

Transcribed from:
“STIR UP THE GIFTS”
Empowering Believers for Victorious Living and Ministry Tasks
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CHAPTER 6
DEVELOPING AND USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The ability to use Spiritual Gifts comes with the distribution, but it is our responsibility to become proficient in the use of our Gifts. I believe excellence in all we do honors God. For us to take steps to develop our Gifts is not incompatible with our dependence on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit called me into the preaching ministry, but I considered it my responsibility to go to seminary and receive formal training on how to best do what God called me to do. By now you may have some thoughts as to what your Spiritual Gifts are. However, to stop at this point is to miss the entire point of the biblical teaching on Spiritual Gifts. Gifts are given to be used, and if they are to be used best, they should be developed.

My doctoral dissertation professor at Ohio State University, who had a passion for academic teacher preparation, often said that when we call teacher preparation “teacher education” it means that we don’t know what we are doing. But when we call it “teacher training” it means that we know what we are doing. The point is that “training” is more specific and measurable; Spiritual Gifts can be developed to become more proficient. A military army would never think of having only a cognitive understanding of warfare. Likewise, we must not be satisfied with just a knowledge about Spiritual Gifts. We must put them into action. God did not tell us “not to be ignorant” concerning Spiritual Gifts for the sake of knowledge alone. Again, the purpose of Spiritual Gifts is to strengthen the believer, serve others, particularly the Church, and glorify God. Developing our Spiritual Gifts is a must. Many Christians are seeking Spiritual Gifts without spending time to develop them.

HINDRANCES TO DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Before we explore the steps to develop your Spiritual Gifts, it seems reasonable to review the factors that would hinder the discovering or developing of your Spiritual Gifts.

UNCONFESSED AND UNRESOLVED SIN

Before you can begin developing Gifts for ministry, your personal life simply must be in order. Personal addictions that may have you in bondage must be resolved. God prefers to work through clean vessels. Ungodly relationships and unreconciled relationships must be brought and laid before the altar with a heart of repentance.

A FRUITLESS VESSEL

Develop the fruit of the Spirit before developing the Gift of the Spirit. Gifts cannot be developed from fruitless vessels. No fruit equals no useful Gift. If you are going to develop your Gifts, there must be some fruit on your tree. You will know a tree by its fruit (Matt. 12: 33). If your tree were shaken, how many of the fruit of the Spirit would be revealed? Would there be at least a peach of kindness, or a grape of meekness and long-suffering, or any of the other fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)? Ideally, we should all reveal both the fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit, but make sure at a minimum that we are living fruitful lives.

SPIRIT OF FEAR

Many of us have been Christians and church members for many years and have remained inactive because we possess a spirit of fear. Such believers suffer from church "spectatoritis." A spirit of fear is so deeply rooted that it cannot easily be overcome. Notice, in 2 Timothy 1:7 that, *God has not given us the spirit of fear*. If God did not give you the spirit of fear in the church, who did? Spirits that are contrary to God's will and purpose come from Satan himself. Remember, *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* (Eph. 6:12). Satanic spirits cannot be overcome by mere flesh or psychological therapy.

If we were simply speaking of an attitude or a mental condition, we could probably find help from a psychiatrist, psychologist or by mental therapy such as behavior modification. However, we are talking about a spirit, and only a spirit can only be overcome by another spirit. Our flesh is simply too weak. Only the Spirit of God can overcome an evil spirit. You simply cannot learn to use your Gifts in the Church if you are afraid.

Some years ago, I taught swimming. I could teach almost anybody to swim. The only people I could not teach to swim were those who were afraid of the water. You absolutely cannot teach a person to swim if they are afraid to put their head under water while standing in only three feet of water. Likewise, you cannot learn to use your Spiritual Gifts if you are scared. You must break the stronghold of fear if you are to develop your Gift. Remember, God has not given you the spirit of fear, but God has given you the Spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. So, stir it up. Develop and use your Gift.

LACK OF INVOLVEMENT

You cannot learn to develop your Gifts by simply talking about them. You don't learn to serve tennis balls by talking about serving a tennis ball, or a tee shot by talking about it. You learn to hit a tennis ball or golf ball by hitting a tennis or golf ball. The more you hit them, the more likely you will learn how to hit them properly. You don't learn anything by trying too seldom and too late. You learn by trying too frequently too soon. To develop your Spiritual Gifts, begin using them as soon as you can.

A SHALLOW SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

A part of my former teachers' training was in the area of exercise physiology. One of the measures of physical fitness that we studied was what is called your "VO₂" or "volume oxygen capacity." It is defined as the amount of oxygen you can consume in one minute. It can be accurately measured and used as a factor in predicting the outcome of an athletic contest, given all other factors are equal. Through physical training, your oxygen consumption capacity can be increased." Christians have a "spiritual consumption capacity." Like your oxygen consumption capacity, your spiritual capacity can also be increased. Many believers today are running from one spiritual conference to another seeking an anointing without spending any time or energy on training the vessel that is to carry the anointing. Exactly what is "spiritual capacity?" Jonas Clark defines spiritual capacity as follows:

1. It is the ability to carry a different spirit that follows after the Spirit of God even when his calling is not religiously correct.
2. It is the capacity to live in hard spiritual climates when those around you break ranks and run.
3. It is the preparation of the human spirit to carry your ministry.
4. It is the capacity to carry the fire of God's glory according to His will and not yours.
5. It is the preparation of character - an absolute must!
6. It is the capacity to pioneer when others want to settle.

DEVELOPMENTAL STEPS

The best approach to the development of any Spiritual Gift is through the steps of (1) preparation and planning, (2) study and meditation, (3) practice and experimentation, and (4) the use of your Gift in ministry.

DEVELOPMENTAL STEP ONE- PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Preparation should be a part of beginning any ministry task. I can recall when I was called into the preaching ministry, many advised me not to go to seminary because I had already earned the culminating degree of doctor of philosophy. I refused to listen to their advice because I knew that I had to prepare myself for the specific task to which I had been called. Many think that the Holy Spirit only works spontaneously or instantly. However, the Holy Spirit can help you in long-range preparation and planning. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you prepare and plan to develop and use your Gifts.

THREE BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

1. **PAUL** -- Before Paul embarked on his call into the new ministry of being a missionary to the Gentiles, he conferred with God and spent three years preparing himself in Arabia. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I*

might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days (Gal 1:15-18).

2. **LUKE** -- The gospel writer, Luke, felt it necessary to be prepared, and he prepared others by writing things down so that we might have a perfect understanding. *Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word: It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed (Luke 1:2-4).*

3. **JESUS**—Before entering into his public earthy ministry, the incarnate God Himself, experienced a time of preparation. *And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:13-15).*

My point is simply this, if an apostle, a gospel writer, and Jesus the Lord of Lords spent time in preparation for the task of ministry, so should we.

Preparation includes planning. Someone has said that people do not plan to fail, they simply fail to plan. Planning is the key to success and failing to plan is the key to failure. The successful utilization of our Spiritual Gifts is our goal, so we must plan. As seen in the above- mentioned example of Luke, the gospel evangelist tells us that writing your plan is important. English author and philosopher, Francis Bacon, wrote “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.” Several suggestions included in this book will give you an opportunity to write down your plan and preparation strategies. Complete the following chart.

MY OVERALL PLAN	I PLAN TO...
My Gift	
My Ministry Profile	
My Three-Month Goal	
My One-Year Goal	
My Long Range Goal	

DEVELOPMENTAL STEP TWO - STUDY AND MEDITATION

The best way to combat ignorance is with study. When I realized how ignorant I was concerning Spiritual Gifts, I devised a personal learning strategy to attain all the knowledge I could. I asked the Holy Spirit to teach me all He could about Spiritual Gifts as I read key passages on the subject.

Also, knowledge replaces fear. To know something is to be less afraid of something. I grew up on a hillside in northern Alabama where rattlesnakes were plentiful. Much of my time was spent up in the mountains among the snakes. I have no fear of rattlesnakes because of my knowledge of rattlesnakes. I know the sound of their warning signal. I know their habitat. I know their warm weather and cold weather nature. I know what they will do and will not do. Therefore, for all practical purposes, though I respect them, I am not afraid of them.

Conversely, ignorance creates fear. To be ignorant about something is to be afraid of something. Many believers today are afraid of Spiritual Gifts because they have no knowledge of Spiritual Gifts. Four key passages have been identified and mentioned repeatedly in this book. They are Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and 28-30; and 1 Peter 4:8-11.

In my initial effort to begin to study and meditate on the scriptures, I asked the Holy Spirit to perform one of His biblical functions and promises. *But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you* (John 14:26).

Study the Spiritual Gifts and their descriptive definitions listed in Appendix A of this book. If you have not already done so, complete the “Discover Your Gift Survey” in Appendix B. This book also includes a twelve –week learning curriculum that you can complete individually or in a small group. The introductory chapter of this book could be read over and over again as a study resource. Make it your business to study and learn all you can about Spiritual Gifts. Attend as many training sessions and seminars on the subject that time will allow. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God.* (2 Tim.2:15).

Study the following chart. It will give you an idea of the kinds of ministry that might develop out of each Gift.

GIFT	POSSIBLE ACTIVITY
Teaching	Teacher in Sunday School, small groups, Bible Studies, Seminars
Service	Deacons, deaconesses, yoke person, visitation, elder, steward, trustee, facilities worker.
Knowledge and Wisdom	Resource person for ministry groups, teaching activities, seminars, etc.

Exhortation	Peer counseling, retreats, youth ministry, support groups.
Discernment	Bible study groups, Sunday school class leader, counseling
Faith	Ministry groups that need encouragement and long-range planning.
Giving	Regular and special-needs giving, stewardship or finance committee.
Apostleship	Church planting, planning new ministry, serving in previously unentered areas, fulfilling a divinely given leadership role.
Shepherd/ Pastor	Visitation, area spiritual coordinator, small group chaplain, etc.
Evangelism	Door to door ministries, apprenticeship programs, public meetings, seminars
Mercy	Hospital visitation, community service, prison ministries.
Hospitality	Receptionist/greeter ministry, small group activities, community service.
Administration	Organizing activities, chairing, and managing groups.
Missionary	Any activity across ethnic or cultural boundaries, feeding the homeless.
Intercessory Prayer	Intercessory prayer ministries, small group prayer leader.
Helps	Church maintenance, deacons, church office personnel, ministry in groups.
Leadership	Elder, deacon, committee chairperson, small group leader
Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues	Evangelism, visitation ministry.

DEVELOPMENTAL STEP THREE—PRACTICE AND EXPERIMENT

Do not make the mistake of waiting to be assigned or counseled. Get involved now. As the *Nike* commercial says, “**Just Do It.**” Jump in and begin to experiment and practice and perfect your Gifts. To help you get started, the following chart is provided. Fit your Gift mix into one of the following categories.

List Your Gift Mix:

1.
2.
3.

Fit your Gifts into one or more of the following three categories:

1. Gifts dealing with outreach and evangelism, resulting in the numerical growth of the Church.

	Evangelism	Tongues
	Miracles	Interpretation of tongues
	Healing	Voluntary poverty
	Mercy	Deliverance

2. Gifts dealing with the spiritual maturity of the Church. These are Gifts fostering spiritual growth, providing discipleship training, and membership support.

	Prophecy	Exhortation and Encouragement
	Teaching	Discernment of spirits
	Pastor/Shepherd	Faith
	Knowledge	Intercessory Prayer
	Wisdom	Hospitality

3. Gifts dealing with the administrative functions of the Church, such as financial management, maintenance of physical facilities, and membership support.

	Leadership	Administration
	Leadership	Administration

	Helps	Service
	Giving	

DEVELOPMENTAL STEP FOUR – USE YOUR GIFTS IN YOUR MINISTRY TASK

Notice that the emphasis is on *your*. These are your Gifts and they have been given to you for your ministry task. God has not only given you a Spiritual Gift. There is also a ministry task awaiting you. God has not only given you a job description (your Spiritual Gift), but He has also given you a job (ministry task). All believers are asked by God to be ministers. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20a).*

This fourth development step deals with you using your Gift in a task of ministry. God’s purpose is not fulfilled for our lives until we use our Gifts in a ministry task. If God gave us all Spiritual Gifts for spiritual purposes, it stands to reason that all believers are called to the task of ministry. Maybe in some traditions, as a matter of semantics or theology, we may not all be called to pastor, or called to claim the title of minister, but without question, we are all called to the task of ministry.

What is your ministry? Your Gift will determine your ministry. Remember, God has or will help you determine your Gift, and your Gift will determine your ministry. From here to eternity your primary role in the Church should be compatible with your Spiritual Gift. Whatever you do, don’t give up on your calling. Don’t get discouraged if it seems difficult at first for you to develop and use your Gift. Serving the Body of Christ is not easy. In the words of the gospel songwriter, “I don’t believe He brought me this far to leave me.” Fulfill the Master’s will for your life. It will bring great joy, but it can be hard work.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1Cor. 15:58)

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL GIFT (A Case Study)

Assume you have been given the Gift of leadership. How can you develop that Gift? Study the following chart, and note the procedure used to develop a Gift. Then use the similar blank chart for a Gift you know you have and make a plan for developing that Gift.

STEP	PROCEDURE	FOLLOW-UP SUGGESTIONS
(1)	Develop a clear understanding of the basic principles of biblical leadership	Master the skill of biblical leadership.

(2)	Develop a system of study on the topic of leadership.	Volunteer to lead any group in the church.
(3)	Practice the principle of leadership you are learning with your family and on your job.	Ask others to evaluate your leadership skills.
(4)	Perfect people skills	Master a book like Calvin Miller's The Empowered Leader: 10 keys to Servant Leadership, or John Maxwell's Developing The Leader Within You.
(5)	Ask a leader you admire and respect to serve as your mentor	Read books, study, attend seminars, take the time to prepare well.

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL GIFT

STEP	PROCEDURE	FOLLOW-UP SUGGESTIONS
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Check Point

Q1. List five hindrances to developing your spiritual gifts.

A1.

- Unconfessed and unresolved sin
- Fruitlessness
- The Spirit of Fear
- Lack of involvement
- A Shallow Spiritual Capacity

Q2. What is meant by the term “spiritual capacity?”

A2. The ability to carry the Spirit of God, live in hard spiritual climates when others run, allowing your character and spirit to be prepared to do God’s will, to persevere when others settle and the ability to carry God’s glory.

Q3. List the steps required to develop a gifts-based ministry.

A3. (1) Preparation and planning, (2) study and meditation, (3) practice and experimentation and (4) using your gifts in ministry.

Q4. List three people who were known to have prepared well for their ministry.

A4. Luke, Paul, and Jesus

Q5. How did Paul prepare for his ministry?

A5. He conferred with God and spent three years preparing himself in Arabia. Afterwards, he went Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days.

Q6. What is the best way to combat ignorance about spiritual gifts?

A6. The best way to combat ignorance is with study.

Q7. Which strong emotion often results from lack of knowledge?

A7. Fear.

Fill In the Blanks

1. _____ should be a part of beginning any ministry task (**Preparation**)
2. It is our responsibility to become _____ in the use of our Gifts. (**proficient**)
3. Your Spiritual Capacity can be _____. (**increased**)
4. _____ replaces fear. (**Knowledge**)
5. Ignorance creates _____. (**fear**)

Helpful Dialogue

- 1 God not only calls us to acknowledge our Gifts but to develop them and learn to use them in the most effective way we can. How can you develop your Gifts? Is it through formal instruction, study and meditation, practical application, or hands on experience? Perhaps it is a combination of all of these.
- 2 To what extent do you think your use of Spiritual Gifts has been affected by lack of development?
- 3 What is stopping you from developing and using your Spiritual Gifts?

What if I Don't Believe

If I don't believe.....

-I may believe that I am super gifted and never spend the time to train myself to use the Gifts effectively. But God requires us to develop our Gifts.

-If I don't believe I am responsible to develop my Gifts, I won't. The result will be under-utilization, lack of understanding and ineffective use.

A Challenge

Matthew 12:33

Galatians 5:22-23

2 Timothy 1:7

Ephesians 6:12

Numbers 14:24

Galatians 1:15-18

Luke 1:2-4

Mark 1:13-15

John 14:26

2 Timothy 2:15

2 Corinthians 5:20a

1 Corinthians 15:58