

# Preparing for Ministry

## A New Life of Spirit Led Ministry to Others

There are two great adventures to this New Life: getting to know our God better and joining Him in the Rescue. We all get to play a part! Of course, only Jesus can save people (as we have found out by our own experience). But He delights in gifting us, training us and going out with us to seek and save those who are lost or hurting in any way.

**His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church).** Ephesians 4:12 AMP

## Two Intertwined Adventures

The great thing is how these two adventures play off of and feed into each other. Because of our growing love for Jesus, we soon overflow. We can't keep it to ourselves. We will burst if we can't find a way to help others enter into the blessings we are receiving. We want the whole world to know Him! And we want everyone to grow in His direction. If only we could all come under His leadership. If only we could all receive His saving grace, healing and deliverance. What a difference would this would be! In fact, that Day is rapidly approaching--the Day [when He returns to reign](#). Until His Return, however, there is the Rescue.



In the meantime, the sight of so much human suffering cries out, making its love-demands upon our newly reborn hearts. Because we hear their cries, we cry out on their behalf. There must be something we can do! Jesus, how can we join You in the Rescue! So, begins the wild and crazy adventure of seeking to find our own special purpose and gain the equipping to help a lost and hurting world that many times (bizarrely) doesn't want to be either found or helped! You will quickly find that it is impossible to pursue ministry to others without pursuing Jesus for help, wisdom, resources and recovery. And so, one adventure leads back into the other.

May these articles help you gain your footing and learn the lay of the land. Ministry to others brings incredible blessings and unexpected battles. Prepare for both!



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## CHAPTER ONE

# Before You Even Start

Ministering to others is immensely rewarding and greatly needed, but it is our secondary calling. Unless this is clearly understood, the attempt to be of service will eventually lead to chaos, burn out, or hard feelings. Our [Primary Purpose](#) and our number one assignment is learning how to love the Lord with our whole heart in all our moments and in all our situations. The Lord packed a lot into the “first and greatest” command, but among other things it means that if we put loving and seeking Him first, the other things will fall into place.

**And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39  
ESV**

## Keep the First Command in First Place

In practical terms the order of the two great commandments indicates that we have to stay under Jesus' leadership (the first command) while we are trying to be of service to others (the second command). In seeking to be under His leadership, our primary concern is to make sure that we are trusting Jesus with what He allows and following Him in what He asks. If this sounds difficult, then that should show just how much this on-the-job training is necessary!



There is almost a universal tendency to see the needs of the people we are serving as our primary concern, but the Lord always sees the condition of our heart as His primary concern for us: are we trusting Him (or stressing); are we enjoying the peace of His fellowship as we work; and are we letting the Spirit of love lead us? Few workplace “bosses” would care about the internal state of their workers, only the external results. Our Lord is radically different!

This difference has a lovely dimension to it for it means that results are not what we are being graded on as we seek to serve others. Love is. Our love for Him, and through Him, our love for others: is it growing? Saint Teresa of Avila wrote that “God doesn't care nearly so much about the work we do as the love with which we do it.” What this means is that the wide field of ministry to others is secretly God's great laboratory for cultivating in us listening ears, trusting hearts, willing spirits and loving ways. Knowing this up front gives us enhanced opportunities for cooperating with the lessons.



## Now, Where to Begin?

This is the easy part. Pray, then jump right in. Almost always you will find open doors for service and people in leadership who are willing to give you a try, if you are willing to “take the lowest place.” Starting at the bottom makes great sense. It gives you time to learn the ropes—how things are done in that particular field of ministry. It also leaves you free (of heavier responsibilities) to learn how to pray as you work. Christian work always needs lots of prayer: for practical help, for heart attitudes, for inspired ideas, for breakthroughs, and for the leadership. Be particularly watchful in prayer over your own heart attitudes. Remember the two “golden rules” of service:

### 1) Kindness

You can't always help someone the way they want you to, but you can always BE KIND to them. Being kind helps everyone! Few things speak the love of God better than when we show patience and kindness to someone whose attitude doesn't deserve anything but reproach.

### 2) Respect

You will not always agree with the leadership, but you can always GIVE RESPECT to them. David was respectful of the wicked king Saul who was trying to kill him. Christian leaders won't try to kill you, but they definitely aren't all saints either. Make sure you don't “stone” them for their clay feet.

The great advantage in getting started with anything available is that the Lord can steer you better if you have some forward movement going. Having a sense of peace about what you are doing is all that really matters in the beginning. As you go along God will begin to give you clues that will point you towards your future calling and assignment.

## Clues to Watch For

Notice what emerges in your heart. Are there aspects to the work that particularly energize or inspire you? Are there certain kinds of people or situations of need that tug on your heart more? The former gives you insight into your “ministry gift” and the latter gives you vision for your field of ministry. In the beginning, while I was still folding tables and putting chairs away for others, I found myself thinking about what I would say if I had the opportunity to teach. I also noticed how much I wanted to help others with their emotional needs. Eventually, I entered into the reality I had been dreaming about.

Meditate on what people say to you, especially if it was unsolicited by you. Those you serve will often thank you in a way that emphasizes the kind of ministry they received from the Lord through you. That's a powerful indication of your ministry gift. Also, leaders may comment on the gifts that they see operating in you, especially when they are talking over what you might want to do next around the church.

As time goes on your sense of calling will deepen, or you will find questions stirring in you about what your purpose is and how to prepare for it. No one can fully teach you these things except the Lord, but fortunately He is with you! And He is the best Teacher on earth. So, carry all of

your questions to Him and watch as the answers begin to unfold. In the meantime, we have other articles posted to help you gain a general understanding of the key issues of calling and purpose, gifting and training. But first a final word of caution.

## The Big Hurdle to Clear

Be on guard against offense. Never let it build up. Always go to work on your heart when offense comes and make no mistake about it, offense will come. What's more, it will most likely come in a way you least expect, causing you to feel *entirely justified* in holding on to it. You would still be wrong. You have an enemy who doesn't want you being of service to the Lord, but he especially doesn't want you to become a *loving* servant. We may have the best of hearts and the best of intentions, but watch out! The only way you and I can become truly loving is by learning how to forgive all manner of injury, mistreatment and wrong—*just as Jesus does*. That's why every would-be servant of Jesus has to be tried in the fire of offense.

What do you do? *Forgive!* [Forgive](#) until you are holding nothing but a desire for the other person's well-being. Forgive until you get your heart back for them. This will be relatively easy most of the time, but tough as nails sometimes, or you are not being seriously tested (yet). Call vigorously on the Lord so that you can learn from Him how to let things go and accept people as they are. Let Jesus be your model and your inspiration for how to respond to offense. This is the growth upwards into Christ that the Father desires to cultivate in you. We can be sure He practiced what He preached:

**And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25 ESV**

As you learn to keep your heart free and clear of offense, you will discover that the Lord will always have something worthwhile for you to do. He only puts us on the shelf if our hearts get hard. That's not going to happen to you now that you are on guard against it! So pray, look for an open door, and jump right in. The water's fine!



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## CHAPTER TWO

# Preparing for Ministry

Considering the Lord's high standards, you might think it takes a long time to get ready to do "ministry." For some things, yes, a fair amount of training may be required, but for most things all you need is a heart and the willingness to jump into that sea of human need, lostness, and misery which surrounds you. Nevertheless, you will be "tested" on the job concerning these basics, so be sure you know what they are and have them in play.

**For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** Galatians 5:13 ESV

## Ministry Basics: Love

Mastering the basics is crucial for success in any field of endeavor. Whether you want to be a ball player, a musician, or a farmer the most important thing is how well you do it and for that you have to be good at the basics. That's not the way it is with Christian ministry. Naturally, it matters that you learn to do your tasks well, but that is far from being the most important thing. Relationships are the main thing! That's because our number one task is love. Relationships are, therefore, "the basics" we have to master.



**And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.** 1 Corinthians 13:2-3 ESV

Here are some examples taken from real life: If you fed a hundred hungry people, but treated five of them rudely, you set the work back in everyone's eyes. If you serve the people well enough, but harbor ill will towards a fellow minister you are a stumbling block to the rest of the team. If you are treating everyone with respect and efficiency, but are drifting from the peace of Christ into burnout, you have lost your first Love.

The Lord sets the top priority on love. He really wants us to put loving others ahead of any work we are doing for them in His Name. Yet, God loves us too much to want us to ever lose His peace or His joy while serving Him. In fact, the very opposite can be our experience, because He is so good at rewarding us when we actually are doing things His way. Imagine Jesus feeding the 5000. Does He look stressed, worried or anxious? Not at all! The ones who lost their peace are the "disciples," a name which means learners. That's us!



Learning how to live in His peace and joy while we serve Him is actually a major key to loving the ones we serve. Think over the many times you have been on the receiving end of someone else's service. If they were impatient, how did that make you feel? If they were in a sour mood, were you happy you walked into their shop? It is so easy to forget this when we are the ones trying to move mountains of difficulty for the sake of the Rescue, but the simple truth is only love really *ministers* to others.

## Three Primary Relationships

Christian ministry is, therefore, one of the best ways in which to grow a truly loving heart. There are three main relationships that the Lord wants to help us build as we seek to be of service. If we work on these relationships the right way (His way), we will grow in love and He will be able to build the work around us and do His best work through us. These three relationships are the people we serve, our fellow servants and the Lord Himself. The kind of love that is grown and the practical test of that love is different in each area.

### I. The People We Serve

Love to cultivate: love as compassion.  
The test of love: Are you being kind?

God's love is not primarily a squishy emotion that we feel in our hearts. Thank goodness, He does give us feelings of immense affection for others *at times*. When we experience them it is always energizing and delightful, but they do not last. You simply cannot build a lifetime of ministry to people based on feelings that come and go. What we always have with us, however, is the Example of Jesus (who is love in action) and the definition of love He gives us in His Word. Please notice that not one of the following characteristics is a feeling. By God's own definition, you and I do not have to "emote" at all. He isn't asking us to *feel* love, but to "do" it!

**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.** 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ESV

### Kindness Is Our Prime Directive

Because love is not primarily a feeling, God can (and does) command us to love. We are to love "our neighbors" and that certainly includes the people we are seeking to serve. Nevertheless, you can breathe a sigh of relief that He does not expect you to feel love when you don't. At those times the best thing to do is what love would want you to do. Heidi Baker, missionary in Mozambique, asks, "What would love look like in action?" God's love is practical. It is eminently "doable."

Now let's turn this definition around. The people we serve won't care what we feel for them (in our better moments), if we are treating them with disrespect or impatience (in *their* moment)! Kindness is our prime directive. You may not feel any love or have what they need, but if you are kind to them they will feel the love and be grateful. It remains true, however, that feelings of love bring an inner release of energy, power and delight. It is also true that God has placed His own love inside of us. Wouldn't it be great if we could learn how to tap into the vast reservoir of

love and flow in its power? Indeed we can! There are two tried and proven ways of “releasing the Spirit” for loving service.

### 1) Clear Out the Garbage!

Just as clear water will not flow through sludge-filled pipes, so the Holy Spirit requires us to keep our hearts cleansed of judgment and anger, fear and worry, doubt and depression. Otherwise, grace recedes, and the joy killers take over. When that happens, negative emotions block love at the starting gate. Forgive, let go, and cast all accumulated cares on Jesus. As you empty out of what doesn't belong in you, the Holy Spirit will fill and lift you once again.

### 2) Focus on Compassion

This is one of the great lessons we receive by “watching” Jesus doing ministry. Many times what moved His heart to deeds of love was the compassion which welled up within Him at the sight of human distress. So it is with us. What moved the heart of Jesus will also move our own. Whenever you need to recover fresh strength, look deep into the ocean of suffering in front of you. Get your spiritual eyes off of everything else and refocus on what moved you in the first place: compassion.

## II. Our Fellow Servants

Love to cultivate: love as acceptance.  
The test of love: Are you forgiving?

In doing ministry we often have to work side by side with other believers. This is by the Lord's design and it gives us wonderful moments of close fellowship. It also gives us unavoidable opportunities for being rubbed the wrong way! That also is by the Lord's doing. Jesus never causes offense to occur, or desires it to come, but He definitely will make good use of it when it shows up.

The first thing to notice about being offended with fellow workers is that it is harder to forgive them than the people we serve. In the latter's case we are well aware of their need and their struggles. That's why we volunteered to serve them. We don't expect good Christian behavior from them, either because they are lost to begin with or because their suffering takes precedence. Our feelings of compassion for them are, therefore, much stronger, more readily moving us to forgive them and find excuses for their behavior.

### The Love Law Still Applies!

None of this applies to our fellow servants, at least not in the same measure. We naturally hold them to a higher standard—the one we ourselves are trying to live by. Since they are professing to be Christians, we expect them to act like it. We don't want to excuse or forgive them. We want them corrected! We didn't get on the team with them because we felt compassion for them, so we have little compassion to give. To make matters worse, because we are working closely with them, we see their flaws repeatedly. We may even be wounded by their words or wrong ways: “friction burns” sensitizes us against further injury. All of this can make it harder to forgive and accept them as they are.



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Now take these problems with fellow workers and compound it, if the ones who offend us are our leaders. They should know better and set a better example. Their weaknesses really do hinder the work. Yet, leaders are notoriously hard to correct “from below” and seem resistant to both words and prayers. You can sometimes speak with fellow workers and they will adjust their behavior; less frequently the leaders. To top it off, we frequently elevate leaders to pedestals of perfection no one could possibly occupy, then are doubly dismayed when they fall from the heights. Take heart! All of this is part of the Lord’s plan for training you in His ways.

### Love Purified by Fire

For our love to be *His* love it has to pass through the fires of offense. We simply must learn how to forgive as He does, which is everyone at all times, including flawed fellow workers and failed Christian leaders. He has forgiven you for all that is wrong with you, past and present, hasn’t He? He accepts you just as you are, doesn’t He? He is willing to use you in ministry, despite your many weaknesses and failings, isn’t He? Well, He is dead serious about you giving the same grace to others!

It is for our own good. Not only do we want to become great lovers of humanity like our merciful Lord, but we also want to live in the “joy unspeakable” He makes available. You can’t have joy and hold onto unforgiveness at the same time. To be a “happy Pharisee” is constitutionally impossible! So when offense comes (and it will), drag your heart to the cross (as He did) and do all the forgiving, releasing and accepting there that love requires. You will grow by leaps and bounds!

### III. The Lord, Our Master

Love to cultivate: love as obedience.  
The test of love: Are you trusting?

We serve a Leader we can’t see. This has unique problems all its own. The One we are meant to follow in life and in ministry is invisible to us. We “see” Him by faith, but few of us see Him with our own two eyes. If we were walking with Peter and John on those Galilean roads, we would see Jesus turning to the left and immediately realize we have a decision to make: *Will I follow Him there?* If He sent us to the next village with instructions, everyone including ourselves would know if we obeyed His words: *Did you buy the bread?* It is not nearly so clear for us in this time and place.

With earthly leaders we can at least look at their expression and know if we are pleasing them or exasperating them. If we can’t tell by their looks, they’ll let us know. Good leaders give you feedback. They want to cultivate you as a follower. They want to develop your gifts for service. They want to make good use of your time. They try to give you clear directions. Jesus is the best Leader on the planet, but we can neither see Him directly nor hear Him audibly (most of the time). How does He make up for this?

### An Unexpected Answer

The short answer is that if you and I really want to know His will in any situation, He has ways of helping us find out. The long answer is that it takes time and trouble to learn how to trust, listen to, and follow a leader who keeps playing “Hide and Seek” with you! Ok, so why does He do it

this way? To grow love in us. Whoa. That's an unexpected answer, but it has to be the right one since His primary command to us is that we learn to love Him at all times and in all situations. That certainly includes ministry. In fact, ministry is a great way to grow a genuine love for Him because seeking to be His servant requires us to seek His will.

At every point of decision, we have a choice: will I seek His will to do things His way, or will I handle it my way? Love (in God) gives us that choice. Love (in us) takes that choice, turns from self and seeks to obey Jesus. Our primary relationship in ministry is as a servant to a Master. This is the entry level—He will want to raise us into friendship eventually, but we must first learn to be disciples (followers). We draw close as servants by seeking to follow our Leader in all things. We not only want to do His will, we want to do it *His way*. This enables Him to work in us and through us whenever we are on track. If we want results, we have to seek Him. If we want to love Him, we must learn to obey Him. He calls obedience love (John 14:15). We have three main ways in which our obedience to Him is enabled and tested.

### 1) His Word

Do you trust Him enough to obey His Word and live within its boundaries? His Word gives positive general directions and clearly marks out the moral boundaries we are to live within. Serving Him means bringing all of our ways into obedience to His Word.

### 2) His Spirit

Do you trust Him enough to allow His Spirit to lift, lead and guide you? The Lord will give you a sense of the next right thing to be done. That may not fit into your plans, but it does His. The Holy Spirit guides us by His peace. If we take the step He is pointing to there is peace; if we keep love and trust in our hearts there is peace. That's our "go" signal!

### 3) Earthly Authorities

Do you trust Him enough to obey the ones He has placed over you? We are not to blindly follow people who are asking something immoral or illegal of us, but most Christian leaders operate within the wide boundaries of the law. Their way of going at things may not be your way, it may not even be God's best way, but we are still meant to give them the best measure of service that we can.

## Cultivating the Garden

These three great loves—for the people we serve, the people we serve with, and for Jesus Himself—don't grow all by themselves. Or rather, they do grow by an effortless grace when conditions are right, but if we don't cultivate around them, our harvest will be mostly weeds and rotten fruit! God starts us with a lot of grace, but we have to learn how to work with His love and mercy in order for things to keep growing in the right direction. So, be prepared to refresh your compassion, acceptance and obedience when the manure of unwanted events and difficult people gets added into the mix.



## CHAPTER THREE

# Calling and Purpose

Because God calls us into relationship, we have not one, but two magnificent purposes to discover: 1) the joy of knowing Him intimately and 2) the unique way He designed us to be of loving service to others. These pursuits supply endless fascination! If our life is not characterized by discovery and adventure, we are probably missing the mark on both counts. As we enter more deeply into our purpose, convergence carries us ever closer to destiny.

**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**  
Philippians 3:14 ESV

## Double Duties, Double Delights

There need never be a dull moment walking with Jesus. He has given us two engrossing and fascinating assignments: He calls us to His side to a) know and love Him and b) love and serve others. These two “great” commands actually describe our calling, our purpose, our assignments and our destiny. We may think of them as duties, but they are also intended to be our delights. Nothing could be more heart-expanding and joy-inducing than to pursue these two great callings.

**And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."** Matthew 22:37-40 ESV



These are certainly commands, but they are also promises. If you look far enough into the future you will see by eyes of faith that one Day this will be eternally true for all of us who make it home to heaven. We will become the people who know what it is like to fully and fantastically love God with our whole heart and who love the entire Body of Christ that He is calling into His eternal family. That's our destiny! God has decreed that He will accomplish it for us: we “shall” enter into the perfection of love which heaven fulfills. How much of it will we enter into in this life? That depends upon our willingness to go for broke, betting the farm on Jesus and living for Him, rather than for ourselves alone.



## A Missing Key to Loving Others

Unquestionably, loving God is our Number One assignment—it is the “great and first” command. To learn how to do it and how it is graded daily, please see [Two Passionate Purposes](#). Since this section is on ministry, our focus here is on the second commandment, loving our neighbor as ourselves. Right away we can see from the Lord’s description that one key to actually loving others depends upon how we love ourselves. Many of us don’t love for ourselves! Truth be told, we are angry, frustrated, demanding and impatient with ourselves. This cannot help but spill over into the way we treat other people. If you need help learning how to love and accept yourself the way God does, then please see [Love Thyself](#) at our sister site, [Healing Streams](#). Once we learn to love ourselves the right way, we no longer need others to meet our emotional needs. This sets us free to love and serve them with no strings attached, just as God does us.

Now we can focus on what it means to love our neighbor. Having a heart full of love for others is a good thing. However, that really won’t do our neighbor any practical good. All it takes is one look into the sea of lost, hurting humanity around us to realize that other people need help and lots of it. If we have any love at all, we will want to be part of the Rescue. Some need to be saved by coming to know the Lord; others need physical, emotional and material assistance. Every individual and every people group needs help of some kind.

## Called with a Purpose

There’s no end to human need! This makes it easy to begin, but how do we find where we can best be of service? We probably all have a sense that God has us here for a reason, a special purpose. Usually this is completely misunderstood. Nothing could be more important to the Lord than that we enter into our high calling of knowing Him—that’s our greatest delight and highest purpose. Just the same this isn’t what people usually mean when they say, “I know God has me here for a reason.” They’re thinking of some way of being of service to humanity. That’s why our first step into our calling and purpose needs to be discovering what our Number One reason for being here is and understanding how to pursue it. Jesus has already warned us that until we get that one in place everything else will be out of order. With that sizable piece in place we are ready to look at the rest of the puzzle.

Our calling by God includes a form-fitted way of serving Him in the lives of other people. Some people have a sense of what that is from an early age. They just “know” they want to be doctors, farmers or musicians, etc. and never waver from that goal all their lives. Even unbelievers who don’t know the Lord or want to know Him, may have this sense of direction which comes from God. They just won’t say it’s a calling, because that implies that there is a God who has a claim on them and they don’t want to answer His call. But what of us who know that our God is gloriously Alive, can speak for Himself, and has a great plan for our life? Sometimes we can wander in the wilderness for years, never discovering our special purpose. That seems so unfair!

## Signs Pointing to Our Purpose

Fortunately, there are ways of finding out what our special purpose is. These are tried and proven ways, but none of them are guaranteed to work on their own apart from God. The Lord is sovereign. He has His own ways of dealing with us and He knows only too well how quick we are to wriggle off the hook. What hooks us in terms of service is wanting to know our special

calling and gifts. Of course, He wants us to know those things too, BUT He also may be interested in helping us learn how to be guided by Him while He has our attention. Additionally, He may want to check out the true level of our surrender to Him, as in “God I will do anything for you, but...” If you want to walk with the Lord, you have to get off your “buts”!

### 1) Nudges

What tugs at your heart? In your head you may have all kinds of ideas about how humanity needs to be helped. The Lord is far more interested in growing love, so look to your heart. What situations of human need actually move you to tears, or to deep feelings of compassion? Jesus Himself was often moved to specific ministry on the basis of compassion for the human suffering He saw. Therefore, we can expect that God will draw us into our fields of harvest the same way. Learning the way of the heart does not come easily to many Westerners. That’s why seeking our calling gives the Lord such excellent teaching opportunities. (See [Contrasting Head and Heart](#)).

### 2) Drawings

What people group(s) are you drawn to? Paul had a dream in which a man called him to come to Macedonia. God still calls us to people groups, though the ways we hear it are varied. People groups come in all sizes and shapes. Those with an evangelist’s calling will constantly be thinking about people who need to be saved. They may narrow it down even more with their concern for unsaved people of a certain region, ethnic group, or age group. Other people will find themselves thinking about how kids in the inner city could be helped, if someone would work with them during after school hours. Or, you may just love talking with the “old folks” and only need to see some practical way to link up your heart attachment with something that looks like service.

### 3) Gifts

What gifts are you discovering? As we try our hand at various ways of serving people we inevitably discover what we are good at (and not so good at). Let your strengths lead you. Things that come easily to you are a sign of prior giftedness from the Lord. So is affirmation from the people you work with as well as from the ones you serve. Other people will notice and affirm gifts operating in you that you might be totally unaware of. These in turn will point you towards your ultimate main channels of service. This is why it matters less where we start serving, than that we start. Once we get going the Lord can more readily steer us. For more on this see [Gifts, Fruit and Talents](#).

### 4) Guidance

Are you learning [the way of guidance](#)? We have not just been given a Book to follow, as helpful as that is. Our guide in life is none other than the Lord Himself. Jesus still calls us to follow Him, just as surely and as intimately as the original invitation came to those first disciples in Galilee. Jesus may have dropped out of sight—we don’t get to see His steps as they did—but in exchange He has given His Spirit to live within us. Entering into the fullness of our calling, inescapably means entering into the fullness of [New Life in the Holy Spirit](#). Learning to be guided by the Holy Spirit is, therefore, essential for the pursuit of our calling.

## Convergence

Making all of this come together is the Lord's work. Our part is to be surrendered and committed to Him, to be courageous at following His guidance, and to listen in a searching way to our own heart. Deep is calling to deep. If we keep answering the call, He will lead and draw us through many unforeseeable events which will both grow and guide us. Eventually, God willing, we will emerge from all the training into a season in life where our gift set comes together with our sense of calling. Our destined purpose draws near!

In this season—it's called convergence—*work actually becomes play*. We end up doing what we have been designed by God to do best and may even get paid for it. Amazing. But be forewarned, one study found that only a very small percentage of pastors could say that they were experiencing convergence. Most felt that they had not entered into the best use of their gifts or had somehow become sidelined along the way. These are the people we expect to have the surest sense of calling!

Don't let anything discourage you. You are not them. It all hangs on just how far you want to go in following Jesus. Be determined to go the distance, to the last measure of sacrifice and surrender, and He will lead you into the promised land of convergence and destiny.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

# The School of the Spirit

There are lessons of the Lord which can be described in a classroom, but can only be imparted by the Spirit in the school of daily life. Being trained for ministry includes character development and spiritual growth, so expect on the job training to continue no matter what you are doing. That means leaning to survive trials and eventually thrive in the midst of them. Fortunately for all of us, our Teacher is also our Comforter and Best Friend!

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." John 15:1-2 ESV**

## Internal Instruction

Without a doubt the Holy Spirit is the best Teacher on earth. Nothing escapes His attention. He is always working to help us do our best and be our best. If you have ever watched the Olympics, then you have probably seen athletes huddle up with their coaches after events. Even if they did spectacularly well, the coach will whisper words to them about how to improve for the next set. Similarly, the Holy Spirit will frequently bring to your mind ways in which you can improve your game as a servant of others. He has a lot to teach us!



Fortunately, the Lord is pleased with any step we take in the right direction and He never reproaches us for missteps, but He loves us too much to let us get the big head. Helping others leaves us open to temptation by pride because, after all, our good works are on public display. Naturally we want to do well—and He desires that for us too—but there is a hidden danger in success: taking credit to ourselves, or thinking that we have arrived at a pinnacle of achievement. So, expect it that your greatest encourager is also your most devoted critic.

Not only is the Lord keenly interested in cultivating our abilities, He also wants to preserve our humility, so that we will remain teachable. If we are open to it, we are now learners for life in the great, never-ending School of the Spirit. This can keep everything that we do fresh and exciting for we who enroll in this course of instruction are always seeking to grow better at loving people and more effective at serving them. It can also open doors (if you let it) for the enemy to harass or oppress you with self-condemning thoughts. Learning to separate out [conviction by the Spirit](#) from condemnation by the enemy is part of the on the job training we need.



## Nine Necessary Lessons

This list is not all-inclusive. It's simply an overview of certain basic lessons that the Lord will likely be working on with you as you work with Him.

### 1) Connection

Just as batteries don't last long without a re-charge, none of us can stay "in the Spirit" and advance the kingdom without staying closely connected to the One who desires to work through us. Jesus has given us [five main ways of connecting](#) to Him. Service is one of those ways, but staying refreshed and ready for anything means that we will need to learn how to keep the other four in good working condition: Bible, prayer, worship and fellowship. You will learn, if you are open to the lessons, that no matter how much you have to do for the Lord, the most important thing is staying well-connected to Him. It's our #1 assignment.

### 2) Criticism

Just because we are stepping out of our complacency or our comfort zones to do something noble for the Lord, doesn't mean critics, naysayers and busybodies will leave us alone. If they bother you, don't waste time trying to change them (or worse, becoming a complainer yourself). You could sooner bail out the ocean than change the sea of humanity around you. Let the barrage of negativity from others (when it happens) turn you away from seeking to please people and re-focus on Jesus and how He sees you. Are you here to please others or God? Criticism can help you see things about yourself you need to work on, even if the only thing that needs changing is your reaction to it.

### 3) Dependence

Entering into the Lord's work usually means discovering how little we have to bring to the table, like the disciples must have felt when asked by Jesus to feed the multitude. Seen from the outside we almost never seem to have enough: more money is needed for the work, or more resources, or more people. Seen from the inside, we can't help but notice our weaknesses and inadequacies. This is likely an uncomfortable position for many of us in the beginning, but it is teaching the life-long lesson of depending upon the Lord to be our faithful Source and supply.

### 4) Guidance

We may be perfectly willing to say with Jesus, "Behold, I come to do your will" and yet not have a clue how to place ourselves under His leadership. If we are willing to begin at the lowest level, serving the Lord's will is easy: just place yourself under the leaders He has already placed over the work. Eventually, though, you will start seeing needs that you would like to reach out to directly. This naturally causes us to pray and seek the Lord for guidance. Learn to watch for the opportunities His Hands provide and listen for the ideas He brings you. Guidance is an art best learned on the job, not in the arm chair. See [Walking in the Spirit](#) for more on this essential lesson.



## 5) Waiting

No one likes waiting these days. There is so much hurry up and impatience all around. Yet, waiting on God is a huge theme in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. Waiting is akin to hope and is infused with faith that the things we had to commit to the Lord (because they aren't happening now!) will come in due time, if we persevere while we are waiting. Christian ministry teaches us to be patient a) because without patience we will inevitably become unkind and that will never do, and b) so many things have to be prayed for in order for the Lord to bring them about. There's no point in holding your breath or drumming your fingers when what needs doing requires the Spirit's wooing in someone else's life. God's timing cannot be forced, especially since His priority is working on hearts. As you learn to wait, be sure to learn how to "enter into His rest" and "possess your soul" with patience.

## 6) Weakness

Don't we love leading with our strengths? Don't we wish we didn't have any weaknesses getting in the way? Strengths are a joy. We can get things done with them! Weaknesses are a bother all the way around. Nevertheless, the call of the Lord brings us face to face with our weakness, time and time again. Why? Wouldn't we be better off without them? In fact, we would do well to learn to see weaknesses as friends in disguise, not enemies to be feared. Our weaknesses lead us to Christ, reminding us to pray, to cast our hope on Him, and to cling to Him. Strengths usually throw us back into total reliance upon ourselves. Weaknesses teach us the high and holy way of dependence upon the Lord.

## 7) Busyness

Jesus said He needed to be about His Father's "business." He never said He needed to be busy. Busyness is a modern plague. For those who have caught the bad infection it feels good—most of the time. It really feels like one is making progress at getting things done. But what happened to the peace of Christ? What happened to the leadership of the Holy Spirit? What about the people who were steam-rolled as you pressed your agenda forward? The one who has learned the ways of the Lord gets more done with less effort, because the Holy Spirit is supplying strength and synchronizing events. Busyness is like an overfilled cup of coffee, sure to scorch someone when it's spilled, most frequently the holder. Let the Lord teach you when enough is enough.

## 8) Rescuing

There is only room for One Rescuer on the team. That position is already filled! Jesus cares for each individual we are trying to serve infinitely more than we ever will, but He has His own way of working with them and His own timing about it. We can easily get in His way if we seize things to ourselves, trying to fix people in our own strength. Learn to let your hand rest lightly on your plans and your desires. God often rules by over-ruling us. This is frustrating, but necessary. He knows what He's doing; we don't. At the same time the enemy loves to obstruct and oppose the work. When do we submit to God; when do we resist the devil? This calls for real discernment. Patient perseverance usually wins the day, though the victory may come days later than you originally expected.



## 9) Submission

We are to “submit to one another” keeping the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Here is where the rubber of gospel truth meets the hard road of daily life. There are so many bumps in the road when it comes to working with others! Yet, the most important thing about the work is the relationships: with the people being served, with fellow workers and with our leaders in the field. The Holy Spirit is watching carefully over all of this. Of course, He hates it when we are mistreated, abused or oppressed, but neither is there any place in Christian ministry for us to adopt an attitude of self-pity, wounded pride, or resentment. Learn to be far less concerned about how you are treated, than how you treat others.

## Tests and Trials

There is a difference between tests and trials. Without drawing too fine a distinction, let’s just say that tests represent the kinds of situations we face most days. Seeking to be of service will test us in the various ways listed above, among others. Be ready for “pop quizzes.” Life hands them out all the time! Staying connected to the Lord and talking things over with experienced friends takes care of most things. You will find yourself learning all kinds of lessons through the ordinary cycle of trouble and resolution. These are usually felt as minor disturbances in the flow of work and as fairly normal emotional reactions. Above it all we usually have a sense of passing the tests and growing in faith and grace.

Trials, however, are more difficult and disturbing. We usually have a feeling of being caught in them, of regressing to previous levels of weakness, and of being too piercingly aware of our moral shortcomings. We don’t feel like we are passing at all. In fact, it is the Lord who “passes” the test of any trial worthy of being called a trial. He proves His strength of heart to us: His faithfulness and His mercy triumph over our dilemma and lead us out. This takes time. If (or when) you get caught in a trial, try to remember that He only disciplines in love. Once you recover your trust and confidence in God—at a new level---the trial has done its work.

## Relax, He Loves You!

Neither tests, nor trials, are a sign of His displeasure. He is genuinely pleased that you are seeking to serve Him. He loves you and He is really, really easy to please. Trials and tests are His “strange” way of working with us to liberate us in areas of our life where words alone could never have accomplished the work. He takes us through experiences that we might have shunned before we decided to follow Him, or overlooked by primarily being focused on ourselves, rather than the needs of others. He is delighted to have us on his team. He wishes to reward us for our service with greater freedom and with a closer walk with Him. Therefore, He disciplines or trains us through tests and trials. It is actually a profound sign of His favor, though a hard one (at times) to interpret.

**My child, don't reject the Lord's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.** Proverbs 3:11-12 NLT



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## CHAPTER FIVE

# Talents, Fruit and Gifts

The Lord gives talents and natural abilities to everyone as a way of getting us started in life. You don't have to be a believer to be a receiver of these—just develop what you notice. As believers, though, it helps to know the limits of these natural abilities in the spiritual life. Wiser still would be to shift our attention towards cultivating those gifts and fruit which are unique to who we now are in Christ as His new creations.

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV**

## A Progression

In general talents are natural abilities given to everyone at birth, fruit are the good things anyone can cultivate, but gifts are the supernatural way God uniquely works in those who are united to Him through faith in Christ. There may be no hard and fast rules here, but there is a general progression that can be noted. Naturally, for those who receive genuine faith in Christ at a very early age, these distinctions will be clouded, since natural abilities, fruit and gifts will begin to appear simultaneously. With adult conversion we see a progression more clearly: natural abilities and most fruit can appear before conversion; some fruit and most gifts can only appear after conversion.

## A. Natural Abilities

We now know that we receive a genetic package at conception which contains fabulous gifts of accumulated generational inheritance. Within it are all of our potential talents waiting (so to speak) for us to discover and cultivate. No one needs to be a believer in God to receive these gifts. Through conception God gives lavishly to everyone natural abilities of body, mind, heart and personality. We all have them to varying degrees. We cultivate them to varying degrees.

Some talents need cultivating from a very early age or they can never develop fully. Other abilities may not be discovered (or even needed) until much later in life. No one is left out, though sadly, many natural talents and abilities may never be recognized or cultivated.

In terms of development a lot depends upon the individual and the environment. However, both of these factors are under the direct influence of the Lord's grace and providential working. Doubtless He helps us discover and cultivate our innate abilities, even if we have no belief in Him at all. That too is His gift to us.



With conversion and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whole new attitudes arise within us. Even if we previously had been too timid or discouraged to discover our abilities or cultivate our known talents, all this is subject to change. A healthy prayer life and growing confidence in God, should be sufficient to help any believer recognize and cultivate their natural abilities above and beyond what they could have done without the Lord's help. Even so, it is important to realize that these are not yet what the Bible calls "gifts." Any good thing a non-believer can do, you can do, too, if you have sufficient desire to cultivate that ability. "Gifts" are what only you can do and a non-believer cannot. Talents come to us through natural birth; "gifts" come to us through spiritual re-birth.

## B. Good Fruit

There are three kinds of fruit that the Bible describes: the fruit of good deeds, the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of Christian ministry. The first two can be cultivated by anyone on earth; only the third one can be cultivated by Christians.

### 1) The Fruit of Good Deeds

While it is definitely true that our good deeds alone can never be sufficient to save us, it is equally true that the Bible expects us to do good as much as we can, as well as we can and as often as we can. You don't have to be a converted Christian to give to the poor, to work hard and honestly, to love your family or to defend your country. These are good things. We could call them "the fruit of righteousness" if that wouldn't give them too religious a cast. No one needs faith in God to do them, though just as with natural abilities, good deeds should flourish in the lives of genuine believers, since we can call on the Lord for help in cultivating them.

**Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.** Psalms 34:11  
ESV

### 2) The Fruit of the Spirit

These are fruit which can grow in our inner state: peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. All right thinking people everywhere prize these as feelings and praise them as virtues. Christians have a unique access to them through faith and grace, but we do not have exclusive receptivity to them for they are gifts of God to anyone who can receive them. Indeed, little children whose parents may be of any faith or of no faith, universally exhibit these fruit better than many of us who believe. As with natural abilities and good deeds, anyone can recognize, receive and cultivate this to a degree, but as believers we can enter into higher levels of these fruit and learn the way of enhanced cultivation which Jesus desires.

**Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.** John 15:4-5 ESV



### 3) The Fruit of Christian Ministry

In the widest sense Christian ministry includes anything that any believer might do as a service to others. But you don't have to be a believer to spend your life in service to others. The New Testament letters generally narrow this down into those specific things which we do for the sake of making Jesus known or for advancing His kingdom: such as preaching, praying, teaching, serving in His Name and doing healing, deliverance and miracles. This kind of fruit is a form of service unique to Christians. It grows out of the "gifts" that the Lord provides believers so that He can work in us and through us by His Spirit.

**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.** 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 ESV

## C. Gifts for Ministry

When we are reborn through the gift of faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Lord showers fresh abilities and desires upon us. These are called "gifts and callings" and they go together like peas and carrots. Because of what the Lord plans to call us into doing, He gives us desires that inspire us and gifts that equip us for service us in that direction. You can count on it that once you discover any gifts or callings in you, they are there to stay. He doesn't revoke or withdraw them due to neglect, misuse or failed behavior.

**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.** Romans 11:29 ESV

There are three main kinds of spiritual gifts that we can receive, as well as others dropped in for good measure. These are commonly referred to as the [Five Ministry Gifts](#), the [Eight Motivational Gifts](#) and the [Nine Manifestation Gifts](#). They will be discussed in the following three articles. For now let's consider the difference between fruit and gifts, and specific gifts and general callings.

### 1) Fruit and Gifts

The good side of God's promise in Romans is that any effort we put into discovering our gifts and callings will always grow us towards our intended destiny: we can build on this as on a foundation that will never be removed. However, we need to build with wisdom. Character and integrity are entirely separate issues—they don't come with any of the gifts. They are fruit of the Spirit (for instance, faithfulness and self-control) that we must cultivate alongside of the gifts, otherwise we risk tarnishing the gifts, spreading confusion in the Body of Christ and giving the work a black eye to outsiders. Maybe someone's been given gifts of healing and evangelism, but if they steal from the offering and cheat on their spouse, that lack of character will bring their work to ruin. Don't let it happen to you!

Another difference between fruit and gifts is that fruit takes time to cultivate. Gifts can drop on you in an instant. The rule for fruit is that of natural cultivation: *sow and grow*. It takes a considerable amount of time to raise fruit trees to the point of harvesting a bumper crop. That should tell us something. We sow and grow by cultivating the 3 P's:

prayer, patience and perseverance. As we die to the old ways of self, the Holy Spirit raises us up into the ways of the Lord. That just doesn't happen overnight.

The three great loves—for the people we serve, the people we serve with, and for Jesus Himself—don't grow all by themselves. Or rather, they do grow by an effortless grace when conditions are right, but if we don't cultivate around them, our harvest will be mostly weeds and rotten fruit! God starts us with a lot of grace, but we have to learn how to work with His love and mercy in order for things to keep growing in the right direction. So, be prepared to refresh your compassion, acceptance and obedience when the manure of unwanted events and difficult people gets added into the mix.

The rule with gifts is different: *believe and receive*. This calls for the 3 F's: faith, fact and feeling. By faith we trust ourselves to the "facts" in God's Word; then feelings follow as we receive what we ask or seek. Ask in faith for the gifts that your heart points you towards, believe in the fact of God's promise to gift and equip you, then step out into service and the feeling of being called and equipped will begin to show up. There's more to it than this, but that's enough to get anyone started.

## 2) Gifts and "General" Callings

Let's take in on faith for the moment that you have been given specific gifts and have a specific calling upon your life. Eventually, you will discover what these might be as you see what you like to do and what you do easily and well. Your friends may point some of this out to you, leaders may confirm it, and the Lord may reveal more through your hopes, dreams or encounters with Him. You have a unique purpose to fulfill and you have been exquisitely gifted to go at it. None of this, however, has anything to do with your "general" callings.

Every Christian knows Jesus by faith and has the Holy Spirit living inside of them. Therefore, every Christian has the potential of serving in any way that the Lord may ask of them from time to time. This has nothing to do with the way we may be best gifted and equipped to operate. It certainly has nothing to do with our comfort zones or personal desires. Just because I may not be "called and gifted" to be an evangelist, doesn't exclude me from the call of God to share my faith in Christ. I may not have any discernible gifts of healing, but I am still called to pray for the sick. You may not be a pastor, but you still will need to know how to comfort, encourage and guide your friends and others the Lord may put in your path.

These general callings of God are in the scriptures and they are directed to all of us. Sure, some have champion level gifts, but all of us are soldiers and may be required to step in to any role at a moment's notice. This can easily seem intimidating at first (and at times along the way), because it means that God may ask us to step out of our comfort zone and rely on Him to help us fill in when no one better equipped is standing by. The beautiful side of this is that nothing is excluded from us: we can grow in every direction to some degree and we can, therefore, reap the blessing of experiencing that part of the Rescue.



## CHAPTER SIX

# Five Ministry Gifts

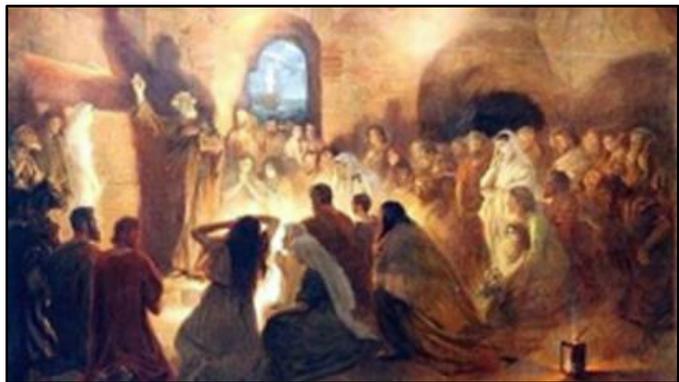
Everyone benefits directly from these five gifts for they are given by the Father for the express purpose of building up the whole Body of Christ so that we can be fully equipped to play our part in the Rescue. Considering how important they are in God's plan, it should not be too surprising that the enemy has tried to eliminate or decimate them. Several of these ministry gifts have nearly passed out of everyday experience for many in the church. The good news is that they are all staging a comeback!

**And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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.**

Ephesians 4:11-13 ESV

## Centuries of Neglect

Looking at church history through the lens of the above passage from Ephesians, it's fair to say that for centuries, perhaps as many as 18, the primary office of leadership in the church has been that of pastor. Whether Protestant or Catholic, Orthodox or Independent, the pastor, minister, preacher or priest is the focal point for the local congregation's experience of leadership in the church. True enough there may be bishops or superintendents above the local pastor and elders alongside, but where are the other offices? Paul is unambiguous that in the church there are meant to be "apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers" as well as pastors. What happened?



The legalization and expansion of the early church in the fourth century of the Roman Empire "watered down" the depth of experience for most Christians from the time of Constantine the Great onwards. As persecution no longer drove the church underground and deeper into Christ, being a Christian became socially acceptable, even preferable. Genuine conversions were no longer the expected norm (being replaced by infant baptism) and the gifts of the Spirit largely disappeared. At the same time the administrative structure of the church increasingly mirrored that of the Empire with its leaders holding "offices" of administrative power. This process actually had begun just over a century earlier as bishops won out over the charismatically gifted for leadership over the church.

These developments were probably necessary for establishing stable order within the church—there was so much naiveté and credulity in those days. However, two of the biggest "losers" during this season of growth and transformation were the [Baptism in the Holy Spirit](#) and the



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[Gifts of the Spirit](#). Perhaps this was inevitable. It may have been by the Lord's doing that these aspects of His power had to await a time when the church as a whole would be in a better position to handle them. What's clear is that they were never intended to disappear entirely or stay submerged indefinitely. Throughout history the miraculous continued to dazzle here and there like jewels in a river bed. Then, in the last century a stunning resurrection has brought these lost treasures to the surface!

## A Century of Renewal

Just as the Catholic Middle Ages proved to be a period of incubation for those ideas which burst forth in the Reformation, so, too, the Pentecostal and Charismatic moments of the twentieth century owed their emergence to the prayer and piety which grew in the intervening centuries of Protestant Orthodoxy. People were hungering for a deeper, more authentic experience of both the passion and power of the Early Church. Where the Protestant Reformation focused on the Person of [Jesus](#) and His saving work, Pentecostalism turned its sights towards the Person of the [Holy Spirit](#) and His supernatural gifts.

This combination was explosive: the Welch Revival and that of Azusa Street quickly brought the baptism in the Spirit and His supernatural workings to millions worldwide. Revivals and outpourings have continued to break forth, as have the baptism in the Spirit and its controversial sign—speaking in tongues. Despite opposition from mainline Christianity, the movement has spread, becoming the fastest growing and third largest branch of Christianity.

In addition, there have been revivals led by extraordinarily gifted healers, prophets with Biblical levels of supernatural vision and accuracy, teachers who have gained universal recognition for their gifts, and evangelists who have reached millions even in single events. Miracles of healing and demonic deliverance have become “the children's bread” once again in the life of many churches, especially those in the Third World. Once birthed these gifts and callings have continued to grow in depth of understanding and breadth of expansion. There has been no turning back! In one wave after another it is evident that a Mighty Hand has been restoring gifts to His Bride which were never intended to languish unopened.

The Body of Christ in the twenty first century is, therefore, entering a restored season of all the elements of supernatural giftedness that the Early Church once enjoyed. No doubt many things are still in a process of growth towards full restoration, but the main pieces are on the drawing room table. Now is the time for seeing how they will fit together in preparation for the extensive growth that will very likely come as a result. Sadly, some will miss out, blinded by doctrines that keep them from seeing what the Lord is doing in our day. That needn't be you!

## The Fivefold Ministry

The entry point for all of us into this dimension of Christian living is the baptism in the Spirit. With it come praying in tongues and access to at least some of the nine supernatural gifts. The fivefold ministry is there (when it is there) to help all believers cultivate their gifts and find their place in the Body as fellow ministers, but it is especially needed by those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Why? Why isn't the traditional pattern of the pastor/teacher sufficient?

Pastors are usually perfectly able to equip believers to serve on the governing board, to teach in Sunday school, to be ushers, or lead home groups, visit the sick at hospital, or canvass the neighborhood in outreach and evangelism. That's a lot. But you don't have to be baptized in the Spirit or supernaturally gifted to do any of it! And neither does the pastor. In the spiritual life it is practically impossible to lead or cultivate others beyond your own level of experience. In the Biblical pattern all of the fivefold ministers were already baptized in the Spirit and operating in their gifts as part of a team. This positioned them powerfully for "equipping" others to join in the effort of a supernaturally gifted Body to do the kinds of ministry which only Holy Spirit empowered Christians can do. Look where Paul places the priority in leadership: apostles first, then prophets. Pastors are not even mentioned.

**Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.** 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 ESV

Without question, the New Testament apostles were Holy Spirit baptized and equipped for supernatural ministry. So were the prophets. So were many, if not all, of the others in leadership positions, judging by the above list which includes supernatural gifts. Furthermore, the apostles were frequently tasked with rounding up the believers that hadn't yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit and laying hands on them until they were. It would appear that the Early Church was so universally charismatic that those who weren't stood out as exceptions to be further instructed. Just as the members of the Early Church could look with confidence to their leaders, recognizing the gifts of those the Lord had placed over them, so we need to understand these gifts for the sake of our own equipping. Seeing the "head" will help us find our place in the Body.

## 1) Apostles

After Jesus' resurrection the twelve disciples He had chosen became the principal "apostles" and the uncontested leaders of the Early Church. Paul's apostolic position was later recognized by these men, but was contested by others who sought to gain influence over churches he had established. Others were added to the ranks of the apostles, though the number of "false apostles" evidently increased as well. Additionally, the Early Church recognized a distinction between apostles who held universal authority in the church and elders who functioned as local administrators or as advisers to the apostles. We should expect it then that as this office is restored to the church controversy will likely surround it. How to recognize true apostles?

The first apostles knew the Lord personally and well. They had learned directly from Him and had seen Him resurrected in power. Their faith and their knowledge of God was, therefore, both intimate and authoritative for others who wanted to be taught by them. This will be one of the marks. Another is the way they shepherded the growth and missionary spread of the Early Church. They had a genuine vision for the harvest of souls and church planting. A third indicator was their ability to move in supernatural power. Paul said he demonstrated all of the signs of a true apostle. Perhaps, the greatest mark of a true apostle, however, will be the way the other four offices recognize their God-given authority and submit their ministries to apostolic oversight.



## 2) Prophets

Prophets abound in both Testaments of the Bible. The unmistakable mark of a true prophet is Holy Spirit given insight and foresight. They are able to see things that others don't or can't. They can foretell future events through dreams or visions they receive from the Lord (foresight). They can also "read" the innermost secrets of a person through whatever unique way the Lord chooses to work through them (insight). In addition to foretelling, prophets were called to "forth tell"—to speak forth the counsel of God's holy standard against sin, calling the people to repentance.

With the New Covenant there is no less emphasis upon holy living, but a much greater emphasis upon the grace of God to accomplish it. There is a marked difference in temperament between the way Old and New Testament prophets present their messages. Whereas OT prophets seemed to "thunder" at the people from on high, inveighing against them, New Testament prophets encourage and enlighten the people "from below" as loving servants. Consider the difference between Moses at Sinai or Elijah at Mount Carmel and Jesus, who is the greatest of all prophets, giving the Sermon on the Mount. Give special respect to those prophets who not only have supernatural gifts from the Holy Spirit, but show forth the nature of Jesus in the way they minister to others.

## 3) Evangelists

Even under the Old Covenant it was expected that Abraham's offspring would carry the "good news" about their God to the outside world. This happened to a limited degree during the Jewish Diaspora as "God-fearers" were attracted to the Synagogues which sprang up throughout the Mediterranean basin. The Early Church carried this to a whole new level with a brand-new message. Both Stephen, the first martyr, and Philip displayed awesome gifts of evangelism. Soon, practically everyone everywhere was hearing the message. Nowadays, we are all familiar with this gift, especially after the explosion of converts taking place through the ministries of men like Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke. Nevertheless, evangelists aren't always on platforms or in the mission field. Look for them in the local church, too.

## 4) Pastors

Pastors are shepherds of the flock. This is the office most familiar to all of us, so there is little need to delineate it here. It is modeled quite naturally on Jesus as our ultimate Good Shepherd who (in the gospels) cared for and cultivated the faith of lost individuals, the inner circle of devout followers and the wider gatherings of interested, though somewhat less committed believers. Typically, pastors are the head of the local church and as such, everyone needs to submit to their authority, even those who might consider that they have a higher gift and calling. Being the head pastor, however, doesn't mean that pastoring is their gift, only their position with its common title. Many pastors are actually evangelists or teachers with little God-given ability to do actual pastoring. That's not their fault—it may be ours for expecting them to be all things for all people, when the Lord told us in advance that He gives out *five* different kinds of leadership gifts for "equipping" us.



## 5) Teachers

For centuries the academic model dominated this gift. The great Luther was himself a seminary professor, though there was certainly nothing stale or pedantic about his preaching. Nevertheless, with their renewed emphasis upon the Word of God, many Protestant churches sometimes seemed designed to resemble lecture halls with sermons given like a scholarly address. This approach has perhaps had the unfortunate effect of cultivating "head knowledge" at the expense of practical experience and personal transformation. In the closing decades of the last century a new kind of teacher emerged out of the charismatic movement. These are being recognized across denominational lines for the power of their gift to open the scriptures in such a way that "our hearts burned with us" once again.

You may not find a church with all five of these offices filled. That's not the main thing you need, so don't let it disturb you. The main thing is seeking to be faithful to what Jesus would have you do. Let Him place you where He wills and lead you as He desires. In any healthy church you will certainly find leaders who will gladly help you get started ministering with the gifts they discern in you.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Seven Motivational Gifts

These should be of particular interest to everyone, since each of us has been given at least one. Oddly enough, it's not always obvious to us what our unique gift is. Perhaps the Lord enjoys playing Hide and Seek more than we might imagine! Here's a clue: usually you will find them "hidden in plain sight," since people often live out of their gift before they catch on to what it is. Intrigued? See if you can spot your own.

**Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:6-8**

## Supernaturally Natural

These seven gifts are called motivational gifts because they provide the inner focus that inspires us to get into the game of serving humanity in our own particular way. We have an inner drive or motivation that causes us to notice certain areas of need in the church or the world and then keeps us looking for ways of meeting that need. All of this happens to match our gift so "naturally" that we may never stop to question or examine it. We might wonder, "Why doesn't everyone feel this way?" and be genuinely surprised that they don't.

Having one of these gifts doesn't mean that we are going to be great at it automatically. They have to be cultivated like anything else in life. And they won't work very well if we aren't in balance with the Lord (more on that later).

Nevertheless, the sense of inner compelling is so consistent and so intimately tied into our own desires that it practically guarantees that we will develop real skills to go along with the gift. If we don't, it won't be for lack of effort, since the gift keeps pointing us at the same target over and over again. This inner motivation is nothing less than God at work within us "for his good pleasure."



**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13 ESV**



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This means that there will be joy in it, because God is working in us to make us willing (desirous) of doing what He is also enabling us to do. It “pleases” the Lord to work through us and He is very good about passing His feelings on to us. This doesn’t mean that we can’t ever burn out the inner flame. We can. It feels so good operating out of our gift that exhausting ourselves is a danger that has to be guarded against. However, the Lord always stands ready to renew and refresh us. If we allow Him to do that—wonder of wonders—the former desires have a way of springing right back to life! This inner drive comes from His holy fire to burn brightly within us in this particular way and that flame can never be quenched.

**For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. [He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.] Romans 11:29 AMP**

## Primary and Secondary

As you look over the list you may notice right away the gift that is your primary motivation. If you can’t spot it, others who know you well probably can. The Holy Spirit has been cultivating these inner motivations in us since childhood in terms of general orientation. Conversion and the entrance of the Holy Spirit within us may bring new aspects and abilities out to the forefront, as well as unveil for us new applications within the Christian community. For instance, someone gifted as a teacher may have been growing happily in that area all their life, but conversion will likely bring whole new levels of purpose and initiate a brand-new desire to teach spiritual truths.

Some confusion may arise over just how many gifts you have. Paul gives us little to go on beyond the mere recounting of the list. There is nothing here to limit these to one per person. You could conceivably have several primary gifts and rotate though times of being more focused on one rather than the other. Nevertheless, the common pattern is for a person to have a single primary gift with one or more secondary gifts that complement and enhance its operation. In this way the Lord provides a natural sense of cohesion and wholeness to our inner focus and motivation. We aren’t as likely to be pulled in three directions at once! Even so, all of us can (and probably should) cultivate each of these gifts to some degree.

## Flesh Verses Spirit

Since these gifts are the Holy Spirit working within us, we might suppose that our gift(s) will always work for good in our life and for the good of those we seek to serve. Not so! It is too much to be hoped that these inner workings of the Lord cannot be subverted by the enemy. Spiritual darkness loves to turn even good things against us. As mentioned earlier, if we don’t stay in balance these gifts of His won’t operate properly. The key to staying balanced is living with Jesus at the center and with ourselves surrendered and submitted to His leadership. He hasn’t given us gifts and callings so that we can go charging off on our own!

As with anything in this new life in Christ, our actual trust in the Lord determines practically everything else. If you want to serve Him and others, if you want your gift(s) to be operating at peak performance, then you will want to learn to guard your heart so that the peace of Christ rules within you. There is no clearer indication that we are yielded to His leadership than the peace He gives us when we are trusting Him and doing things His way. With that peace in place the motivational gifts positively hum! It is truly amazing, even breathtaking to be flowing in these gifts. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit.



We can, however, fall back into being oppressed by the flesh. It is easy and “natural” to fall out of the Spirit and into the flesh, even when we are trying to serve the Lord. Because the flesh is our fallen nature, falling into it almost feels normal. The absence of the peace of Christ should alert us that something has gone wrong. That wrongness will inevitably show up by distorting the gifts we cherish and enjoy, turning service into something onerous, rather than delightful. In the following brief descriptions note how being in “the flesh” can distort the gift. Note also the wonderful purpose the gift can serve when we are in the Spirit.

**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** Ephesians 2:10 ESV

## The Seven Motivational Gifts

Because it is possible for believers to receive the indwelling Spirit, but never seek or receive the baptism in the Spirit, there will be differences in the way these gifts operate in those who are not Holy Spirit baptized. Remember, the Early Church that Paul shepherded was almost entirely composed of people who had received the baptism in the Spirit. Hence, he would have had in his mind the way these gifts look in the lives of people who know Jesus by faith and are also anointed with the Spirit’s power.

### 1) Prophesying

"If prophecy, in proportion to our faith."

People with this gift usually know it and are eager to cultivate it, because it can bring with it enhanced opportunities to experience the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit. Prophets have a burning heart for receiving specific words or visions from God which will bring clarity to individuals or churches. Clarity comes by calling people to repentance, pointing out their sin; or through sharing visions, restoring lost spiritual sight. If those with the gift of prophecy have not yet received the baptism in the Spirit, their emphasis will be more on the Word of God, than specific words *from* God. If in the flesh, people with this gift may lose the New Testament tone of grace, becoming hard and judgmental.

### 2) Serving

"If service, in our serving."

The Amplified Bible calls this “practical service.” That’s the proper note. The person with this gift is always noticing things of a practical nature that will help an individual or the church, and then throwing themselves into the fray to get the job done. It’s been said that love is an active verb; certainly, these are the ones who put feet to their prayers. That is if they haven’t slipped into the flesh. The danger here is leaping, before praying, and thereby taking the lead away from the Lord. This can lead to misguided efforts, feeling unappreciated or burn out, if left to the flesh. Pastors always appreciate the gift of service (not necessarily that of prophesy!) and they can and should help these good-hearted workers learn the ways of wisdom. If this is your gift, try to remember that seeing a need isn’t always a call of God—it may be a call to prayer instead.



### 3) Teaching

"The one who teaches, in his teaching."

A teacher's focus is different than a prophet's in that their concern is more for the whole counsel of the Word of God with a willingness to leave the individual's response to conscience. Prophets are more inclined to "zero in" on specifics and seek to close the deal. In our day a great line is drawn between preaching and teaching, but not in the Bible. Jesus' "preaching" was called teaching and so was that of the apostles—it's one of the main things they were known for. Teachers with an anointing will teach truth in order to elicit the saving transformation they know that particular truth can bring. Teachers in the flesh are focused upon get the "head knowledge" right.

### 4) Exhorting

"The one who exhorts, in his exhortation."

Exhortation is better known to us as encouragement, a word which means to give courage to the hearts of others. Exhorters are always looking for opportunities to do that. Who is cast down? Who needs building up? How can their spirits be lifted higher? Where a teacher wants to help you learn truths you don't know yet, an exhorter wants to help you believe what you already know. Watch how this plays out with different preaching styles: some preachers are teachers at heart; others are exhorters. Some of the best exhorters don't have a public ministry. They just "naturally" lift the mood of individuals wherever they go. Watch out for one in the flesh, however, if you don't want to find out what the "gift of discouragement" looks like in operation.

### 5) Giving

"The one who contributes, in generosity."

The Lord evidently calls some people to gather wealth, so that through them, He can bless others and the church. It's a tough job, but someone has to do it. The thing about these folks is their absence of greed and the evident delight they have in giving money or material help away. They usually seem consciously aware that their calling is to be a channel of blessing and they genuinely want to keep the river flowing. If they fall into the flesh, all bets are off: they may amass wealth for themselves alone, or seek a show of recognition for what they do give away.

### 6) Leading

"The one who leads, with zeal."

This gift of administration includes the ability to supervise others, cast vision, assemble a team and chart a course all with unflagging "zeal" or diligence. If this is your gift, then know that the rest of us are grateful you have it! We need your energetic devotion to duty or things would really fall apart. We thank God for your integrity and willingness to sacrifice ordinary pleasures for the sake of the cause. Just please don't "lord" it over us, bossing us around! Jesus said that our leaders would be servants to us and those with this gift truly are—whenever they are in the Spirit. Otherwise...



## 7) Caring

"The one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

Last, but not least, is the heart of the Body of Christ. People blessed with a mercy gift have hearts as big and warm as your mama's stove. They notice the hurting people among us and launch into prayer, then press in to draw them out. They care less about how you got into trouble, than how to get you out. Unlike teachers and prophets, they don't want to know if you are learning from the experience; they want you free of the pain. These are people you can trust with your heart. Unfortunately, when in the flesh, their own heart can take them down, if they don't learn how to cast every care and all that pain on the Lord.

Put it all together and you have a vision for the Body of Christ as a mighty warrior, able to tend its own wounds and refresh its own vision when all the parts are working together as designed. Discover your gift, learn how to walk in the Spirit with it, and find your place in the Body!



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Nine Manifestation Gifts

Jesus never intended for His church to be powerless or penniless. Just as the tithe is the Lord's provision for material supply, so the baptism in the Spirit is His provision for supernatural supply. Neither is forced on anyone, but when believers come into obedience, watch out—the “windows of heaven” open wide! Through the baptism in the Spirit, Jesus pours out gifts that will manifest as signs and wonders for the sake of ministry to someone He wants to bless.

**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** 1 Corinthians 12:7 ESV

## A Context for Understanding

The main passage concerning the nine gifts of supernatural power is Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 12:1-12 where they are set within a wider context. Since he was writing to a church that was experiencing these gifts and was already familiar with how they worked, Paul doesn't take time to describe them. That's a pity for us, because many of us grew up in churches devoid of these supernatural operations.

Experience is the best teacher when it is available; absence of experience gives false ideas plenty of room to grow. Nevertheless, we can surmise what these gifts would have looked like then, by their appearances in other passages of scripture and by the way they are breaking forth in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches where the baptism of the Spirit is flourishing today. Before we examine the individual gifts, let's look at the context Paul gave them.



### Context #1

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.** 1 Corinthians 12:1 ESV

According to St. Paul, the very first thing that we need to know concerning spiritual gifts is to avoid being “uninformed.” Learning about something is usually the first step towards doing it, but it is also a necessary step towards allowing others to do a thing. Why does that matter? In western churches many people have pulled away from the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit due to fear and false teaching. By being uninformed of the truth, they not only aren't seeking to make themselves available for God to work through them, they are actively hindering others from going forward.



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## Context #2

**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 ESV**

The whole of the Trinity is involved in the operation of these gifts: the Holy Spirit who works through the gift we are given, the Lord Jesus whose church is being served by the gift, and God the Father who oversees it all for the sake of everyone involved. Elsewhere Paul will describe other gifts and their place in the Body of Christ. Here his concern is only for certain gifts he now calls “manifestations of the Spirit.” Whatever is “manifest” has been brought to the light. It is something obvious and evident. These are gifts which make it obvious that God is at work through them. They display supernatural power in a way that the other gifts do not.

## Context #3

**All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:1-12 ESV**

Because these gifts are manifestations of the Spirit, it is God alone who “apportions”—who chooses who, when and where. Although these “activities” can be counterfeited by the enemy, the operation of the true gifts is entirely under the Holy Spirit’s control. They can’t be worked up by human effort. This is an important point for discerning how these gifts differ from normal human abilities. For instance, anyone who teaches can convey intellectual knowledge about a subject, but that is not what is meant by the “word of knowledge.” We look to doctors for healing, but their gifts are not “gifts of healings.” Certainly, God may work through doctors and teachers (let’s hope He does!), but His work is hidden, not manifest, except in outcome. These nine gifts manifest during the process of ministering to others.

## The Nine Gifts of Power

**For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 NKJV**

### 1) The Word of Wisdom

Wisdom is available to everyone who asks for it or seeks it. The whole of Proverbs, for instance, is devoted to helping us gain practical wisdom and understanding for daily living. This accumulation of good sense and insight is akin to, but not exactly, what is meant by “the word of wisdom.” Solomon’s most famous judgment gives us an example of this gift in operation. Having previously prayed for wisdom, God gave Solomon the perfect solution to a troubling dilemma:

which prostitute was the true mother of the child who died and which was lying. Solomon's decision in the case revealed to all Israel that God was with him, giving wisdom.

**Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. 1 Kings 3:27-28**  
ESV

## 2) The Word of Knowledge

This gift has a very strong prophetic component, giving "knowledge" to both the one who receives it and the one being ministered to that God is at work in a given situation. This elevates the faith level of everyone present for whatever it is that the Lord desires to do. Often, however, it doesn't seem like a word at all. In the context of a healing service it may be a sense of pain felt by the prayer minister in a very specific part of their body. When that "word" is spoken out ("Someone here has ringing in their left ear that God wants to heal"), a person in the congregation with that condition will usually experience increased faith, often receiving healing as a direct result. When the blind man was told Jesus wanted to see him, his faith level was certainly enhanced. Jesus saw his response, noted the faith, and the healing happened.

**And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. Mark 10:49-52** ESV

## 3) Faith

All who believe in Jesus have already received the gift of faith, so saving faith or faith in Christ's death and resurrection is not what is meant by this gift. This gift conveys a supernaturally sustained ability to trust God in a specific situation or to believe for a specific thing that the Lord wants to accomplish. Persons who receive it don't have to "work" at believing God against what may seem like impossible odds. They only have to make sure they don't lose what they have received. Often this ability to believe for a specific thing is activated by a specific word "quicken" from scripture or received directly from the Spirit. David's confident faith for killing Goliath seems to have been sustained by this kind of gift.

**And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!" 1 Samuel 17:37** ESV

## 4) Gifts of Healings

There are so many things about us that can go wrong: physical sickness, systemic disease, organ failure, accidental injury, mental disease, and emotional wounds. It's no wonder that many "gifts" for "healings" are needed. Everyone should pray for healing, all of us can seek to receive a greater capacity for effective prayer, but certain individuals have already been

unquestionably gifted by the Lord for healing. Many of them are consciously aware of an anointing from the Lord which “signals” His presence upon them to heal someone. Sometimes it is a sensation of physical warmth on their hands; at other times it may be an ability to “see” faith upon someone, as with Paul in Lystra.

**And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. Acts 14:8-11 NKJV**

## 5) The Working of Miracles

Of course, sudden healings are miracles in themselves, but what is (likely) intended here are those activities of God which affect the natural order, not the human body—what are usually termed “signs and wonders” in the Hebrew scriptures. Nature, too, can go awry. Jesus rebuked the wind for His disciples’ sake. God stopped the mouths of lions for Daniel’s sake. He also brought forth water from a rock and provided mana in the wilderness for His chosen people. We, too, need miracles of all kinds in our lives: miracles of escape from imminent danger or looming debt; miracles of provision; miracles of deadly forces in nature stopped or turned aside. We have an awesome God-given ability to “speak” even to mountains, commanding nature just as Jesus did.

**And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen." Matthew 21:19-21 ESV**

## 6) Prophecy

There are many levels to the prophetic. At the entry level is the kind of seeking we all do in prayer to find a word of encouragement or just the right book from an inspired author to match a friend’s need. Jesus says that all of His sheep “hear” His voice. Some do more than others. Those with a prophetic gift hear more frequently and more specifically from the Lord by means of a “language” of prophetic communication that may include dreams, visions, symbols and pictures, even more than words. This does not mean they get it right all of the time, but that they develop a dependable track record for accuracy which makes it worthwhile for others to pay attention to, weigh, and sift their sayings. Agabus’ prophetic gift helped the church prepare for a famine.

**Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. Acts 11:27-29 ESV**



## 7) Discerning of Spirits

Having been active in the field of demonic deliverance, I can testify that there are at least two levels to the operation of this gift. There are some people (myself at times) who can discern by inward sense which demon needs to be cast out of a person, which spirits are oppressing a church or other organization, and even where angels or demons may be positioned around a room. There are others who have been given sight to see into the invisible realm that surrounds us all. I have worked with many people who evidently had this ability, whose credibility and Christian character gave support to what they reported seeing. In battlefield conditions having someone with this gift is like having a spy behind enemy lines. To Balaam's chagrin, however, his donkey saw the angel blocking their path before he did. Nevertheless, it was a good thing he finally listened to what the donkey discerned.

**And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face.** Numbers 22:30-31 ESV

## 8) Different Kinds of Tongues

In addition to "tongues" or languages that can be learned by the usual human means, there are tongues "of men and of angels" which are given by God for His own specific purposes. On the day of Pentecost everyone in the Upper Room was baptized in the Holy Spirit and given an ability to speak human languages that they could not have previously known. This was a sign to the multitudes who heard them "speaking in their own tongue"—a convincing display of God's power which led to Peter's sermon and the conversion of 3000. There are also "tongues of angels" by which the Lord may be worshiped or entreated. These tongues have no human counterpart. The tongues spoken of here may be of either variety, but the setting is public worship, which is why it is stipulated that an interpretation should be given, something that is completely unnecessary if they are simply a part of the person's private prayer language (see [Praying in Tongues](#)). Such a setting requires interpretation for the sake of proclaiming the prophecy it contains.

**Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up... So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.** 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12 ESV

## 9) The Interpretation of Tongues

The interpretation of publicly uttered tongues is necessary for the Lord to accomplish what the tongues describe. Without the interpretation coming forth, no one knows what was said. No one can even be confident that the tongues conveyed a message from the Lord or were initiated by Him, rather than from of the speaker's own soul. This gets tricky really fast because the speaker has to have faith that someone is present who will be able to interpret what he/she believes God has prompted them to say (perhaps that will be themselves); likewise the interpreter has to have faith to believe that they are hearing from God at least enough of the message to launch out in faith to let it flow in fullness.



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**Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. 1**  
Corinthians 14:13 ESV

Learning about these gifts is not the same thing as doing them, but it is a necessary beginning. To go further you will need a fellowship of like-minded believers who are committed to discovering how to make themselves available to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit at this level. You can be sure that there are others who are pursuing these things of God, as well as the Lord Himself. Passion for Jesus and compassion for others will carry anyone a long way towards the unfolding of every gift the Holy Spirit desires to release through us—if we don't set preconceived limits to what is possible. You can be sure that the Lord doesn't!



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