

Transcribed from:
“STIR UP THE GIFTS”
Empowering Believers for Victorious Living and Ministry Tasks
By: George O. McCalep, Jr. Ph.D.

Chapter 8

STARTING A GIFT-BASED MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

Gift-Based ministry has been referred to by other names such as team ministry, networking and lay mobilization. Whatever name you call it, Gift-Based ministry is a continuous ministry of the Church that expects all the members of the body to actively participate in a life-long ministry task of service based on their Spiritual Gifts used most effectively and pleurably.

Several basic principles that are worthy of repeating are incorporated into the definition. First, it is a continuous ministry. Gift-Based ministry is more than a curriculum or a course on discovering your Spiritual Gifts. Gift-Based ministry is more than a spiritual trend or popular church fad. It is not an ad hoc committee. Rather, Gift-Based ministry is an established way of doing church that penetrates every facet of the life of the Church.

Second, all members of the Church are not only encouraged, but they are expected to participate. Again, Gift-Based ministry is not an auxiliary of the Church like the choir or ushers, whereas, all members are not expected to actively be involved. Gift-Based ministry is a life-long commitment on the part of believers. It is not intended to be a season. Realistically, due to our busy personal lives, there may be periods with a believer when they are not available. However, they remain committed to return to their position and task as soon as possible.

Third, Gift-Based ministry expects all members of the body to be ministers. Interestingly, most believers have no problem, psychologically or theologically, with the term “servant,” but the term “minister” excludes them and is relegated to paid, licensed, and ordained clergy. When we change the word “serving” to “ministering” we encounter roadblocking. Gift-Based ministry pushes past these roadblocks and views all believers as ministers divinely Gifted for a ministry task.

Fourth, when a believer is ministering in their Spiritual Gifts, not only will they be highly effective, they will enjoy it. Churches that are serious about fulfilling the will of God will consider Gift-Based ministry as a biblical way of fulfilling the purposes of the Church and her members.

SPEAKING OF BEING SERIOUS VS. PLAYING CHURCH

Speaking of being serious, I am convicted that many churches today are simply playing church, or at best just going through the motions. The Christian church is perceived as a religious institution rather than a body of baptized believers. Others view the Church as just another organization within the special order, thereby, it takes on the status of a social organization. We are challenged to actually follow Christ’s agenda for the Church and her believers. The biblical mandate is clear concerning the use of Spiritual Gifts within the Body of Christ. Most of us agree with the biblical and theological principles on the subject of Spiritual Gifts, including the doctrine of the priesthood of believers and the work of the Holy Spirit. The problem is in the area of implementation or actualization. In other words, making

it happen. We must stop playing church and operating in our comfort zone of routine and make the bold step into the land of total obedience to His way of doing church.

ADVANTAGES OF A GIFT-BASED MINISTRY

The advantages of a Gift-Based ministry are to provide opportunities and possibilities for actually fulfilling god's agenda for the Church and her believers. God's plan calls for believers to live an abundant, fruitful, fulfilling and victorious life. Gift-Based ministry facilitates satisfying this plan. God's plan for the Church is to multiply, not add on. Many churches are adding on, but few are multiplying. Gift-Based ministry moves churches from an add on mode to a multiplication mode. There are at least four specific advantages of Gift-Based ministry.

ADVANTAGE ONE – ELIMINATING SLINGING MUD AT THE WALL.

Many churches select, nominate, or appoint leadership positions by throwing enough mud at the wall with the hope that some will stick. Before I accepted the call to the preaching ministry, I worked as a divisional sales director for a major mutual fund distributor. One of my ongoing responsibilities was recruiting sales people. In order to find one good sales person that would make it in the business, I knew I had to recruit at least ten. I compare this to slinging mud at the wall with the hope that one out of the ten recruits would stick. Churches today are constantly looking for ministry coordinators and leaders to fill ministry task positions. The process of appointing and electing equals throwing mud at the wall. Every once in a while we find someone for the position who fits. Gift-Based ministry is designed to match the right block with the right hole. Gift-Based ministry is designed to take the guess-work, mystery and luck out of assigning positions for accomplishing church work. Gift-Based ministry eliminates throwing mud at the wall and provides a God-given method for placing the right believer in the right church position to get the job done.

ADVANTAGE TWO – MOBILIZING VOLUNTEERS FOR SERVICE.

Churches have found themselves in a spectator status. Some pastors have reported that finding volunteers to work in the Church is like pulling hen's teeth or finding a needle in a haystack. A major advantage of Gift-Based ministry is its power to mobilize volunteer workers. No church can fulfill the purposes of the Church with only a paid clergy staff. The numbers simply won't add up. There is too much to be done and too few to do it. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; (Matt 9:37). Because Gift-Based ministry expects all members to be serving in a ministry task, volunteer mobilization is accomplished. God has called us to be an army, not Lone Rangers. Gift-Based ministry is based on a team approach to ministry.

ADVANTAGE THREE – KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING.

Have you ever noticed how excited new Christians seem to be when they first enter the Body of Christ? They are excited and want to join in and participate in everything. Then something happens and their excitement dwindles. This is the exact picture Paul painted of the Church of Ephesus, explained in the first chapter of this book under the heading "A Fireplace Analogy." Timothy, the pastor, had a genuine faith and had once been excited and enthusiastic about ministry, but something had happened to his excitement since Paul had laid hands on (ordained) him. Therefore, Paul admonishes him to "stir up the Gift of God" that he once had. An advantage of Gift-Based ministry is to keep the fire aflame. When we don't feel a sense of accomplishment, our motivation ceases. Gift-Based ministry is designed to keep us motivated. Being fruitful is motivating. By fulfilling God's purpose to the glory of God by serving others is a ministry task that is fruitful. Being fruitful keeps the fire burning.

ADVANTAGE FOUR – OPENS THE FRONT DOOR WIDER AND CLOSES THE BACK DOOR TIGHTER.

Assimilation refers to helping new members feel comfortable in the Body of Christ, thereby closing the back door. Gift-Based ministry provides long lasting, real comfort because it seeks the right fit. Shoes that are too tight hurt, and sooner or later you will pull them off. Believers who are put in a ministry task that doesn't fit are uncomfortable and sooner or later they will leave. Gift-Based ministry is designed to eliminate the "wrong-fit" problem and thereby closes the back door tighter.

Very few, if any, evangelical churches deny that evangelism is a major purpose of the Church. Also, many churches have now recognized the need for assimilation, which has as its goal, keeping the back door of the Church closed. Often the emphasis on keeping the back door closed has simply resulted in lengthening the hallway. In other words, church members simply stay longer before eventually leaving. Gift-Based ministry increases the number of people who come in while decreasing the number that leave. Surveys indicate that at least 10% of any given congregation will have the Gift of evangelism. Given the right ministry profile, this 10% can serve as evangelistic leaders. Notice that I said "serve" as evangelistic leaders.

All believers are called to be witnesses regardless of their Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual Gifts should not be used as an excuse to not do the things that God has called all believers to do. Spiritual Gifts simply allow those with the Gift to perform more effectively and efficiently. Not only is the front door of evangelism opened wider, but the back door of assimilation is closed tighter.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The study of group dynamics, experience and plain common sense tell us that unless the pastor of a church is a vision caster and supporter of a Gift-Based ministry it is simply not going to happen. As Gift-Based has been fully suggested and described in this book, anything less is not truly a Gift-Based ministry and falls into a category of being another task oriented auxiliary of the Church. Therefore, not only the pastor but the other decision making persons, boards, or committees such as the deacons, elders, nominating committee, etc, must not only be supportive, they must also be actively involved participants. All leaders must be on one accord and in agreement. When it comes to training, the leadership must be trained first. Gift-Based ministry represents a change in the way we traditionally do church. Change does not come easy. Gift-Based ministry empowers congregations. If the pastor is insecure and/or the Church officers are unwilling to give up or share control, Gift-Based ministry as a way of doing church will not come to fruition in that setting. If you are a member of a church that does not and probably will not have a Gift-Based ministry, it does not excuse you from doing what God has called you to become and do. God has called you to discover, develop and use the Spiritual Gifts divinely given to you as a ministry task. You should follow all the steps and suggestions given in this book and join an existing ministry in your church immediately. If there is no existing ministry in your local church that matches your Gift mix, then meet with your pastor and ask permission to start one. Remember that God has promised that your Gift will make room for you (Prov 18:16). If you are a pastor or church leader, you should follow the following steps to get started:

STEP ONE: BELIEVE IT.

"Believe it" means to believe what the Bible teaches even though it may be different from accepted traditions. Tradition is often wrong and out of step. Starting a Gift-Based

ministry may be marching to a different drummer. Marching to the drum beat of God means not being a crowd or man pleaser. To start a Gift-Based ministry, you must hear the voice of God through the scripture telling you to march on.

STEP TWO: RECEIVE IT.

Oftentimes we believe but do not receive, therefore it is impossible to achieve. In order to become the vision caster necessary to begin a Gift-Based ministry, you must receive it in your spirit. If you receive it in your spirit, then you can see it with your mind's eye and feel it in the soul of your heart.

STEP THREE: STUDY IT.

Knowledge is a must. Learn all you can about Spiritual Gifts. Like myself, you may have grown up and been trained in a tradition that did not teach the principles of Spiritual Gifts. Put yourself on a personal learning plan. Prayerfully, this book, including the appendices, will serve as a resource. Now is the perfect time to prepare and train your leaders. You are not ready yet to go public with your vision plan for a Gift-Based ministry. However, you must get your leaders on board early. It is not a good idea to go public with your vision plan until the majority of the leaders also "own" the vision and have been trained. The Twelve-Week Spiritual Gifts Curriculum in this book should prove helpful in the training process.

STEP FOUR: PREACH IT.

Believers may learn best in a classroom or workshop setting. But they are convicted to do better and change best through the preached word delivered during prime times on Sunday. Now ye are clean through the Word, which I have spoken unto you (John 15:3). The uncompromised preached word will either drive or draw. You can expect some to be driven, but God's word never goes out void. Some will be driven but have the sweet assurance that according to the scriptures, you are within God's will for His people and His church.

STEP FIVE: MODEL AND MIRROR IT.

As you model it, others will see the blessing in you as the leader. As you mirror it, you will see the blessing of God in yourself. As a personal testimony, my Gift mix is a mixture of the Gifts of leadership, teaching, evangelism, faith and shepherding. I have a people-oriented personality style and a fifty-fifty mix oriented toward structure and unstructured tasks. My heart's desire, or passion, is kingdom building/church growth. Many pastors are amazed that I have been blessed to pastor a phenomenally growing church and the Gift of preaching is not in the top five of my Spiritual Gifts. Others have been amazed at my energy level at sixty years of age and the ability to balance the many ministries that I am responsible for implementing. The secret is now out. The secret is that I am working within my Gifts and ministry profile. I have a master's degree in administration, but I do the least amount of administrating possible. My Spiritual Gift is not administration. Administrative tasks deplete my energy level rapidly. If I am given the choice between an administrative task and a people-oriented ministry task, I will choose the latter one hundred percent of the time. However, I recognize that administrative tasks and the Gift of administration are just as important as any other Spiritual Gift, including my top two Gifts of leadership and teaching. Therefore, the Gift of administration, like all other Spiritual Gifts, must be honored and esteemed within the body just as much as my personal Spiritual Gifts.

The point is that when you are working in your Spiritual Gifts, others will see a living example of a fruitful, joyful, victorious, and effective believer and want to share your fulfillment. We all need role models. As pastors and leaders, we must provide our congregation with models they can admire, respect, and emulate. After the ministry has progressed, veteran members should model the process for new converts and church members.

STEP SIX: TEACH IT.

The introductory chapter of this book is entitled, "Don't Be Ignorant." It dealt with the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Christian church not to be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts. Now that you have prepared yourself in study and meditation, you must lead others in Bible study and training workshops on Spiritual Gifts.

STEP SEVEN: REVEAL IT (GO PUBLIC).

If you have not already done so, it is definitely time to share your vision plan for Gift-Based ministry with your entire congregation. You should already have done so with the core leadership of the Church. It is now time to share Gift-Based ministry as a way of doing church with the entire congregation. Use all avenues of communication to get the message across about what is expected as a life commitment of every believer. Ministry fairs and career ministry days are among the many ways to communicate.

STEP EIGHT: PROVIDE FOR IT.

To effectively implement a Gift-Based ministry, believers must be given opportunities to discover, develop, and use their Spiritual Gifts. Workshops and seminars must be made user-friendly in terms of time, material, and cost. Some members may be able to attend on Sunday afternoon, whereas others could attend on Wednesday evening or some other time. The cost of materials and seminars registration fees should be kept to a minimum. Remember, Gift-Based ministry is more than simply a survey to discover your Spiritual Gifts. Gift-Based ministry is about moving believers into ministry tasks by using God's proven plan for spiritual growth and fruitfulness. Therefore, ministry opportunities must be provided. Ask existing ministers to write job descriptions and post them in convenient locations. Ask existing ministry coordinators to begin recruiting believers for their particular ministry in much the same way as an employment agency would operate. Advertise ministry jobs. Ask yourself what Spiritual Gift mix is needed to work in this newly formed Spiritual Gifts employment ministry.

STEP NINE: ENCOURAGE IT – SUPPORT IT.

If it is to be successful, it must be encouraged. Along with other means of encouragement, encouragement must come from the pulpit. No encouragement is as meaningful as encouragement from the pastor. Those who have the Spiritual Gift of encouragement may form an encouragement team for the purpose of exercising their most needed Gift of exhortation in ministry. Oftentimes, encouragement comes in the form of support. The Gift-Based ministry should be adequately supported with personnel, finances, and other resources. Since this is new, it is not likely that the ministries of Christian Education or any other current staff person will have the time to direct this fully incorporated way of doing church. Therefore, a volunteer ministry coordinator or paid director must be sought. Again, what Spiritual Gifts and ministry profile should this person possess? Without question, they will need the Gift of leadership.

STEP TEN: REINFORCE IT.

Gift-Based ministry, particularly in its genesis, will not only need much encouraging, but it will need to be continually reinforced. As a former physical educator, I learned the importance of reinforcement in teaching anew motor skill. There is positive reinforcement and there is negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is designed to cause an activity to be repeated more frequently. Negative reinforcement causes a behavior to stop or decline. We must be careful not to use too much negative or corrective reinforcement because it will produce a negative environment. The key is to give a word or gesture of approval as often as you can when a believer and the Church are following the vision plan for the Gift-Based ministry.

STEP ELEVEN: GLORIFY GOD WITH IT.

The ultimate aim of a Gift-Based ministry is to glorify God. This can also be done intentionally by using the testimonies of believers as they break strongholds and experience the joy of fulfilling God's will in ministry using their Spiritual Gifts. God appreciates testimonies and using testimonies for His glory. However, if indeed we follow God's biblical plan for doing church His way, he will have received the glory.

STEP TWELVE: THANK HIM FOR IT AND PRAISE HIM FOR IT.

God gave it and God should be thanked and praised for it. With hearts of thanksgiving and mouths filled with praise, we should thank God for His divine plan for the Church. Thank Him for showing us a new way. Praise Him for opening our minds and freeing us from ignorance and fear. Praise Him for each obstacle we overcome with the Gifts of God. Don't wait until your Gift-Based ministry is in full bloom. Thank Him for the buds that will become flowers. Praise Him for the root, which is the Gift of love. Praise Him for the vine in which we abide. Praise Him for the blossom and the anointing rain that produces fruitful, fulfilling Gifts.

Checkpoint

1. Define the term, "Gift-Based Ministry."

A continuous ministry of the Church that expects all the members of the body to actively participate in a life-long ministry task of service based on their spiritual gifts used mostly effectively and pleurably.

2. What does the author mean by "playing church"?

Just going through the motions of church and being religious. Not taking the things of God seriously.

3. List four advantages of a Gift-Based Ministry.

1. Eliminating random selection of workers in the Church.
2. Mobilizing volunteers for service
3. Keeping the fire burning
4. Opens the front door wider and closes the back door tighter

4. What should you do if your church is not a Gift-Based ministry?

You should identify and develop your own spiritual gifts and join an existing ministry in your church immediately. If there is no existing ministry in your local church that matches your gift mix, then meet with the pastor and ask permission to start one.

5. If you are a Pastor, list the twelve steps to starting a gift-based ministry.

1. Believe it. 2. Receive it. 3. Study it. 4. Preach it. 5. Model and Mirror it.
6. Teach it. 7. Reveal it (go public). 8. Provide for it. 9. Encourage and Support it.
10. Reinforce it. 11. Glorify God with it. 12. Praise and Thank God for it.

Fill in the Blanks

1. When a believer is ministering in their Spiritual Gift, not only will they be highly effective, they will _____ it. (enjoy)

2. Gift-based ministry expects all members of the church to be _____. (ministers)

Helpful Dialogue

1. If you are a Pastor, does your church believe in Gift-Based Ministry as an established way of doing church that penetrates every facet of the life of the Church?

2. If you are a member, does your church practice Gift-Based ministry? If not, how will you begin to utilize your Gifts to serve God within the existing church structure?

3. How do you know when someone is "playing church?"

What If I Don't Believe

If I don't believe...

- If I don't believe in the value of having a Gift-Based ministry in the church, I will miss out on the wonderfully marvelous benefit of unity and a level of efficiency only realized by Gift-Based ministries.

A Challenge

Proverbs 18:16

John 15:3

Matthew 9:37

APPENDIX A
LESSON 8 – THE GIFT OF THE APOSTLESHIP
Scripture Reference: Acts 13:1-4

Lesson Aim: After completing this lesson, students should be able to identify the gift of apostleship and recognize it in operation in the scripture.

The Gift in a Word: Planter

Key Biblical Character: Paul

Introduction: Christians with the gift of apostleship possess the super-natural (beyond the natural) ability to (1) preach the Word of God and start churches in areas that have not heard the Word and (2) assume and exercise general leadership over a number of churches with extraordinary authority in spiritual matters that is recognized and willingly accepted by those Pastors and churches. Unlike the gift of evangelism, those operating in the gift of apostleship often remain in an area longer and maintain close contact with the church they started and/or is under their supervision. Like the gift of evangelism, however, Christians operating in the gift of apostleship are frequently mobile.

Lesson Explored:

1. In our scripture reference, what were the prophets and teachers doing? Who did the calling?
2. In acts 13:2, there is a word which describes the purpose of the “call” to use the gift of apostleship. This word can either be looked at as a verb or as a noun. What is the word and explain its use as a verb and a noun as it relates to the gift of apostleship.
3. What was Paul’s background that made him especially successful in operating in this gift?
4. Read the entire thirteenth chapter of Acts. List below the various places the Holy Spirit lead Paul. What, if any differences, can you see in the gift of apostleship and the gift of evangelism in the chapter?
5. Apostleship is not a “chosen” profession. A church cannot be planted in a region solely because statistical data reveals a need. What must proceed the planting of churches, **using the gift of apostleship?**

Learning Activity

Paul made three apostolic journeys. Using a good study Bible or commentary, indicate which journey Paul visited or passed through the following cities. Note: Some cities were visited more than once during different apostolic journeys.

Journey #1 = A

- ___ Berea
- ___ Ephesus
- ___ Athens
- ___ Lystra
- ___ Iconium
- ___ Rome
- ___ Syria
- ___ Miletus

Journey #2 = B

- ___ Corinth
- ___ Salamis
- ___ Cyprus
- ___ Philippi
- ___ Thessalonica
- ___ Galatia
- ___ Macedonia

Journey #3 = C

- ___ Jerusalem
- ___ Antioch
- ___ Troas
- ___ Derbe
- ___ Caesarea
- ___ Attalia
- ___ Phrygia