sometimes accompanies evangelism. Although gifts of healing are only given to some, elders and other believers are to pray for healing (just as not all are gifted as evangelists, but all believers are to witness to their faith). While it is obvious that not all prayer for healing results in healing, and there is much that we don't understand about this, there are still many contemporary examples of healings in the name of Jesus.

Mercies are readily drawn to young children, and also to elderly people.

When teaching or speaking, they like to have the security of knowing they are thoroughly prepared and so use notes. They can find on-the-spot requests very threatening.

They will not usually volunteer to lead, but can be effective leaders if given that responsibility.

They delight in being in the company of those whom they trust and have come to know well. It is there that their humour and sense of the ridiculous emerges.

They dislike conflict and will tend to settle for peace at any price. They can tend to withdraw into self-pity.

They can also be immovable in their own point of view, and will often need time to change. They dislike change of any kind and can fear the unknown.

Sometimes they surprise others when these nice, quiet, non-threatening people suddenly explode into anger and have an emotional and verbal catharsis which leaves everyone astounded and wary.

As children, mercies react strongly against loud noises, sharp commands or words spoken in anger. They are loving and easy to correct. They like smiles of approval, because they give smiles. They have good imaginations and can be drawn to the world of fantasy. They like books that tell of the lives of people, real and imaginary (for boys it is often a hero in an adventure story, for girls it may be a romantic novel). They usually like pets, are drawn to the distress of animals and desire to nurse them back to health.

Peter is given supernatural knowledge that enables him to say that Ananias and Sapphira have lied (Acts 5:1–10). In the Old Testament Elisha is given supernatural knowledge that his servant Gehazi has lied and contradicted his directive not to accept payment (2 Kings 5:20–27). Gifts of knowledge are not to be elevated to a position higher than that of love (1 Cor 8:1–3 and 13:2, 8).

Rick Yohn tells of two more recent examples of this gift being used:<sup>3</sup>

As [F.B.Meyer] was preaching in the Free Assembly Hall in Edinburgh he stated, 'There is a man here who owes his employer three pounds and eighteen shillings. Until that sum is repaid, that young man will never have peace with God.' F.B. Meyer was unaware of whom he was speaking. He was using the gift of knowledge to uncover a hidden sin. But later a young man made an appointment to see him. He asked the preacher if he knew him. 'No, I never saw you before.' The astonished youth replied, 'In your sermon you described exactly what I did. My soul has been troubled ever since. Already there is a letter in the mail with a cheque returning the money.'

Previous to President Kennedy's trip to Dallas, Billy Graham called the White House and told them he felt that something dreadful was going to happen to the President. Mr Graham asked that President Kennedy postpone his trip. The White House thanked the evangelist for his concern, but the trip was not cancelled.

### Gift of Faith

This is not the same as salvation faith, i.e. the faith that all Christians have in order to know that they are saved. Rather, it is special faith that is given for a specific situation. Barnabas is

be something like this: the perceiver might pray with her, the server might take her a meal or mow the lawn, the teacher might find it hard to relate to her but finally takes her some good books and CDs, the exhorter will probably go right over to encourage her and maybe share some uplifting comments, Bible verses or jokes, the contributor might bring gifts and food and spend time with her, the facilitator might find out what she needs for the future and organise others in the neighbourhood to meet those needs, and the mercy person might quietly assess how she feels, listen to her story, maybe give her a hug, and be happy to stay by her bed.

Irrespective of what one's main motivational gift is, it is helpful to work out whether serving or facilitating is higher. It is rare for someone to be equally strong in both. While servers are good at organising things, facilitators are good at organising people. To give an example, if a mundane job in the family needs to be done, the parent who is more of a server will tend to do the job himself or herself, whereas the parent who is more of a facilitator may organise the children to do it. Sometimes frustration can occur if a server, who is excellent at a particular job, is put in charge of a large team because they are not so comfortable in organising others. Sometimes they can appear bossy or find it difficult to delegate. On the other hand, some facilitators may not feel that they are particularly good at anything, because they miss seeing what they are really good at: enabling others to achieve a goal.

These gifts are given, not earned. In all we do we are to keep love as the highest aim and do all, in humility, to the greater glory of God.

### Further reading:

Andy Raine, *Given for Life: A Guide to Motivational Gifts* (Stowmarket, Suffolk: Kevin Mayhew, 2004); Don and Katie Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, c1987) which contains a useful questionnaire.

<sup>3</sup> *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987) p. 99

## THE MANIFESTATION GIFTS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12-14

These gifts are only available to Christians, as they are specifically designated as gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some call them the charismatic gifts (*charisima* in Greek simply means 'gift'). They can be given to any Christian believer at any time to meet specific needs, if a Christian is open to the Holy Spirit to work. They are supernatural and can sound quite scary, unless they have been experienced. In fact, they never feel scary when they are given. They are often used without being recognised and labeled. Sometimes it is only later, on reflection, that a person realises that God must have been present in some supernatural way. Usually they are in response to genuine love and concern for someone in need or in a context of personal or corporate worship.

Sometimes a particular gift will only be experienced by a particular person once in a lifetime, but often a person will experience similar gifts repeatedly. However, each time may still be surprising and unexpected, because these gifts (apart from the gift of tongues) cannot be 'switched on' at will. God wants us to keep in tune with him, and to be open to a fresh expression of his gifts for each new occasion, as he sees fit. We have no right to tell God which gifts we won't accept!

These gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, with further instructions in their use in the rest of that chapter and also in 1 Cor 14. In 1 Cor 12:1 Paul writes that he doesn't want us to be ignorant about these things. However, it is no accident that the famous chapter on love (1 Cor 13) comes right in the middle of this discussion. He knows the tendency for people to react immaturely and unwisely when entrusted with supernatural things. Better to have none of these gifts than to lack love!

The use of these gifts is still to be subject to correction, wisdom and consideration for others, just as other aspects of our lives. They are to be submitted to leadership, and are not

to be either idolised or quenched. If they are from God, they can always be controlled, as 1 Cor 14: 27-33 shows, and will never 'take over' a person (as an evil presence may).

## The Word of Wisdom

This is God-inspired wisdom that is brought to a particular situation. In Acts 15:13-21 James brings wisdom into a situation of potential division. In Acts 6:3 the Twelve are given wisdom to resolve a conflict regarding the neglect of Greek Jewish widows. Paul is said to have written in wisdom that is given by God (2 Pet 3:15). Jesus says that the person who hears his words and puts them into practice is wise (Matt 7:24), but warns that wise men, prophets and teachers will not always be appreciated (Matt 23:34)! In the Old Testament special gifts of wisdom are given to Joseph (Gen 41) and Daniel (Dan 2:23) to interpret dreams. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7), and there is an invitation for us to ask for wisdom (James 1:5). Wisdom from God is described as pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17).

In some ways this gift has similarities to a word of prophecy, in that there is a word given for an immediate situation. The known principles of God's Word are applied, with an 'uncanny' ability to see the issues clearly in such a way that a difficulty is resolved, conflicting parties are brought to peace, a way ahead is found where there appeared to be none, or there is new light that connects apparently disconnected pieces of information so that new sense is found and God's direction, the 'how to proceed' becomes clearer.

## Word of Knowledge

Words of knowledge are supernaturally revealed. Jesus says that Peter's ability to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is supernaturally revealed (Matt 16:17).

### General comments

Sometimes our core gift is not immediately clear because our job in the workplace has drawn more heavily on a secondary gift, or because at some stage a gift has been squashed. Parental training can also foster the development of the same gift as a parent, but this may be only a secondary gift for the child and so may 'cover' the identification of the core gift. Poor self-image can also make it difficult to see ourselves clearly and we may need others to help to confirm our assessment of ourselves. If we have been trying to be someone other than ourselves (e.g., by modeling ourselves on someone who fits the popular image) then we will probably be confused about who we really are. A lifestyle that is not in line with God's commands can also distort our perceptions.

Sometimes two gifts appear to be just as strong and will modify each other. Sometimes looking at our weaknesses will help us to know which gift is stronger. For others it is the memory of what we were like as children, before being thrust into adult categories, that will tell us which gifts came most naturally. While some will recognise their gifts very quickly, many will need time and prayer for this to settle and become clearer. All of us are real people, not just a category of one gift. So our core gift will always be modified by the various secondary gifts which we each have to varying degrees.

While we will all be called upon to operate in a variety of areas, it will be the *way* in which we operate that will be characteristic of our motivational gift. For example, most of us teach someone at some time, but our styles of teaching will be influenced by our motivational gift. Preachers and counselors, as well as truck drivers and musicians, will include people of different gifts.

To use an exaggerated caricature, if a neighbour is bedridden and a person of each gift decides to visit, our approaches may

given faith to believe that Saul/Paul is truly a believer now when others can't lay aside their fears (Acts 9:26,27). Paul has this gift of faith when he says that no one on his ship will be destroyed—in this case, his faith is inspired by an angel (Acts 27:22–25). Peter exercises special faith in telling the crippled man to walk in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6). The prayer of the elders that is offered in faith will make the sick person well (James 5:15). Jesus speaks of the faith that is able to move mountains (Mark 11:22, 23), yet says that it doesn't need to be huge (Luke 17:5, 6). In the OT, Elijah has the gift of faith as he confronts the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:33–35).

The gift of faith refers to a supernatural conviction that God will reveal his power or mercy in a special way in a specific instance. It is usually involved in the working of healings and miracles, but is not confined to these. It involves believing God for something that other people don't think is going to happen, and in seeing God do it. It often arises through prayer and compassion, sometimes out of lament to God. When the gift of faith is given, there is usually joy, release, confident expectation or unusual boldness. It is not worked up by human effort. Some refer to it as 'praying through' on a matter; it often comes with a sense that further prayer on this issue is not needed. Howard Carter tells of one situation that demonstrated the gift of faith in George Müller, who fed thousands of orphans and never appealed to anyone for money.<sup>4</sup>

One day the members of his staff said, 'Mr. Müller, we have no bread for the children; what shall we do?' 'Put them around the table,' Mr. Müller replied. All the children marched in and sat down. The dear little children were sitting at the table and there was no bread. What could the man of God do now? Would God fail him? There was a knock at the door. A member of staff came to Mr. Müller and said, 'The local baker is at the door. He says he has made a mistake which he has never made before;

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Gifts and their Operation* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1968) p. 46

## Mercy

(e.g. the Good Samaritan)

Mercies are the 'feelers' who minister to the emotional well-being of others. They are quiet, gentle people who can express compassion through a look, a touch, a word, simply listening or some practical help. They communicate their understanding of how others feel; articulating their reasons for understanding is of secondary consideration.

They like to observe quietly before responding, and in conversation can sometimes be left behind because they are still thinking of their response to the previous issue. They prefer to act after consideration.

They are aware of non-verbal signals and can pick up on a tone of voice or body language that could express hurt or be hurtful. They like to observe, and tend to notice those who are depressed or left out. They can be very supportive because they are non-threatening—this does not mean that they agree with everything or the one they are supporting.

They can have difficulty in articulating their own feelings in words. Men who are of this motivational gift may have repressed their emotions and have difficulty in recognising their gifting.

As people, they love security and comfort, preferring to live in the stability of non-threatening circumstances, quiet surroundings and regular routines.

Sincerity is an integral part of their own nature, and they are quick to discern insincerity in others. They can be easily hurt and misunderstood. They can be strong for the good of others, especially those for whom they carry some responsibility.

Howard Carter<sup>5</sup> tells a story of a dying woman who was only skin and bones, and as white as a sheet, with sunken dark eyes. One day faith came into her heart, and she said to her relatives, 'Take me to Stephen Jeffreys.' He was holding meetings in Louth.' They said, 'You cannot go!' 'Yes, I can, I am going to be healed.' They got her on the train with her four-wheel stretcher and took her to the meetings at Louth. The evangelist, Stephen Jeffreys, left the platform, came to her stretcher, and prayed as he laid hands upon her. She said afterwards that she felt a divine hand under her spine lifting her up. She put her feet over the side of the stretcher and on to the floor. The evangelist held her as she attempted to balance. She took a few steps with his aid; then he released her, and she walked around the church. A crowded church witnessed this great miracle.

## Miraculous powers

These are gifts through which God works to perform powerful acts which alter the ordinary course of nature. Barnabas and Paul report the miraculous signs and wonders God has done among the Gentiles through them (Acts 15:12); as Philip evangelises, he does miraculous signs (Acts 8:6); Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:40); the marks of an apostle are said to be signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor 12:12). Jesus' life is characterised by miraculous signs, e.g., turning water into wine (John 2), calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41), multiplying the loaves and fishes (John 6:1-14). Old Testament stories tell of the workings of miracles, e.g., parting the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21), the widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), the sun standing still (Joshua 10:13).

Although healing is one kind of miracle, there are other kinds as well. They may have to do with such things as providing protection, giving provision or vindicating God's name. Miracles tend to occur more in missionary work where the conditions

<sup>5</sup> *Spiritual Gifts and their Operation*, p. 58

### **Facilitator**

(e.g. Nehemiah)

Facilitators give aid in administration. They know what needs to be done and know how best to use time, resources and finances to that end. They can create organisational order out of confusion and plan the steps necessary to complete a task. They can organise people to achieve the given goal effectively.

Facilitators prefer to delegate, rather than finding fulfilment in actually doing the task themselves. However they will step in and do whatever needs to be done in order for their plan to be completed if no one else is doing it.

They have the ability to remain steady and keep a clear perspective of the goal in the face of opposition, disappointment and crisis and are very rarely impetuous. They can hold a long-term vision and allow others to take the time needed to talk things through.

They naturally work on increasing efficiency in the use of resources, time and talents. They have an astute sense of timing.

They like to plan on paper and write schedules. Then they will check lists to keep the broad perspective before them. They can become inwardly frustrated with people who thwart their desire to get things done.

They are not fine details people, and don't always communicate the details that on-the-job people would like to have. They dislike being questioned about what they are doing, and don't see the necessity to explain why things are to be done in a particular way.

'prophecies' occur in normal conversations without being labelled as such. Prophecies are not prepared, as sermons are; they occur with spontaneous inspiration. They need to be tested, but not quenched (1 Thess 5:19-22). They are not to be regarded as being on the same level of inspiration as the Scriptures or the words of the Biblical prophets.

### **Discerning of Spirits**

We need to distinguish between the operations of God's Spirit, evil spirits and the human spirit. When Elymas stands in the way of the proconsul hearing the word of God, Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looks straight at him, tells him he is a child of the devil and that he will be blinded (Acts 13:8-12). Paul discerns that a girl has an evil spirit and casts it out of her (Acts 16:16-18). Simon the sorcerer believes, is baptised and wants to buy the ability to give the Holy Spirit, but Peter discerns that he is full of bitterness and captive to sin (Acts 8:23). Paul discerns that many are false apostles, masquerading as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:13-15). We are to test the spirits (1 John 4:1).

Because there is always the possibility of counterfeit gifts, discerning of spirits is important in any church so that we can determine whether an operation is of God or not. Sometimes this gift is present merely as an uncomfortable feeling (if the course of action is not of God) or a sense of clear peace (if it is). Those who think they may be discerning something need to share that with the leadership so that the discernment itself can be tested and appropriate action taken. It is important also to realise that real works of God are often condemned because they do not conform to one's personal expectations of how God should act. In this case, the uncomfortable feeling needs further testing.

### **Contributor**

(e.g. Abraham)

Contributors are motivated to respond to needs and to give in whatever ways they can. They have generous hearts and share with others in financial and practical ways.

They are supportive people and like to add to situations, usually functioning more effectively in the second position than in the top leadership position. They usually make good committee members.

As people they are friendly and non-threatening, open and positive, cheerful with a good sense of humour, preferring company to being alone. They mix well and are comfortable, disarming people who do not crowd others.

Although they have strong personalities with very definite opinions they do not thrust themselves upon others, but leave them free to respond. They also like to be given freedom to respond and resent any attempts to manipulate them.

They show delight in good food, friends and gifts. It is important to them to remember to say 'thank you' and to write notes of appreciation.

They like a fair balance and an even distribution of things and have difficulty with injustice and insincerity. They often come to the defence of the underdog and do not like people to miss out unfairly. They tend to have a peripheral perspective.

Their giving is not indiscriminate and they do not respond to every appeal. They resent anyone presuming that they will continue to give, and prefer to give quietly.

opened my ears (and he could now hear a watch ticking) Brother Carter spoke in Welsh.'

Tongues is often the first of these gifts that a Christian experiences. It may not even seem worth using, as it feels foolish, rather like nonsensical mumbo jumbo. Perhaps it is precisely because it requires child-like humility to utter words that we don't understand that it can be used to allow our hearts (not just our minds) to engage more fully with God. Its prime use is in private prayer, as a means of allowing our hearts to pray when our minds don't know what words to say. Sometimes, after a time of praying in tongues, a very appropriate prayer can be formed in the speaker's own language, but it may be a different prayer from what might have been expected.

Carter also gives an example (p.91) of someone who joined a prayer meeting and spoke in tongues, but there was a general discernment that something was wrong. Carter questioned him and discovered that he had departed from orthodox Christian faith.

### **Interpretation of Tongues**

This is the gift of interpretation of a message given in tongues, in such a way that the sense is given, but not necessarily an exact translation. The interpreter has not learnt the language of the message in tongues. Those who give a public message in tongues are instructed to pray for the gift of interpretation (1 Cor 14:13); if there is no one to interpret, then the tongues speaker should be quiet (1 Cor 14:27, 28). Interpretation of tongues is very like prophecy. Peter Wagner gives an example involving a group of believers in a remote Guatemalan village:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1979) p. 236

**Exhorter**

(e.g. Barnabas)

Exhorters, or encouragers, love life and love others to experience the best of life. They are naturally drawn to people and people are drawn to them. They are fun to be with, and life with them is never dull!

They tend to put a positive construction on everything; they dislike hearing people criticised and will quickly come to their defence and say something positive about them. Sometimes it is hard for them to hear truth.

Exhorters are not afraid to jump in where someone is experiencing difficulties and will offer advice, comfort, encouragement and assistance.

Exhorters are NOW people, eternal optimists who can find it difficult to face up to facts about yesterday and tomorrow. They tend not to save for the future as they are inclined to believe that tomorrow will take care of itself.

They are not interested in theories, but consider themselves to be practical and like practical application. They can also oversimplify situations in an attempt to find the quick and easy way out of a difficulty.

They have a strong speaking gift and use life-related experiences to illustrate their points. They are not particular in checking the details of Scriptural contexts. They like the total attention of their listeners.

They are not easily discouraged, and will bluff their way through situations (with 'the gift of the gab') rather than back down. Their learning tends to come more through life-experience than through books, but they usually enjoy history.

260 AD.<sup>7</sup> This was about the time that the church became more acceptable, educated and organised and worship was more formalised.

*The Didache*, written in the second half of the first century, talks about itinerant prophets and gives tests to separate true from false prophets: the teaching must conform to known Christian instruction and the life-style must be compatible with what the prophet teaches and not exhibit greed. Bishops and deacons are said to be performing the service of prophets and teachers.

Clement of Rome (the third bishop of Rome, late first century) asks all Christians to put themselves at the service of their neighbour as their particular spiritual gift dictates. He considers spiritual gifts to be important in helping Christians to function as a body.

Ignatius of Antioch (writing around AD 98-117) was a bishop who was also a prophet and had a high regard for the gifts of the Spirit. He urges another bishop, Polycarp, to ask for revelations and to seek spiritual gifts.

*The Shepherd of Hermas* (probably early second century, associated with Rome) is a book in which some visions are described. Visions and prophecy are accepted and the author writes of the true prophet's ministry in the context of group worship. There is the need for tests for true and false prophets; these are primarily based on their deeds and life.

*The Odes of Solomon* (probably before 150 AD in Syria) are like psalms and give evidence of experiences in which the overpowering presence of God is felt. The writer speaks like a prophet and claims divine inspiration.

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984)

## Teacher

(e.g. Luke, Apollos)

Teacher-motivated people do not necessarily function in the office of teacher, either in church or school. Nor are all official teachers of this motivational gift—and nor should they be! This motivation will come out in conversations, in meetings and in the whole approach to life.

Teachers have clear and logical minds and assist in clarifying the facts and in being able to assemble them in logical sequence so that others can understand. They are motivated to research, to gather and give information, to clarify doctrines, principles and accuracy of information in the search for truth. They can quickly see the 'bones' of a topic and summarise it and they can make profound concepts simple.

Their approach is objective (so they can easily extract facts from feelings), systematic, questioning, orderly and accurate. They are usually mild-mannered except when it comes to facts—then they are dogmatic about whether something is right or wrong.

They can be stubborn and unwilling to change once they have validated facts within their own mind and accepted them as truth. They can also be intolerant of those who cannot express themselves clearly and logically and distrust both their own and others' emotions.

As people they are usually faithful, truthful, loyal, diligent and conscientious. They are thorough, precise, neat, careful, and they like punctuality! They can be perceived as aloof when their love is expressed through giving clarity of information.

## MINISTRY GIFTS IN EPHESIANS 4:1–16

These are leadership gifts which Christ gave the church to equip God's people for works of service and to grow to maturity. Ephesians 4 places the gifts of different ministries within the call to maintain Christian unity (Eph 4:3–6). These are equipping gifts, i.e., gifts that are focused towards the development of other Christians, to help them in turn to use their gifts more effectively.

Any healthy, growing church will probably have all of these gifts represented somewhere in its leadership team, even as combination gifts. However, there are times when a church needs the dominance of a particular leadership gift for a season, but not forever. For example, a church plant will need more of the apostolic and evangelistic gifts to get it going; once it is established it will need a period of pastoral and teaching gifts, then it may need more prophetic ministry to call it into a new cycle of growth so that it doesn't stagnate. Some churches have declined because the assumption was made that we only need pastors and teachers these days. But more recently there has been an international realisation throughout Western churches that we need to recover the importance of all five areas for the ongoing health and continuing growth of the church. So this list is obviously helpful for choosing people on our church leadership teams.

Even if we are not church leaders, it is helpful to think how we operate when we are in any other kinds of Christian leadership positions. We may find that we are more naturally drawn to teaching, or to evangelising, or to starting new projects, or to hearing God's voice with accuracy, or to caring for people in a housegroup. We all need to develop our leadership potential so that we are growing in our ability to lead others.

## Server

(e.g. Martha)

Servers are motivated to give practical assistance. Many who have worked in a practical area for many years (for example, housewives, mechanics) tend to assume that this is their motivational gift, but this may not be the case. It is also important to note that this personality gift is not related to general intelligence and nor does it denote being a servant to everyone else! All are called to serve, to minister, and this gift refers to the particular kind of ministry which people of this motivation will tend to choose to offer.

They are do-ers, people of action and have both dexterity of hands and physical stamina: they find it difficult to delay taking action. They desire to please others and express their love for them in action. They are big-hearted and energetic and willing to overlook their personal discomfort and weariness to minister to others. They find it very difficult when limited by illness.

Servers minister to people by their caring and attention to details. They have the ability to recall details of time, events, personal likes and dislikes and what has been said or done. They are quick to discern little things in personal, environmental, spiritual and practical areas. They have the ability to be totally absorbed in the details of a given task.

Servers prefer to do the job themselves rather than spend time sorting it out with others. They can usually see how to do it, and want to just get on with it. They are not usually good at coordinating a group to do the job, and if they are placed in such a position will still tend to do the job themselves, and perhaps complain that others didn't do their part.

While most denominations today do not have a particular ministry position called 'prophet', some people lead in ways that might be described as prophetic. Prophetic preaching applies the Scriptures with power for the present situation. Prophetic people can also speak from the impulse of a sudden revelation. They may have gifts in discerning the character and motives of people, in identifying evil and in calling people to repentance. They call for restoration and righteous living, have bold, strict personal standards, are frank in their assertions, have a strong sense of urgency, and walk a lonely road.

## Evangelist

An evangelist shares the Gospel with unbelievers in such a way that people often believe and become Christian disciples. Although the twelve disciples were sent out to evangelise (Mark 16:20; Luke 9:6) and the apostles were teaching and evangelising (Acts 5:42; 16:6-10), the clearest example of a NT evangelist is that of Philip (Acts 6:5; 8:5-13,26-40; 21:8). People pay close attention as he speaks, either to the crowds or to the individual (the Ethiopian eunuch). In his ministry there are also manifestations of miracles. A significant feature of the work of a NT evangelist is that it is itinerant (Acts 8:40). Timothy is urged to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:2-5), preaching the word in season and out of season.

Evangelists have one primary message, although they may present it in different ways: they are passionate about the Good News of salvation. They can be especially sensitive to the right timing for harvesting (1 Cor 3:5,6). Some are evangelists to children, some to adults; some speak to crowds, while others are most effective in one-to-one relationships. They are not well suited to pastoring a church long-term, unless others on the team are pastors and they are given the liberty to spend time outside the established group. Researchers suggest that 10% of any congregation have special gifting in this area.

### **Perceiver**

(e.g. John the Baptist)

Most Bibles call this gift 'prophet', however, it is not the same as an Old Testament or even New Testament prophet (as in Ephesians 4), and may or may not be one who gives 'prophetic utterances' (1 Cor 12-14). However, the biblical prophets seem to have been generally of this motivational gift. To avoid the confusion, some prefer to call this gift 'insight'. I will adopt the name 'perceiver'.

Perceivers are motivated to clarify motives and attitudes, to bring spiritual insight, to understand and operate out of principles, and to be concerned about moral integrity and truth. They call for repentance, because they see it as life-giving.

Being future-orientated, they automatically see the future ramifications of present decisions, words and actions, like the tree that is encapsulated in the seed, and are amazed when others don't see it. They are concerned to correct the present if they see a negative future consequence for someone; this may seem to others like an over-reaction. In many ways they seem to be extreme.

They usually have sensitive and tender consciences and are constantly checking their own motives. But they tend to be disturbing and challenging because they can often discern inner motives that are behind people's facades or masks. It is difficult for them to explain how they know what they know, as they cannot produce outward evidence. They can, at times, expect too much of both themselves and others and become judgmental and critical.

When stirred they are zealous and can at times appear to be harsh in their concern for spiritual truth. However, they are very vulnerable and sensitive people and at a personal level are

There are different kinds of teachers for different age groups and contexts (including TV, writing, drama). They are happy to spend time in long preparation and are patient with students. Complex material is analysed, broken down and put together in a way that can be understood and applied. Spiritual teaching is not arid; students not only learn facts but are disciplined in Christ.

### **HOW DO THE THREE GIFT AREAS WORK TOGETHER?**

We all operate in unique combinations of all these gifts. And, of course, there are many additional gifts that we are each given that are not mentioned here.

People with the same motivational gift will not necessarily have the same ministry gift. For example, one mercy person may be more of a pastor, and another may be more of a teacher. One exhorter may be a gifted preacher/teacher and another may not be suited to that at all; however, he or she may be a good one-to-one evangelist. One facilitator may have an evangelistic ministry, while another may be more apostolic.

Words of prophecy may just as easily be given to a server or to a mercy person as to a perceiver—in fact, they can be given to anyone who needs them. However, manifestation gifts are often given repeatedly in areas that are needed to support ministry leadership gifts.

## Introduction

Within the New Testament there are three main passages on the gifts that operate within Christian people. Romans 12:6-8 deals with fundamental personality gifts, sometimes called 'motivational gifts'; 1 Corinthians 12-14 deals with occasional gifts, also called 'manifestation gifts'; and Ephesians 4:11 deals with leadership gifts, often called 'ministry gifts.' These 3 lists will be the focus of this study.

Two additional passages mention gifts more briefly. 1 Peter 4:7-11 simply divides gifts into 'speaking' and 'serving' with the encouragement to employ our gifts hospitably for one another, and as good stewards. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 mentions just one gift: prophecies, telling us not to treat them with contempt, nor to put out the Spirit's fire, but to test everything.

## THE MOTIVATIONAL GIFTS IN ROMANS 12:6-8

The seven gifts found in Rom 12:6-8 are all present in everyone to some degree in unique combinations, but we can usually find, with some reflection, that one is more central to our personality than the others.<sup>8</sup> They are inbuilt from birth and tend to motivate our actions and reactions. They affect the way we see, reason, understand and prioritise things. They come with potential strengths and potential weaknesses, to be used wisely, otherwise they become distorted through selfishness.

Romans 12:1-2 calls us to offer our whole selves to God, including these gifts which are so central to who we are. As we do, our minds are renewed and our gifts flourish as they are trained to be used for good and enhance life for others.

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<sup>8</sup> I am using a model developed by Don Pickerill of California, who taught this on audio tape in the early 1970s. I am also indebted to Joan Brown in Tasmania who developed it further.