

Transcribed from
Stir Up The Gifts
Empowering Believers for Victorious Living and Ministry Tasks
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INTRODUCTION

Spiritual Gifts are God given abilities for ministering effectively and pleurably to others. God tells us not be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor 12:1). The purpose of this book is threefold. First, to eliminate the ignorance of believers and churches relative to spiritual gifts. Second, to empower believers and congregations for the task of ministry, thereby liberating professional clergy for the role of leadership. Third, to empower believers to live victoriously.

When God says, "Brethren I would not have you ignorant," concerning a certain subject, that certain subject is important. It is important in the mind and heart of God that we understand it and it is important to us for Christian living. It is equivalent to His use of the word "behold."

Behold means to pay attention. Behold means to listen closely to what I am preparing to tell you. Likewise, when God says, "Don't be ignorant," he is saying, "Pay close attention to the spiritual truth I am about to teach you." God says in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." This is a serious spiritual truth relative to our Christian journey. Ephesians 5:17 declares, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." What follows is one of the important Christian duties. We are expected to be obedient and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God explicitly tells us, emphasizing to us and exhorting us that we are not to be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts. This is an important subject to God and it must become equally important to us. So, fine tune your holy channel and lift u and adjust your spiritual antennae. Don't be ignorant.

IN WHAT WAYS COLD WE BE IGNORANT?

What could be the manner of our ignorance? We are ignorant in at least four ways.

First, we are ignorant of simply not knowing that Spiritual Gifts exist. The Church that I was affiliated with before my calling to the pastorate never once mentioned Spiritual Gifts. There were no Bible lessons or sermons concerning Spiritual Gifts. However, the Bible teaches that all believers are blessed with at least one Spiritual Gifts. But unto every one of us is give grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave Gifts unto men (Eph. 4:7-8).

Non-believers are not spiritually gifted. They may be ever so talented, but Spiritual Gifts are reserved for believers. Notice, Spiritual Gifts were given by grace. Once you experience grace, you are spiritually gifted for a ministry task. Those who have not known grace are not spiritually gifted. You cannot receive the Gifts of the Spirit until you receive the Gift of the Spirit, which is salvation.

Both talents and Gifts come from God. They may be one in the same, but they may also be different. One important difference is that performing in your talent saps energy from you, drains you and makes you tired and exhausted. On the other hand, performing in your Spiritual Gifts energizes you, invigorates you and makes you excited. God has given each believer at least one Spiritual Gifts. Some having been given more than one Spiritual Gifts (For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required) Luke 12:48. A biblical picture of our God-given Gifts is presented in Ephesians 4:8-11: Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave Gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And He gave some, apostles; some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; God has given every believer a special, supernatural Gift. If you are a believer, you are spiritually gifted. This Gift is not something you acquired on your own. God gave it for His purposes.

The second way we could be ignorant of Spiritual Gifts is when we are unaware of what Gift or Gifts we possess. There are several things you should know relative to identifying and discovering your Spiritual Gifts.

1. Know that God's people will affirm your Spiritual Gifts. The people of God affirm the Gifts of God in the children of God. When you are working in your Spiritual Gifts, God's people will affirm it verbally. Believers who are not ignorant of Spiritual Gifts will recognize and validate your Gift.
2. Your Spiritual Gifts will make room for you. A man's Gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men (Proverbs 18:16). Not only will your Spiritual Gifts be affirmed, but it will be honored by others. If you are obedient to using your Gifts for spiritual purposes, nobody can stop and deny you that privilege.
3. Many excellent instruments will help you discover your Gift. One is include in Appendix B of this book. Most of these surveys have proven to be valid, based on the affirmation of God's people and other spiritual truths already mentioned, such as your Gifts will energize you and make room for you.
4. There are at least 23 different Spiritual Gifts listed in the Bible. They will be listed Appendix A. Four books in particular speak to Spiritual Gifts: Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; and 1 Peter 4:10. They will be referenced throughout this book. The best way to eliminate ignorance is through study, meditation, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you and give you discernment. Read and study these scriptures repeatedly so that you will not be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts.

The third way you can be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts is thinking that Spiritual Gifts are something that they are not. In other words, believing Spiritual Gifts are something other than what they are. Don't confuse Spiritual Gifts with

- (1) natural abilities
- (2) fruit of the Spirit
- (3) spiritual admonitions
- (4) clergy offices

Natural abilities are given at biological birth. Spiritual Gifts are given at spiritual birth. Also, natural abilities may be transferred by the power of the Holy Spirit to a Spiritual Gifts. For example, one can be endowed with the natural ability to sing and have the natural talent transformed into a beautiful, anointed Gift to be utilized in the Church.

Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit are both necessary for the work of the Church and they both originate from the mighty Love of God. The fruit of the Spirit are manifest in your character traits and Spiritual Gifts are made manifest by our actions. Fruit represents who you are as a result of your discipleship, whereas Spiritual Gifts represent what you do as a result of special blessings and callings from God. Gifts are the Spirit's manifestations through a vessel; but fruit is the offspring of one's spiritual character. Spirituality should not be measured by Spiritual Gifts, but by spiritual fruit. However, spiritual maturity can often be determined by the effective use of Spiritual Gifts.

Spiritual admonishment must be distinguished from Spiritual Gifts. God has admonished us to pray, meditate, fast, etc. Spiritual admonitions are how we get in contact with and hear from God. Utilizing Spiritual Gifts is how we help others contact and hear from God.

Members of the Clergy should have Spiritual Gifts that complement their ministry position. Please do not confuse the offices of the clergy with Spiritual Gifts. This is a dangerous mix up. The distinction is that clergy offices are positions and titles, whereas Spiritual Gifts are functions.

The confusion between the office of pastor and the Gift of shepherding can cause more problems than benefits. Even more explosive is to attempt to turn a proclaimed Gift of prophecy into an office of prophecy. Both of these illustrations would cause division in the body.

The fourth way you can be ignorant about your Spiritual Gifts is that you may not know where to use them. Spiritual Gifts are given for spiritual purposes. They are given, For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ (Eph 4:12). Spiritual Gifts can be misused and abused. Some love the Gift more than they love the Gift giver. God speaks specifically to this problem in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

One of the reasons we have allowed ourselves to be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts is because they are often abused and misused. Because Gifts are misused and abused does not invalidate or deny the biblical truth that God gave them. Remember, one of Satan's strategies is to have a counterfeit copy for anything and everything that God has made. If Spiritual Gifts are used to helping saints grow in Christ, to perform ministry tasks and to build up the Body of Christ, that are authentically employed Gifts. Otherwise, they are counterfeit and are being abused and misused.

Spiritual Gifts can and must be tested to determine their authenticity. God encourages and admonishes us to test everything and hold on to the good. Do not put the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil (1 Thes. 5:19-22 NIV). The authenticity of Spiritual Gifts can be put to three simple tests:

1. Test of Doctrine: Does this Spiritual Gift adorn the true doctrine of Jesus Christ? If a person speaks in tongues, prophesies or teaches and does not believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah prophesied in the scriptures-God's Son, fully God and fully man, their Gift is to be rejected as false (1 John 4:1-3).

2. The Tests of Knowledge, Love and Order: Does the use of this Spiritual Gifts measure up to Paul's corrective passages in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14? Reading through these three chapters you can get the idea that the Church at Corinth was experiencing a problem caused by the misuse of Spiritual Gifts. In Chapter 12, we see that the problems was ignorance; in Chapter 13, lovelessness; and in Chapter 14, disorder. Some of the abuse was due to immaturity and carnality. At other times, the abuse was a result of demonic deception.

3. The Fruit Test (Matt, 7:20; 12:33; 13:23; Luke 4:20; Gal 5:22-23): Does this Spiritual Gift evidence the indwelling life of the Lord Jesus Christ with the accompaniment of the fruit of the spirit? In other words, is there character as well as charisma? If a person says the right words, but his or her life is consistently immoral, out of line with scripture, the ministry must be disapproved. (David MacAdam, Pastor, New Life Community Church, Concord, MA).

A THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

From a theological perspective, I do not believe that some of the Spiritual Gifts listed in the Bible have not been appropriated to the New Testament church today. I believe that all of the Spiritual Gifts mentioned in the Bible can be and should be activated in the Church today. I fully realize that the Body of Christ is divided relative to the Gift of speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Some seemingly are afraid of tongues. Others seemingly are obsessed with tongues. Both are ignorant and ignore at least twenty other God-given Spiritual Gifts. The result

of this theological division has left the Body of Christ weak and limp. Due to this problematic and detrimental division, additional discussion on the theology of Spiritual Gifts seems necessary.

A theology is a systematic exposition of what the Bible says about a certain topic. It is the science of God. The theology of Spiritual Gifts can be discussed based upon: (1) what God did on the cross, (2) the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, (3) God's love, (4) grace, (5) a measure of faith and (6) the Church. First, what God did on the cross relative to this theology was to defeat the enemy (Satan) and capture of the weapons needed to carry on His purpose.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He lead captivity captive and gave Gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And He gave some, apostles; some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph 4:7-13).

Important to this theology is the unfinished business of the cross. He said, "It is finished," (referring to the unfolding plan of redemption). He did not say, "I am finished" (referring to the work of the Church). Notice, verse 13 says, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith." "Till" or "Until" means we have not yet arrived or gotten where we are going, or achieved what we are striving to become. We live and exist in a Christian era of incompleteness. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor 13:12).

Second, what about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? Beginning with the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became the chief executive officer of the Church. Although Gifts are given by the great triune God "same Lord," (Jesus Christ) and "same God." (the Father). And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all (1 Cor 12:5-6). The task of distribution belongs to the Holy Spirit. Like the Father Godhead and the Son Godhead, the co-equal Spirit Godhead is also sovereign. Therefore, He distributes Spiritual Gifts at His discretion; whatever Gift to whomever He pleases. His promise is to give grace according to the measure of the Gift of Christ. (Eph. 4:7).

Third, a detailed discussion of love follows in the next chapter.

Fourth, how does grace intertwine into the theology of Spiritual Gifts? We cant earn Spiritual Gifts and we don't deserve them. They are unmerited tools for the purpose of ministry. They are not awarded or rewarded. They are Gifts given by grace.

Fifth, a major part of any theology of Spiritual Gifts is determined by an understanding of a measure of faith and the nature of the Church. A "measure of faith" refers to the fact that God has given all of us what we need to complete the grace process. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man to measure of faith. Having then Gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith (Rom 12:3-6). It is by grace, through faith, that we come to know Christ. Many

think it is God's grace and our faith. However, He has given us the faith also, we simply exercise the measure of faith He has already given us. Some may have the Gift of Faith, but God has given each believer a measure of faith.

Biblically speaking, the Church is definitely not an organization, but this does not prevent the Church from being organized to operate effectively and efficiently, as well as do everything decently and in order. Truly, God is not a God of confusion. However, the Church is a living organism that must be permitted the freedom of spontaneity. Spiritual Gifts cannot function in highly bureaucratically structured organization.

From a theological perspective, there is much division concerning the topic of Spiritual Gifts. I believe that there are basically only two major schools of thought. The first school of thought believes that Spiritual Gifts are available to believers and the Church today and will remain available until Jesus returns. The second school of thought believes that Spiritual Gifts, although biblical, have ceased and do not exist in the Church today. Those that belong to the second camp are somewhat emphatic in their position on the Gift of tongues. They hold strong to the fact that 1 Cor. 14:20-22 is the only passage in the Bible that states the purpose of the Gift of tongues. Once the purpose of the Gift of tongues was fulfilled and the Jews had been warned of their coming dispersion, tongues ceased, because God was no longer testifying to Israel as a nation, although He will resume His relationship with Israel in the future. They say that we couldn't possibly have the Gift of tongues today, because there is no reason for it, in that it has already fulfilled its purpose. They are quick to point out that New Testament tongues were always directed toward the Jews and there were always Jews present when tongues were used. According to this school of thought, tongues ended for good in 70 AD when Israel was dispersed. Further, supernatural Gifts were for a time of the apostles to authenticate the apostle's message and once the gospel was established and the apostles died, supernatural Gifts ceased. Also, those who hold to this theological school interpret verse ten of the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians to mean that because the Bible is perfect at the completion of the New Testament, supernatural Gifts have ended.

Although I personally do not have the Gift of tongues, neither do I possess the Gift of healing or miracles, this book is based on the former school of theology espousing that the Gifts of the early church are available to the 21st century church and will remain available until the bridegroom comes to claim His bride (the Church).

Five simple assertions support this theological position. First, nowhere in the Bible does it say that Spiritual Gifts are temporary. Second, to declare that Spiritual Gifts no longer exist is to deny the sovereignty and power of the Holy Spirit. I don't believe that God would dismember His own body. Since Spiritual Gifts are a part of the Body of Christ, to remove them would be saying that God dismembered (cut off) part of Himself. Third, the witness and testimony of scholarly believers (myself included) ,whom I don't believe are faking, counterfeiting, misusing, abusing, or are crazy. Fourth, the witness and testimony of the signs and wonders that God is performing in the world today that beg for a biblical explanation rather than a rational human explanation. Fifth, "perfect" to me can only mean when we see Jesus face to face and we shall be like Him.

Although I am not a Seventh-day Adventist, my theological position can be summed up in their Fundamental Belief No. 16 which states: "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age Spiritual Gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the Church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the Gift provide all abilities and ministries needed by the Church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these Gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God

and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the Church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the Church to spiritual maturity and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these Spiritual Gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the Church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God and is built up in faith and love." -Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1995, pp.6-7.

My position on the Gift of tongues may need some additional clarification. Since the Gift of tongues causes the most division, a brief additional thought is warranted. To begin, I believe that the advantages of utilization of the Gift of tongues in churches today does not measure up to harm caused by the controversy. In other words, the disadvantages outweigh the current practical advantages. Of course nothing is new under the sun, or in the area of church problems. This is the same problem that the Apostle Paul spent the entire fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians attempting to resolve. Paul was unable to put the issue to rest and we probably won't be able to either. However, from a practical and biblical viewpoint from which this book is written, I remain consistent with my thinking on all Spiritual Gifts. The biblical viewpoint from which this book is written, I remain consistent with my thinking on all Spiritual Gifts. The biblical purpose of tongues is clearly revealed as a way to get the gospel into the hearts of unbelievers and/or unbelieving Jews. Today there are many unbelievers and God's word promises that He is not yet through with the Jews. Given that the Gift of tongues will be used only for the unbelieving Jews in the future, minimally, tongues may be silent for a season, but they have not died. Based on the use of the Gift of tongues for the biblical purpose, most pastors would love to have a church full of tongue speaking Christians who would definitely be soul winners. I stand, therefore, squarely on God's written Word that He gives to us in Paul's concluding fourteenth chapter discourse on tongues, which states: Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:39-40).

Again, this is not intended to be a theological book, therefore no major attempt will be made to argue my position. I felt forced to give some theology that surrounds the topic of Spiritual Gifts as well as state my theological position because of the detrimental division that has given Satan a foothold on individual believers and the Church. This book is intended to be a practical book to strengthen believers and the Church. In my opinion, our theological differences that stem from the problems that surround Spiritual Gifts, that also happen to be the same problems that the Apostle Paul addressed to the Church at Corinth, have caused us to throw the baby out with the bath water. We must find a way to throw our dirty water of theological differences out and keep the precious baby of Spiritual Gifts. I beg all readers, including those of a differing theological position, to read and study this book from a practical standpoint. For those who, for whatever reason, cannot believe in the sensational charismatic special Gifts of the Spirit, please consider stirring up the Gifts of the pastoral Gifts and the Gifts of service that do not include the special charismatic Gifts.

A TAXONOMY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Taxonomy is the science of classification. An oversimplified taxonomy of Spiritual Gifts may prove helpful. There are many ways of classifying Spiritual Gifts, such as by ministry/office Gifts, motivational/practice Gifts, manifestation/charismatic/ Spiritual Gifts, Gifts of revelation/mind. For the sake of practicality and endeavoring to keep the unity of the faith, the following classification is offered, but is not ranked or prioritized.

Classification One: Position Gifts – Position Gifts are those Gifts that closely relate to the clerical offices of the Church such as the pastor, teacher, apostle, prophet and evangelist (Eph 4:11-12). believers are called to perform service functions but some are Gifted to perform them more easily, with a higher energy level and more effectively (Rom 12:6-8).

Classification Three: Miraculous Gifts – Miraculous Gifts are special, sensational, spectacular, supernatural Gifts that are given for a special situation or circumstance, but also according to the New Testament were given to authenticate the gospel to unbelievers (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

There are approximately twelve Gifts listed in the first two classifications that do not include the others listed in the list of miraculous Gifts. This is not intended to be a theological compromise or middle-of-the-road compromising approach. Simply stated, it is better to stir up twelve Gifts (than) no Gifts. The reader is challenged to abandon as many of your comfort zones as possible and stir up as many Gifts as you can stir up. Maybe the only Gift you will not be able to stir is the controversial divisive tongues Gift. This will leave you with nineteen Spiritual Gifts to unwrap and stir. The challenge is moving from “natural task” to “spiritual task.” Spiritual Gifts are God’s power tools for a serious spiritual task. These are His abilities, not ours. Why should the believer and the Church deny and rob him/herself of the power of God in the midst of spiritual warfare Stir up the power of God?

The focus of this book is simply to help you identify and discover your Spiritual Gifts for victorious living. You must then use your Gift for a ministry task, thereby fulfilling the second purpose of this book which is to empower the believer/congregation for the task of ministry, thus liberating professional clergy for the all-important role of leadership.

EMPOWERING THE CONGREGATION FOR THE TASK OF MINISTRY

What would the impact be in your church if all the believers’ Gifts were discovered and employed in a church ministry task? The strength of any army is in its ability to mobilize the troops to battle. What if you could quickly mobilize eighty percent of the congregation for a volunteer task of ministry? Discovering your Gift is not enough. Your Gifts need to be employed. This book will focus on employing Spiritual Gifts for the awesome responsibility of ministry, thus freeing the clergy for the all important task of leadership. The primary role of the clergy is leadership.

Empowering congregations for the task of ministry, although biblical, represents a tremendous paradigm shift for many churches. Many churches are past-centered and/or clergy-driven. In such cases, the pastor is expected to have all the Gifts and the task of ministry is considered a clergy function. For example, ministers of evangelism are generally expected to be a soul winner and do the ministry task of evangelism rather than leading those in the congregation who have the Gift of evangelism in that ministry task. Given a church of 500 members, approximately twenty percent will have the Gift of evangelism. What a tremendous difference in the impact on God’s kingdom if 100 (20% of 500) are performing the work of evangelism rather than the one minister of evangelism and a select handful.

The end result of not being ignorant about Spiritual Gifts is not for personal gratification, but rather for the empowerment of the believer for living victoriously and for the task of ministry. In this sense, all believers are ministers. We are saved from something and for something. We are saved from the second death called hell and we are saved to help god carry out His purpose. We are His ambassadors. We are co-laborers with Him (1 Cor. 3:9).

Many churches suffer from leadership that is less that effective due to a limited amount of the time spent training for and concentrating on the role of leadership. Spiritual Gifts employed in the task of ministry will allow those in positions of leadership to better perform their primary responsibilities.

You don’t have to have the Gift to perform a service task of ministry. In other words, you don’t have to have the Gift of hospitality to be nice to others, or have the Gift of evangelism to perform the task of evangelism. All believers are admonished to perform the task of evangelism.

All believers are admonished to be witnesses for Christ. Those who are gifted for the task will not only enjoy the task but they will be more successful. In addition, you don't have to have a Spiritual Gifts to perform routine volunteer tasks like picking up paper in the Church facility, or mowing the Church lawn, or washing windows. Spiritual Gifts are given to believers to better perform spiritual functions. Our purpose is to educate believers so that they can be empowered for the ministry task that will equip the saints, exalt the Savior and edify the Church.

LIVING A VICTORIOUS LIFE

Third and not necessarily ranked in priority, the purpose of this book is to help the believer to live victoriously. Victorious means being "more than a conqueror." Victorious living means living the abundant life that has come to us through Christ. I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Victorious living means overcoming fear. Fear strangles the believer and causes the believer to be victimized in spiritual warfare. Chapter 2 in this book is devoted to overcoming fear by the Spiritual Gifts of love. We are reminded in 2 Timothy 1:7 that, God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of sound mind. Therefore, do not afraid, stir up the Gift of Love.

SUMMARY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS PRINCIPLES

The following is a summary of Spiritual Gifts principles that have been discussed in this introductory chapter and undergirds the remaining content of this book.

1. All Gifts are given by Christ through the Holy Spirit, according to His sovereign purposes. The Scripture declares, There are different kinds of Gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...All these are the work of one and the same Spirit and He gives them to each one, just as He determines (1 Cor. 12).
2. God does not want us to be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts. The Word of God and the Spirit of God teach us about Spiritual Gifts.
3. Every believer. Has at least one Gift. No one is left out. One of the results of salvation for each and every Christians is receiving at least one Spiritual Gifts. (Eph 4:7; 1 Pet 4:10; 1 Cor 12:7).
4. All Spiritual Gifts are Gifts of grace.
5. Spiritual admonitions such as praying and fasting are not Spiritual Gifts. They are how we get in contact with God; Spiritual Gifts are how we help others get in contact with God.
6. All believers are called to a task of ministry. We are His ambassadors. We are co-laborers with Him (1 Cor. 3:9).
7. You don't have to have the Spiritual Gifts of "service" to serve. Neither do you have to have the Spiritual Gifts of "helps" to help.
8. Your Gift is given not for you, but for the Body. Paul says that all the Gifts are given so that the Body of Christ may become mature like Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). We must overcome our theological differences if we are to strengthen our churches (the Body of Christ) and become all that God expects us to become.

9. Spiritual Gifts are available to the Church today and they will remain available until Jesus comes again.

10. Although organized, the Church is not intended to be an organization. The Church is a living organism. The bureaucracy inherent in organizations hinders the effective use of Spiritual Gifts.

11. Each Christian's ministry is more fruitful when there is an understanding of and faithful use of his Gifts. Unless players on a team know what their role is and have confidence to perform their role, inefficiency and even chaos may result.

12. Gifts may be related to, but are distinct from talents. All human beings have some degree of individual talent. Only Christians have Spiritual Gifts which are supernaturally bestowed.

13. The Gifts of the Spirit are distinct from the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to produce the same character in every Christian (Gal 5:22-23), but the Gifts are given as the Spirit wills for the good of the body.

14. Proper use of the Gifts will be accomplished by love, without which the Gifts are useless. The Bible says without love, we are nothing (1 Cor 13). Love is our ultimate motive in service.

15. Spiritual Gifts can be and should be tested to determine their authenticity. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil (1 Thes 5:19-22 NIV).

16. Stirring up our Spiritual Gifts will help us live victoriously without fear. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

Chapter 1 – Stir Up the Gift of God (Love)

God tells us, and the Apostle Paul tells his young spiritual son in the ministry, Timothy, to stir up the gift of God (2 Tim 1:6). What is this precious gift that we are admonished to stir up: It is the gift of love. The gift of love is the greatest gift of all. It is the root gift that all other Spiritual Gifts spring forth from. God would not have us ignorant concerning this gift.

God concludes His instructions to us on Spiritual Gifts in the last verse in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians by saying, But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. This more excellent way is the way of love.

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

What follows is the well-known 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, often referred to as the "love chapter." However, contrary to popular casual thinking, the context of the chapter is unrelated to romance. Rather, the chapter declares that you may have all the other gifts, but if you do not have the gift of love you really don't have anything. The all work by love. Faith works by love.

Furthermore, when all the other gifts have failed or passed away, only the gift of love will be left standing. The gift of love is preeminent, therefore-stir it up.

To bring clarity to this point, Paul first emphasizes the importance of love by comparing it to other gifts, namely, speaking in tongues, prophecy, volunteer poverty and martyrdom. These were highly regarded gifts of the era. Paul gives three verses directed at their minds, emotions and their wills. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Cor. 13:3). Imagine having a digital clock keeping score of our effective use of Spiritual Gifts. Every time we operate without love the clock ticks back to zero. Many pastors may have the gift of preaching (prophecy), but if they don't demonstrate love for the congregation they are preaching to the heavenly scoreboards records a zero.

Secondly, Paul defines love by emphasizing and engulfing the positive qualities of love by telling us what love does and does not do. Notice that there are seven characteristics that are positive and eight that are negative. In Hebrew, the number seven is a complete or perfect number. However, all fifteen characteristics are expressed in the Greek as present tense action verbs. God always defines love as an action. Our God is a "show me" God. In addition, all fifteen of these characteristics either describe the love of Jesus, or love that is definitely not of Jesus. These expressions of love should not only serve as evaluative criteria for properly utilizing our Spiritual Gifts, but also as guidelines for our daily lives. The love of Jesus is expressed in these verses in a positive sense by saying that: (1) love is patient, (2) love is expressed in kindness, (3) love rejoices in truth, (4) love protects and endures, (5) love trusts, (6) love hopes and (7) love perseveres. Often, we learn more from "don'ts" than we do from "do's." The "don't" list tells us that: (1) love is not envious or jealous, (2) love is not boastful, (3) love is not proud, (4) love does not act rude, (5) love is not self-seeking, (6) love does not easily get mad, (7) love does not keep score of wrongs and (8) love does not rejoice in evil or weakness. The point is that, what love is not, Jesus is not and we are not to be what love is not. Again, it's all about love.

Finally, in verses 8-13, Paul drives the point home by speaking of the permanent nature of love. Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away...But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor 13:8-10).

Any discussion of Spiritual Gifts begins and ends with the love of God. The love of God is the source of the gifts and the love of God will be what remains when Spiritual Gifts have vanished. When other Spiritual Gifts are contrasted with love, love remains a champion gift. While all gifts have their important functions, the time will come when they will pass away and only love will remain standing. We are to desire Spiritual Gifts, but they are only a means to an end. That end is to be like Him, in love and glory. Therefore, it behooves us to stir up the gift of love. Paul also tells us that we are not yet perfect, but as we grow in Christlikeness, Spiritual Gifts will decline until one-day perfect agape love will replace all Spiritual Gifts. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (1 Cor. 13:10-13). This day of total perfection refers to when we see Him "face to face."

A few single scriptural truth or work repeating. Artist love. Love is God. Faith works by love. Perfect love cast see. Love covers a multitude of sins. It has not yet been revealed what God has prepared for those who love him. They will know we are Christians by our love. We are to love God first to you we ought to love one another. Nothing can separate God's love from us. We must, therefore, diligently follow love.

FOLLOW LOVE

Paul immediately follows the famous "love chapter" (1 Cor. 13) by saying: Follow after charity, and desire Spiritual Gifts, but rather than that ye may prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1). We are to follow the way of the love. Love gives direction to all of the Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual Gifts absolutely cannot function properly outside the path of love. Much like a track and field participant in one of the dash events, like the 440-yard dash is required to run in his or her designated lane or be eliminated. So it is with Spiritual Gifts. We must function in the way (lane) of love; otherwise our Spiritual Gifts are nothing. The purpose of Spiritual Gifts is to serve and the motivation for serving is love. "No love" equals "no motivation." And "no motivation" results in "no service." Therefore, as we desire to discover, develop and utilize our Spiritual Gifts we must pursue love. Noteworthy is the fact that God did say, desire Spiritual Gifts, not abandon spiritual gifts due to fear, misunderstanding and confusion. Remember that love is the key that unlocks the door of understanding and boldness and love is the glue that cements the various gifts together. Notice, God says to stir up the gift (singular). Yet, there are many gifts. Like God speaks of the fruit (singular) of the Spirit and there are many fruits. Why? Because love is both the gift and the fruit from which all gifts and fruits spring forth.

GOD LOVES ME

One of my favorite hymns is, "Yes, Jesus Loves Me." The hymn gives the reasons we know Jesus loves us. The refrain repeatedly declares, "Because the Bible tells me so." A study of Spiritual Gifts tells us that Jesus not only loves us, but He loves us equally. He loves me as much as He loves anyone else. How do we know Jesus loves us equally? Because He gave us all a Spiritual Gift. Not one of His children is left out. Not a single one is denied because He loves us equally, He gifted each and every one of us with various Spiritual Gifts. Let us unwrap our gifts and dig in our gift bags and follow the way of love.

A BASIC ASSUMPTION AND THE POWER OF LOVE

Since the gift of love is the primary, preeminent, root gift of God, if you stir up the gift of love you will stir up all the Spiritual Gifts of God. This is due to the nature of the gift and the nature of the gift giver. The nature of the gift of love is powerful. For I have not given you a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

The power of this love was demonstrated by the genuine faith of our parents. When I call to remember the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift... (2 Tim. 1:5-6). In other words, remember that power of faith and love that your parents possessed and stir it up. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth our fear (1 John 4:18). When we fail to stir up the gift of love, fear controls our lives. Bondage is a product of fear, but freedom is the child of love. If we stir up the gift of love we will not live in the fear of judgement, fear of man, or fear of anything. If we stir up the gift of love we will not live in the fear of criticism. The spirit of love teaches us the power of love.

The powerful nature of the gift of love was demonstrated by the acts of Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi. Both were born into lives of relative comfort, but they chose to forsake themselves to serve others. Mother Teresa's love of God led her to serve the poor, the sick and the homeless on the streets in Calcutta, India until her death. Gandhi chose to give up his law practice

to lead his fellow Indians to free India from British rule through peaceful civil disobedience. His was a love for freedom for his fellow countrymen. The power of the gift of love became evident during the non-violent civil rights demonstrations that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led in the 60's when people laid down their lives for the sake of peace and freedom. Mother Teresa can sum up the nature of this love in these words.

We must grow in love and to do this we must go on loving and loving and giving and giving until it hurts – the way Jesus did. Do ordinary things with extraordinary love; little things like caring for the sick and the homeless, the lonely and the unwanted, washing and cleaning from them. You must give not just what will cost you something. This, then, is giving not just what you can live without but what you can't live without or don't want to live without, something you really like. Then your gift becomes a sacrifice, which will have value before God. Any sacrifice is useful if it is done out of love. This giving until it hurts-this sacrifice-is also what I call love in action. (Mother Teresa, A Simple Path, Ballantine Books, 1995, Page 99.)

Ultimately, the power of the gift of love is best seen in the nature of the gift giver, Christ, who because of love would not come down from the cross. He bled and died for the lives of all! That's love! That's power! That's the gift we want to stir up. And if we stir up the power of that gift, we can stir up the manifold gifts of God enabling believers to become overcomers and congregations to become empowered.

STIR UP THE GIFT – THE FIREPLACE ANALOGY

The Apostle Paul, writing his last will and testament to his young spiritual son in the ministry, Timothy, who is now the pastor of the Church in Ephesus, gives an analogy of a fire that has nearly gone out. Evidently, Paul had ordained Timothy because he refers to the once genuine faith he had seen in him when he laid hands on him. Paul reminds Timothy of what a strong faith he once had. But now the spark is gone. The picture is one of a fireplace that was once ablaze, but is now flickering amidst a few warm coals. The fire needs to be rekindled. It needs to be stirred up (stoked). It needs the coal or logs moved around so it can be brought back again to a flame.

This is the mirror reflection of the many pastors, church leaders, believers and the Body of Christ. We were once on fire. When God first touched our lives, we were ablaze with His light. When we first experienced grace. When we felt hands laid on us. When we first received His love. But now something has happened to us. Our smoldering embers glow without a flame. Our fire is burning low. Our excitement and enthusiasm are simmering. Our joy has been soled and the thrill is gone. Saints, we need to stir up the al powerful Gift of Love that was shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Stir up the Gift of Love and we will bring the dormant Spiritual Gifts possessed by believers in the Church to a flame. Don't let your fire go out. Stir it up. Don't be ignorant. Know that you have been given a precious gift. Discover the gift. Use your gift. Stir up your gift. Stir it up. Stir up the gift.

STIR UP THE GIFT – THE BODY ANALOGY

There are several analogies in Pauline literature used to describe the Church. Often the Church is described as a bride, building or temple and at other times as a soldier or army. But the most predominant description is the human body. It is the Body of Christ here on earth. Christ is the head of the body. As a biology major in college, the awesome collaborative functions of the cells, tissue, organs, and systems of the human body always fascinated me. To understand the physiology of the human body is to say, "Look at God!" In three scriptures: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4:15, 16, a body analogy is used to explain how Spiritual Gifts function.

In Romans 12:1, God tells us through Paul, that we should present our bodies as living sacrifices which is our reasonable service or worship. In other words, based on what God has already done, we should utilize all that God has given us, including our Spiritual Gifts to edify the Body of Christ. We are to use our gifts to build up the Body.

In 1 Corinthians 12, beginning at the twelfth verse, Paul gives an elaborate, detailed explanation of one body with many parts working together for one purpose—one for all and all for one is the rally chant. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ (1 Cor 12:12). The major point of Paul's detailed analysis of the body is that every member is expected to function in its own place of service and for this place of service, every member is gifted. The emphasis is on participation and not on being entertained. The Church is neither a spectacle or spectator sport. The Body of Christ is weakened when we expect the paid staff to do the work, while the rest of the body sits on the bench or in the stands as fans either cheering or booing.

In Ephesians 4:16 we are told once again, motivated by love, that we should find our place so we can use our spiritual gifts for the increase of the body. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself and love (Eph 4:16). A track and field team would not likely have a field participant like the shot-putter, discus and javelin thrower trying to run the 100, 220 and 240 dash. Also, there are runners who specialize in short distances and some who are best at long distances. Those who specialize in short or long distances are not expected to run in all events. It is a team effort. The team score determines the winner. Likewise, the believer should not be expected to operate outside of how they are best made to function on God's Kingdom building "construction team." God's ministry is a collaborative team effort. Spiritual Gifts are congregational Spiritual Gifts and were never intended to run solo. Spiritual Gifts are not given to create spiritual Lone Rangers.

The question for you is, "Where do you fit in the Body of Christ?" where are you joined together for the effectual working of the body? These are questions this book will help you answer. What is your spiritual job description? Where do I fit (join) in? Stirring up the gift of love will bring illumination to this question.

Checkpoint

1. What is the greatest gift of all gifts? The one that sparks all other gifts?
2. What is the main point of 1 Corinthians 13 (the love chapter)?
3. List the seven things that love will do.
4. List the eight things that love will not do.

Fill In the Blank

1. Faith works by _____.
2. God is _____.
3. Love _____ a multitude of _____.
4. It has not yet been revealed _____.
5. We must therefore diligently follow _____.
6. Love is both the _____ and the _____ from which all others spring forth.
7. Bondage is a product of _____.
8. Freedom is a child of _____.

Helpful Dialogue

1. If you have all the gifts of God but you don't walk in love, your gifts will be ineffective. So if you covet the best other gifts, there is a more excellent way and that is the way of love. How much of the love of God do you covet earnestly? Have you asked God to fill you to overflowing with His love? The Bible says, "The love of God is shared abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." We need to stir up the gift of love in our lives.
2. Do you know anyone who comes close to the type of love described in 1 Cor. 13? Love that suffers long and is kind? This love requires personal, physical and emotional sacrifice. Are you willing to sacrifice in order to walk in love as God has commanded?
3. If faith works by love and perfect love cast out fear, if you are full of fear in any area of your life, you are not walking in love. What areas in your life need to be liberated from fear through love?

What If I Don't Believe

- If I don't believe that love is the preeminent Gift of all Gifts and that other Gifts would not be effective without it, I will never be able to revive my Gifts and my Gifts will remain dry and lifeless in the Church. I will be as a sounding brass and that tinkling cymbal.
- If I don't believe, I will battle constantly with the Spirit of Fear, Jealousy, Envy and the like. The Spirit of Love (God) will not be there to overcome these vicious spirits.
- I will produce little or no fruit in the Kingdom of God.

A Challenge

1 Corinthians 13
 2 Timothy 1:7
 1 John 4:18
 Ephesians 4:16
 Matthew 22:37-38