

Spiritual Gifts

by Bob Bruton

Every Christian has a spiritual gift that they can use to serve God and others, and the biblical key to discovering this gift is to think soberly and rate your ability with sober judgment.

Duration: 24:53

Scripture: Matthew 25:14

Topics: "Gifts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of thinking soberly and making a realistic assessment of our abilities. He uses the analogy of a soldier being equipped to fight tanks to illustrate the concept. The speaker encourages listeners to search the scriptures and discover their spiritual gifts, so they can serve in the best way possible. He highlights the biblical key to discovering one's spiritual gift as stated in Romans 12:3, which cautions against thinking too highly of oneself and acknowledges that God has given each person a measure of faith. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the joy that comes from being a faithful servant of the Lord with the talents He has given.

Transcript

In the months of September, October, and November of 1951, an evangelist and his team came to my hometown, and I'll never forget the opening service nor the ones that followed. When the first meeting got underway, the temporary tabernacle that had been built specifically for this great crusade was filled to capacity. Now, it was designed to seat about 18,000 people, but over 20,000 had crowded in and another 20,000 were standing around just outside.

When the song leader began to lead the great 1,000-voice choir and then turned to lead the additional 40,000 folks in the audience to sing the great songs of the faith, believe me, it was a wonderful sight to see and even more wonderful to hear. During the weeks of this great campaign, I observed each member of the evangelistic team and came to the conclusion that each one was an individual that had been highly trained in his area of service. Each seemed to have a specific spiritual gift, and a spiritual gift was being used to its fullest capacity in just the right place so as to make this great campaign function properly.

And I also noticed that each one of these gifted men were supremely happy as he went about his task. The reason I tell you all this is because I want to make a very important point. I remember saying to myself over and over again as the campaign progressed, wouldn't it be wonderful if every Christian in the whole wide world could have some active part in such a campaign as this? I said to myself, wouldn't it be

wonderful if every Christian had some spiritual gift given to him from God? Wouldn't it be wonderful if every Christian could discover his spiritual gift and then get into the right channel where he could exercise it to its greatest quality and quantity? Well, my friend, it gives me great pleasure to be able to announce to you at this time that God has given at least one spiritual gift to every single Christian.

And the Bible teaches that it is the individual responsibility of each and every Christian to discover his gift and then refine it and exercise it to its greatest quantity and quality. We're going to find also that this great truth is the real key to living the happy, successful Christian life. In other words, if we don't know what our spiritual gifts are, we can't possibly be exercising them to their fullest extent.

And if we're not exercising them, there is bound to be a certain area of our lives where unhappiness, discontentment, unrest and lack of vision prevails. A Christian who has not yet discovered his own personal spiritual gift usually doesn't know what God wants him to do. He doesn't know where God wants him to be.

He has very little vision, even though he is sincere in his life. Consequently, because he doesn't know what he should be doing and where he should be doing it, he often feels unimportant, insecure, and very often, to say the least, feels critical towards others who are actively serving God in a dedicated manner. Once again, let me say that the Bible teaches that every Christian should know precisely what his spiritual gift is and should be constantly refining his gift by using it.

Maybe at this point you're saying to yourself, all of this sounds good, but show me in the Bible where you get these facts and then I'll be convinced. Then I'll get excited. Then I'll begin looking for my spiritual gift and then when I find it, I'll start using it to its fullest capacity.

Well, my friend, if this is the case, prepare yourself for some wonderful news. It may be that what we have to say could change the entire course of your life. At this point, let me suggest that you go ahead and listen to the rest of this side of the record before searching the Scriptures for yourself, but as soon as it is over, by all means, read the following portions of Scripture before listening to this side of the record again.

Here are the verses that you should look up and read. Matthew chapter 25, verses 14 through 30, Romans chapter 12, verses 3 through 8, 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 7, chapters 12, chapter 13, and verses 1, 12, and 37 through 40 of chapter 14. Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7 through 16, 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 14, 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 6, Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 4, and 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 10 and 11.

Now, before we get into the mechanics of our subject, there is one other thing that should be said. It is not our purpose to make an exhaustive study of the subject of spiritual gifts, the main purpose for our conversation is to determine the biblical key to discovering these gifts. But in order to do so, we must first look at the subject from an overall view.

When you examine the verses that we have given to you, I think you will make a few observations that shall be obvious and without controversy, and here are some of them. Number one, all of the spiritual gifts, talents, enablements, or whatever you are accustomed to calling them, are from God. They are delivered to members of God's church by way of the Holy Spirit.

You will find this truth elaborated upon primarily in all of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, but for now let us read only verses 4, 5, and 6 of the chapter. Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, 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. The second thing that we should point out is this.

Every Christian has received at least one spiritual gift from God. Now, there are many clear, unmistakable truths in the Bible, and this is one of them. Listen to what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 7. Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 7. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 11. A third observation you'll make is this.

Each Christian has a spiritual gift that is exclusively his. You'll find that a large section of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is devoted to this point, but at this time we only refer you to Romans chapter 12, where it says, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Did you know that you possess at least one spiritual gift that no one else in all the world possesses? Did you know that if you do not exercise your spiritual gift properly, the whole church, which consists of every genuine born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, suffers? That's right.

The whole church suffers if you do not exercise your spiritual gift properly. By the way, you do not have to be some type of public figure to exercise most of the spiritual gifts found in the Bible. As a matter of fact, those who possess unseen gifts are more honored, it seems, than those who stand in the spotlight.

You'll find this truth in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 22 through 24. And if you take the human body for an illustration like the Bible does, you'll agree that there are more unseen parts of Christ's mystical body than parts that are seen. There are more unattractive members than attractive ones, but one spiritual gift is no more important than the other.

Before we make our fourth observation, let me say this. We cannot scripturally limit the gifts to only those 12 or so found in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, because, you see, the word helps in verse 28 refers to literally thousands of different things. Romans chapter 12, verses 6 through 8, lists all sorts of other gifts not found in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Frankly, according to Romans 12, 6, where it tells us in so many words that each has a gift differing from all other gifts, I'm of the opinion that if there are at this present time 10 million Christians on the face of the earth, there are 10 million different spiritual gifts that should be in operation. Now, the fourth observation is the most important one of all, so before we consider it, let us quickly review all that we have learned thus far. We have learned that the universal Church is described as one human body in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

We have learned that each individual believer is one, but only one, member of this body, Romans chapter 12 and verse 5. As members, we have an assignment from God, Romans 12, 4. Our assignment is exclusively ours, Romans 12, 6. No one else can do our job, and we cannot do anyone else's job. We have learned that God has given each member of His Church an exclusive spiritual gift through which he may accomplish his exclusive assignment. We have learned also that the spiritual gifts possessed are just the gifts that are needed to make the great body of Christ function properly.

Without your spiritual gift, dear friend, the function of the Church would not be at its best. Now, all of this may be hard to believe, but it's every bit true. We come now to the most important observation of all, observation number four, and incidentally, this is the real reason why this side of the record was made, so

listen carefully.

Permit me to introduce this point by asking this question once again. What is the biblical key to discovering your spiritual gift? Well, I think that the answer is the most clearly stated in Romans chapter 12 and verse 3, and for the sake of clarity, I want to read that verse in three different translations of the Bible. First of all, I wish to read it in the beloved King James Version.

Quote, 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 the measure of faith. End of quote. Now, let's listen to the J.B. Phillips translation of the same verse.

Quote, I think that you should hear the amplified New Testament on this verse also. Quote, For by the grace, unmerited favor of God given to me, I warn everyone among you not to estimate or think of himself more highly than he ought, not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, but to rate his ability with sober judgment, each according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him. End of quote.

Dear friend, I think that we should take a long look at this verse. First, you'll notice that we're told not to think that we're better or more capable than we really are, and isn't that human nature in a nutshell? But you'll notice that we are told to think, and we're told to think soberly. We're told to make a sane estimate.

We're told to rate our ability with sober judgment. In other words, take a conservative inventory of our capabilities. Now, again, I can just hear someone saying, how do you do that? So, with your permission, let us use an illustration.

If you were a member of the armed forces and the commanding officer wanted you to fight the enemy tanks, he'd send you to wherever the tanks were, and he'd also equip you with something to fight the tanks with, wouldn't he? If he wanted you to fight enemy submarines, he'd likely relocate you to wherever the subs were and equip you with something more suitable for fighting subs. Now, the whole point is this. Whatever God wants you to do, he has equipped you to do.

For instance, God gave the little bird wings long before he learned to fly. He gave the little fish fins long before he learned to swim. Dear friend, if you'll read the scriptures carefully on this subject, I think you'll agree that the teaching of the Bible is this.

Whatever you're basically capable of doing at this moment, that is exactly what God wants you to do now. If you do not have the necessary spiritual gifts to accomplish some particular work, don't worry about it, because God never intended you to be active in that work at the present. As far as the future is concerned, we'll come to that.

But for now, let us think of the present. Well, you may say, how can we apply this to our personal lives in a practical way? And in answer to that, let me make a suggestion. If you will take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle, and then on the left-hand side of the line, write down all the things that you cannot do, and on the right-hand side of the line, write down all the things that you can do, you'll begin to see, first, what God does not want you to do, and second, what God wants you to do.

Now, the negative side of this inventory is just as important as the positive side, because it should immediately give you a release from many of the uncertainties you may have been harboring in your mind. For instance, I know a certain Christian who has for years been mourning over the fact that he wasn't a

preacher. On the other hand, he has a wonderful singing voice, and can sing very nicely, but doesn't want to be a singer for the Lord.

Now, I believe that if this person would simply follow the directions of the Word of God, he'd soon realize that the Church needs his singing more than it does his preaching, that is, in an official capacity. But let's get back to ourselves. If you have not settled this problem in your own personal life, listen to this side of the record so many times that you're familiar with its entire contents, and then get yourself a pencil and some paper, and begin your own inventory of your personal spiritual gifts.

Maybe the negative side of your list shall read something like this. I cannot at the present play any musical instrument, therefore I cannot and should not at this time want to be a great organist, pianist, or instrumentalist of any kind. I cannot carry a tune at the present, so I know that I cannot and should not want to be a great singer or soloist at this time.

On and on your list, both positive and negative sides shall go, but in due time you'll come to an end, and when you do, you'll be making great headway on the road to success. At this point, let me say that this list doesn't come easy. You must be absolutely truthful with yourself.

You must spend much time in prayer and soul-searching before the Lord, before you write down a thing, and as you write down each word. The completion of this list may require an undue amount of patience. Actually, if you're a young Christian and unfamiliar with much of the Bible, it may take many, many months or maybe years before this list is complete, but in most cases you should be able to get started using your spiritual gifts in just a matter of days.

But the time shall eventually come when your list shall be complete, and after you have satisfied yourself that all the major areas have been covered, then it's time to crystallize your thinking a little more. So here's what to do. Number one, forget the negative side of the list.

These things aren't really important to you at the present. Number two, take all the things listed on the positive side and rearrange them in the order of your capabilities. For instance, you may be able to give out gospel tracts or pray better than you could preach behind a pulpit at the present.

So be realistic and put down what you can do best first. Eventually, you shall develop a list of things that you can do, and the one you can do best shall be first. Incidentally, the thing that you can do best should also be the thing that you enjoy doing most.

Now you're really getting somewhere. Once you have discovered your most obvious spiritual gift, then crystallize your thinking upon it until you see a work that only you can do, because you haven't fully discovered your gift until you see the exclusiveness of it. After you have developed this list to maturity and then rearranged the positive side of the list so as to show your most capable gift listed first and your second most capable gift listed second and so on, it's time to go to a few faithful Christian friends one at a time and share your findings with them.

The Bible says in Proverbs 11, 14, in the multitude of counselors there is safety. It would be wise to go to those who are elders or pastors in your church group. Play this record for them and explain that you're trying to locate your best spiritual gift so you can be as effective as possible for your Lord.

If these friends of yours are faithful, matured ministers of God, they'll understand your problem and they'll help you because it is their God-given responsibility to do so. I might also add here that the Bible says in

Proverbs 27, 6, faithful are the wounds of a friend and you should be prepared to be corrected if necessary. However, if you've been absolutely true with yourself and with this person you have approached, I think you'll find that your friend shall agree with you.

If all your friends give you the same advice and directions, then you can pretty well rest assured that you're on the right track. If there is some difference of opinion, then continue going to various matured friends and seeking their help until your mind is cleared of all doubt about what your spiritual gift is. Now you know beyond all doubt what you can and should be doing and this knowledge has been confirmed by a variety of reliable sources.

The next step is to get busy exercising your spiritual gift for you see, whatever God has equipped you to do, this is exactly what he wants you to do and he wants you to get started immediately. There are many verses in the Bible that could be turned to that would tell us how to get started but I think that it's all summed up in Revelation 3, 7 where the Bible says, quote, He that openeth and no man shutteth and no man openeth, end of quote. The reference is to our Lord Jesus Christ and the opening and shutting refers to the opportunity he gives his servants to serve him.

Because you have a gift that is exclusively yours, no one else in all the world can do your job. So this means that the use of your spiritual gift can never be made void by someone else's gift regardless of what you may think or feel. If you'll just look hard enough and study your circumstances thoroughly enough, you'll find a way in which you can use your gift right where you are.

Maybe you'll have to begin in an insignificant, unnoticed way but remember, you're out to please the Lord, not the people so seek his approval first. It won't be long, however, before the Lord will commend your use of your spiritual gift if you're using it humbly and to the best of your ability and if you're sticking to it. Many a Christian has given up too soon and consequently lost his opportunity to be of real service and help to the great body of Christ, the Church.

Here's something else for your encouragement. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 18 says For not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord commendeth. Now you'll notice that it says the people will approve you if God commends you.

For you see, the word approved refers to the attitude of the people. When God commends your work, he also sees to it that the right people shall be aware of it. For instance, you may go down to a skid row mission and through the proper use of your spiritual gift lead a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If this were to take place, God shall see to it that eventually others shall know about your accomplishment. You do not have to go back to your local church blowing your own horn. God will take care of your success so leave it with him.

Don't try to figure out how God will do it. That's his job, so leave it there. Many a young Christian has made shipwreck of his life because he had the disease known as inflammation of the wishbone.

So don't be hasty. Isaiah chapter 28 and verse 16 says He that believeth shall not make haste. Don't try to force yourself to greater heights.

Let God do it. If you're serving him, he's responsible for your success and your promotion. For Psalm 75 verses 6 and 7 says Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south but God is the judge.

He put us down one and set us up another. Remember now, your responsibility is only to keep your heart clean before the Lord. 1 Samuel chapter 16 and verse 7 says Man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Incidentally, if you're keeping your heart right with the Lord you'll put your heart into your work. I think of 2 Chronicles chapter 31 and verse 21 that says He did it with all his heart and prospered. What the Lord enables you to do do it with all your heart and the Lord shall prosper you, I'm sure.

Now, before we consider some of the dangerous misunderstandings of exercising your spiritual gifts let us think together about the future. You'll notice that in Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 through 30 where the Lord is commending his servants for the profitable use of their talents the servant with the two talents earns the same commendation as the servant with the five because he was equally faithful, though he possessed less. Now, I'm aware that the talents here are money according to verse 27 but the application is the same as though they were spiritual gifts.

The whole point is this if you will take all the spiritual gifts you possess and put them to work for God He will increase the number of your gifts. For you see, spiritual gifts are obtained at three times in life. First, through natural birth although not spiritually ignited until after conversion.

Number two, through conversion itself when the Holy Spirit comes into your life to live for he it is who really brings the gifts in the first place and thirdly, when you earnestly exercise the gifts you have for the Lord shall faithfully reward you with more spiritual abilities or gifts when you use what is presently within your ability. So don't be concerned about the future work with what you've got where you are and leave the future with the Lord. If your gifts are of such a nature that they could be used on a national or international level God will see to it that they shall be used to their fullest capacity by first blessing them as they're presently used and secondly, causing others to recognize that you are talented in this manner and thirdly, open the doors for greater areas of service.

Your only obligation is to be faithful to his direction. This is the sure way in which one can know that he is serving God in the right manner. Now before our conversation comes to a close let us consider two things that often shipwreck some as they seek to serve the Lord.

Number one, do not settle for less than a full knowledge of your spiritual gifts and do not ever slow down the use of your gifts except only as the Lord may lead. In 2 John, we find that we may lose our reward of faithfulness if we begin and then quit. Number two, good is often the worst enemy of best.

Don't get so involved doing what you can do nominally that you never have time to develop your main gift but never turn down the opportunity to serve. The task of staying in the middle of the road here is difficult. Folks shall often misunderstand you but nevertheless, keep your hand to the plow.

So child of God, now you know the problem. Now you know the answer to the problem and now you know how to apply the answer to the problem. The rest is up to you.

If this is the first time you've heard this recording and if you are one who cannot announce to the world what your spiritual gift is let me suggest that you play this recording over and over again and search the scripture verses given until there is no trace of doubt about your spiritual gift and then get into that channel of service where you can exercise your gift in the greatest quality and quantity. Let us conclude our conversation by referring to Matthew chapter 25 and verse 21 where we learn that the basis of true joy in

the Christian life is being a faithful servant of the Lord with the talent he has given you. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son for the securing of our salvation.

We thank you for the gift of the Bible which tells us of this great redemption. We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to understand this message of the Bible and to live the victorious Christian life. And we thank you for the gifts that you've given each Christian.

We would at this time rededicate ourselves as weak and faltering as we may be to you and ask you to help us to serve you in the best possible quality and quantity. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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