

A Biblical View of Spiritual Gifts
For The Common Good
Chapter 4
The Serving Gifts (Part 1)

For God loved the world in this way. He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

It is said that Gandhi once requested of a group of Christian missionaries that they sing the song to him that best represented their faith. After some thought, the missionaries chose to sing the old hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". The missionaries felt that it was this song that best explained their reason for sharing the gospel of Jesus to any who would believe. In a world of multiple religions, Christianity forever stands in stark contrast from all the others. Why? Because in all other religions, though every one realizes that something is horribly wrong with humanity, it is incumbent upon the people to find a means of restoring themselves.

Take Islam for example. Although many have tried to make the case that Allah and The God of the *Bible* are one and the same, NOTHING could be further from the truth. The god of Islam is an angry god, who is disgusted with humanity. He can only be appeased if the people obey his rigid ideology, and even then, he seems to remain dissatisfied. This is the reason that the oft misguided followers of Islam are so easily radicalized into believing that their god will only accept them if they martyr themselves in a vicious act of slaughtering others that they deem to be "infidels". In short, they are willing to strap bombs to their chest and destroy themselves and others, for just a glimmer of hope that their god will love them for it. There is no grace. Salvation is not given, it must be earned.

This, and every other false religion, are the antithesis of Christianity. For in Christianity, **God so loved, that He gave!** Think about that for a moment. **"For God so loved, that He gave..."**. The God of the *Bible* saw the despicable plight of humanity, and He didn't just preach a sermon. He didn't just write us off. He didn't say, I can only love you if you are willing to die while murdering my enemies. No, **He so loved, THAT HE GAVE!** We were helpless to save ourselves, so He took the initiative. **"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)**. Therefore, giving and serving are vital to genuine Christianity. We have a God who serves, so we as a church must also serve as proof of His great love. No other religion has at its source a Deity of grace! Our **God so loved that He GAVE.**

It is not enough, for the church to simply preach the message of hope and restoration, for if we wish for people to understand the love and grace of God, then we must demonstrate that love and grace through works of service. **"Faith, without works is dead." (James 2:17)**. It is for this reason, that The Holy Spirit has endowed so many within the body of Christ with the "Serving Gifts". If the speaking gifts are to be the "voice" of the "Body of Christ", then the serving gifts are most assuredly the "hands and feet". The serving gifts support the speaking gifts by proving beyond a shadow of doubt that the love we speak of is genuine. Love must be demonstrated as well as proclaimed. If the church was only in the preaching business and not the serving business, then who would ever listen to the message?

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed', but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **James 2:15-17**

The church that does not serve, does not love. The church that does not love, is pretty much useless. Without the serving gifts, the gospel we preach would never be believed. Period. Serving proves the message to be true. So let's take a look at the many serving gifts within the body of Christ.

Service

The gift of service is arguably the most prevalent gift within the body of Christ. This gift is often referred to as the gift of "helps", because those who have been blessed with this gift are always willing and able to lend a hand whenever and wherever it is needed, in order to help a particular ministry project to be successful. "Service" Christians do not crave the spotlight, but rather just the opposite. They wish to remain ever behind the scenes, tirelessly working in order to help those in more visible positions to accomplish the mission of the church.

Because they are willing to work so hard without any recognition, they serve a vital role within the body, for without these people, nothing would ever get done in the church. These diligent worker bees are a pastor's best friends, for they genuinely love to serve wherever there is a need. It is not the task that seems to motivate them, but rather the opportunity to serve, therefore a servant will usually find themselves serving in many different ministries throughout the course of their life. One week they might find themselves working as greeters at the door of the church, and the next week, holding babies in the nursery. Servants are always on the lookout for a need that they can meet.

Because the "servant" wishes to remain behind the scenes, as it were, it is incumbent upon those in leadership to carefully protect these workers of the church. Servants can find themselves frustrated when they are called upon to work long and hard upon projects that are destined to fail, and therefore a waste of the workers time. So, it is the responsibility of those in leadership to prayerfully choose the directions and ministry projects to be carried out by the church.

Servants can also very easily be manipulated to take on too many projects within the church body, to the point where they could experience "burn out" within the church. Many people have left churches because they were both over worked and under appreciated. While the servant doesn't wish to be seen, EVERYONE needs an "Attaboy" now and then, so, those who are charged with overseeing the work of the church should be ever aware of their responsibility to care for, and encourage, those with the gift of service. This is what the Apostle Paul is referring to when he says that the parts of the body that we deem as "less presentable" should be treated with special honor (**1 Corinthians 12:23**). Servants do not wish to be noticed, but it is imperative that they are, in fact, honored for the invaluable service that they provide within the church.

As a pastor I have learned, over many years of ministry, that if you do not take time to encourage those who serve so diligently beside you to help you accomplish your ministry goals, one day you may end up in a lonely room talking to yourself. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the work, that we can lose sight of the worker. Leaders, remember to bless your helpers, for you cannot survive long in the ministry without them, or as the Apostle Paul would say, **"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you!'" (1 Corinthians 12:21).**

I thank God for the servants within the body of Christ. Do you see a need around you in the church and feel compelled to see it met? Do you find yourself not minding the task, just so long as you can serve? Do you find a deep sense of fulfillment from helping others, even in the most menial of task, with absolutely no recognition for your efforts? Does sitting by idly while others are doing kingdom work frustrate you? Then you could very well have the gift of service, and let me encourage you by saying, your church desperately needs you!

Administration

This gift is sometimes described as the gift of "leadership". Those with the spiritual gift of administration are not always pastors, though most successful pastors do have this gift. The administrator is blessed with the ability to take charge of a group, and govern them, giving direction and focus to any church endeavor. The administrator has been bestowed with a spiritual quality about them that gives others the desire to follow. In the *Old Testament*, when God would raise up leaders such as Joseph, King David, and Daniel, he would in turn **"give them favor"** with the people (**Genesis 39:21; Daniel 1:9**). Something within those leaders chosen by God would supernaturally inspire others to want to come alongside to aide them in their endeavors. The people did not need to be forced or coerced to follow, but instead, were drawn to follow because the Spirit of God was leading them to do so.

Within the church, God similarly will "raise up" leaders and subsequently, give them favor with the people. These church leaders will take it upon themselves to lead in any circumstance where they observe a void of leadership. They simply will step in and take charge to see that a task gets done. They have the ability to strategically plan, and carefully organize. Administrators become agitated when they sense a lack of organization and strategy within the body. They are motivated by planning, so conversely, the lack thereof is unacceptable to them.

Unlike those with the servant gifts, these individuals will gladly delegate responsibilities, rather than try to do everything themselves. They realize the need to stay above the fray in order to accomplish their goals, rather than allowing themselves to get bogged down in the details and menial tasks. The administrator is usually very creative and would much rather visualize and conceptualize, than actually do the "hands on" work. But many times necessity, from project time constraints, to a lack of servant helpers, dictates that they, in fact, must do both.

A major pitfall for the administrator to beware is pride. Many who have been made successful by the grace of God have forgotten the source of their success and have fallen into the trap of arrogant pride. King Saul was one such leader. The Bible clearly warns us that ***pride usually goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)***, and therefore, those with the gift of administration should always maintain a humble walk with God and never neglect their prayer lives, or they too, just like King Saul, can find themselves in utter disgrace. ***Apart from Christ, none of us can accomplish anything (John 15)***, and we would all do well to remember.

As previously discussed, because the administrator is in a place of authority and recognition, it is their duty to love and honor those who have the gift of service. No administrator will have successes without the steadfast servants who are willing to make their visions become reality. Therefore the administrator is to cherish those who serve and not lord over them as a dictator. Those of us who would lead in the body must always remember that ***the least is the greatest in the Kingdom of God***. Do you find yourself oft times filling a void of leadership within the various ministries of the church. Would you rather plan and organize a banquet than quietly cook in the kitchen? Do you desire responsibility and would rather lead a group than simply be a part of the group? Are you often frustrated at the lack of organization and planning in your church? Then you may very well have the gift of administration.

Mercy

Those with this spiritual gift have far above and beyond the average Christian's ability to empathize with the feelings of others. While all Christians are admonished to be our "brothers keepers", as it were, those with the gift of mercy live to do just that. I have found in my own personal experience that there seem to be more women in the church with this particular gift than there are men. While I'm certain that many men indeed have the grace gift of mercy, perhaps it just seems to be more pronounced in women, when compounded with their natural ability as nurturers.

The person with the gift of mercy goes out of their way to find people who are suffering and then ease that suffering, if at all possible. They are the first to start up "prayer chains" when other members of the body are ill, or when tragedy strikes. They are not at all quick to judge but are much more concerned with "binding the wounds" as it were.

People with the gift of mercy often find themselves at odds with those who have the gift of prophecy. This is understandable, for their gifts of ministry are at opposite ends of the ministerial spectrum, as it were. The prophet's task is to correct error in plain terms. Whereas, those gifted with mercy simply want to give comfort to the fallen. Both gifts are absolutely necessary within the body. However, as ambassadors of the kingdom, we have a responsibility to tell people when their griefs have been brought on by disobedience to the word of God. For example, a drug addict doesn't just need someone to feel sorry for him, he also needs someone to set him straight. A person gifted with mercy, who is daily walking with God, will understand this concept completely and will always try to give true spiritual guidance to those who have fallen.

The mercy giver and the prophet must work hand-in-hand for the church to function properly, for love without discipline merely enables, just as discipline without love often crushes the spirit, rather than

bringing healing. We must always remember that God has designed the body to work together in BALANCE. **Galatians 6:1** admonishes us to restore the fallen with gentleness. That doesn't mean that we do not speak truth. Rather, it means that we speak truth IN LOVE (**Ephesians 4:15**).

Thank God for those in the body with the gift of mercy, for often they serve as the cooling hand to a fevered brow. Just as the godly Abigail was able to stop an angry David from doing something that he undoubtedly would live to regret (**1 Samuel 25**), they quietly make us stop and consider the merciful God we claim to serve. In short, they calm us down in our sometimes angry and offensive reaction to the sins around us. They quietly remind us that lost people act like lost people, *because* they are lost. They remind us of the mercy that Christ has shown to each of us, to enable our salvation.

Mercy people, are the best of all of us. They are soft spoken, yet mighty in their role, as ambassadors of the love of a Merciful God, who empathized so strongly with our lost state, that He *gave* his only son to save us from ourselves. Do you deeply hurt, when others hurt? Do you live for the chance to ease the burdens and sufferings of others? Are you at your best when you selflessly give of yourself for the sake of another? Do you find yourself reminding those with a more prophetic makeup, that they, too, were freely given the grace of God? Do you sometimes, idealistically believe that a good hug can fix just about everything? Then you most likely have the spiritual gift of mercy! And I for one, Thank God for you.

Giving

Those in the church who possess the spiritual gift of giving are arguably the most selfless among us. They don't just merely give their tithe to the church (a tenth of their income which all Christians are commanded to do **Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 23:23**), they are constantly on the lookout for needs that they can help to meet over and above their tithe. The giver, is the most generous of us, and oft times, his gift of giving is accompanied by the spiritual gift of faith. This combination enables the "giver" to truly give until it hurts, with the full confidence that God will make up any lack that they could experience as a result. The giver is the first person who comes forward when a need is expressed within the body. They delight in giving until every need is met. For this reason, it is imperative that those in leadership are discerning when expressing needs within the body, for the giver can be unwittingly taken advantage of, by being called upon to pay for frivolous and wasteful endeavors that can seem at the time to be noble causes.

One of the best friends that I ever had, who is now gone on to be with the Lord, was a giver. He was one of the few that I have ever known. I watched him time after time reach into his wallet to give to a need, when I knew in my heart that he couldn't afford to do so. That man taught me so much about the love of God. He used to say, "If you go around saying you love Jesus, then sooner or later, you will get a chance to prove it!". That is probably the most profound statement that I have ever heard in my life.

"Givers" live out this philosophy, and every time they get a chance to prove their love for Christ, they do so, by giving generously, with a cheerful heart. The giver causes ALL of us to reexamine our priorities. I heard my pastor once say, let me see your checkbook and I will tell you what you serve. The giver proves every day that they are a devoted follower of Christ, for they are ever funding His causes. Do you find yourself constantly searching for a good cause to support financially? Do you always go above and beyond giving your tithe to the church? Are you always willing to have less, so that others can have more? Do you find a sense of deep satisfaction from helping those in need? Does your checkbook read like a who's who in the kingdom of Heaven? The most likely, my friend, you indeed have the spiritual gift of giving .

These are the first four of the nine spiritual gifts of service. In **Ephesians Chapter Four**, the Apostle Paul says that those who possess the speaking gifts are not only required to preach and teach the Word of God, but are also to help equip those who possess the serving gifts with the knowledge to use them properly (**Ephesians 4:11-12**). It is my sincere hope and prayer, that as we further explore the study of spiritual gifts you will indeed be able to not only discover your own personal gift, but to combine them with your natural abilities, to serve alongside your fellow believers within this wondrous body of Christ, commonly called the Church. If by now, you have gained some valuable insight into your own gifts, wonderful, but if not, don't be discouraged! There are several more gifts to be explored. May God richly bless you in this journey of discovery.

...**Truth!**