



LESSON #9 THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF A LEADER

A Barna survey was conducted among pastors of various denominations. They were asked if they believed they had the gift of spiritual leadership. Only 6% affirmatively responded “yes”. That means 94% of church “leaders” are managing God’s house in their own ability, training, knowledge and effort without the impacting gifts of the Holy Spirit. How this explains the anemic, spiritual condition of average churches today in our nation, having never activated the supernatural gifts of God. Every God-appointed leader in His Church has been endowed by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts suited to their calling, anointing, and position in ministry. A gift is not a reward for service—you earn a reward, but a gift is freely given with no effort or obligation on our part to obtain it. As a leader, you have within you supernatural gifts for the promotion and empowerment of the Body of Christ. However, your gift will be useless if it remains dormant. How many leaders never experience their full potential because they have never activated their gift. In the same way that a gift card given to you must be activated in order to benefit you, your spiritual gift must be activated by faith and action. Your gift will produce results greater than you can ever imagine as you set in motion the process for God to flow His power through your gift to others. Proverbs 18:16 tells us that *“A man’s gift makes room for him and brings him before great men”* Another version states, *“Your gift can open doors; it gives access to important people!”* This verse speaks of a greater platform of ministry and outreach with a more far reaching influence to bless others. God’s gifts were never intended to benefit the operator of the gift, but rather the receiver. That is why activation is crucial. *Activation is application*—and as you apply your gift, it grows and forms and develops and increases in power and performance as a ripple effect upon multitudes in the house of God. John Bevere accurately points out, *“Your calling is bigger than you. It is about the people you are called to impact.”* Take a moment at the beginning of this lesson and think about one specific person that your gift has made an impact upon. In what way?

YOU DON'T GET TO CHOOSE

When a close friend or family member gives you a distinct gift for a special occasion such as Christmas or your birthday, you normally don't get to choose it—you simply receive it as a token of love from your well-meaning loved one who took the time, the care and the expense to bless you in a personal way. 40 years ago when Julie and I both said, "I do!", our friends and family blessed us with many wonderful gifts that they selected for us. We had nothing to do with the choosing. If we ended up with two toasters or three coffee makers, so be it. Not so today—friends and family now register at certain stores where a list of items is provided for them to purchase at the choosing of the bride and groom. It is a gift of personal choice, not of the giver but of the receiver. But not so with God—He has full and undisputed control of choice regarding the dispensing of His gifts to His leaders. He knows better than anyone, including ourselves what gifts to give us.

"It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have" 1 Corinthians 12:11

We don't choose our spiritual gift—nor do we choose our leadership position—God chooses for us and in our free will, we either accept or reject His choosing. Paul clearly instructed to the Corinthian church who excelled in gifts, God's ordained plan and predominance over the leadership structuring for His Church.

"First, God chose some people to be apostles and prophets and teachers for the church. But He also chose some to work miracles or heal the sick or help others or be leaders..." 1Corinthians 12:28

WE ALL HAVE OUR PLACE IN THE BODY

Any church would function exponentially if each leader recognized where God has placed them and then begin to grow there and be used by the Lord. For that to happen, two things are required—*time* and *opportunity*. Leadership gifts are developed over time and through use—that's why a leader should never be discouraged or compare himself or herself with other leaders in God's house. Consider the amount of *time* that is required for leaders to come into a necessary state of spiritual maturity with their giftings fully activated. As a young man, newly saved, I recognized that the call of God was upon my life to be a preacher.

One day, I zealously approached one of my pastors to express with great zeal that it was time to launch out into full-time ministry. Zeal is great when accompanied with wisdom and experience, which only is developed through the course of time—year after year after year. Leonard Ravenhill stated in one of his sermons that it takes God 20 years to make a preacher. This is true and how I didn't want to hear that in my early years of being a "know-it-all". My pastor all but ignored me, knowing that I was far from ready for full-time ministry. That was a painful lesson, but today, I'm thankful for the 20 plus 20 years of prep work by the Holy Ghost. In the same way it takes time for the harvest to fully mature into ripeness, so it is with the spiritual leader. There are no "overnight" methods or short cuts when it comes to preparation and operation of spiritual gifts.

And then let's consider the *use* of the gift. Freedom Life Church International has a vision statement that reads, "*Equipping believers to rise up and fulfill their God-given destiny!*" The key word is "*equipping*"—in other words, intentionally giving opportunity for the gift to be used. We strive to fulfill this vision with every member of our church family that desires to use their spiritual gift, even if it means "baby steps" for some, and giant leaps for others. It is the responsibility of our church leadership to recognize and discern the potential of ministry in every one of our members and equip with hands-on opportunity to exercise that gift. I've been accused by some of our members that I like to stretch them out of their comfort-zone, to which I reply, "guilty!" I've been on the stretching end and it works, because the Holy Spirit is having His way.

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." 1Corinthians 12:18 In what way does this verse apply to your church?

THREE PURPOSES FOR OUR LEADERSHIP GIFTS-

1. TO BE ESTABLISHED - "*I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be established.*" Romans 1:11

It is the role of the pastor and elders before the congregation to impart gifts to the body by the laying on of hands and prayer which establishes church ministry.

2. TO BE EFFECTIVE- "*I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.*" Ephesians 3:7

The goal of every church leader must be Spirit empowered effectiveness in their anointed calling and gifting within the church body and outside of the church body. Anything short of this will not endure God’s consuming fire and will be exposed as a ministry built on wood, hay and stubble, fed by emotional hype, carnal methods and people pleasing messages. True leadership will display genuine effectiveness.

3. TO BE EDIFIED- *“Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.”* 1 Corinthians 14:12

This is the most important purpose of all. When we activate and effectively use our leadership gifts in faith, the church will be strengthened. The gifts of faith, tongues, prophecy, intercession, preaching, teaching, exhortation, administration and many others by the Holy Spirit will keep the local church united, focused and strong.

The great Apostle Paul, who planted churches all throughout Asia, raised the dead back to life, healed the sick, cast out devils, wrote at least 13 books of the New Testament, and visited the third heaven, made this humble claim in 1 Corinthians 15:10, *“By the grace of God, I am what I am.”* For 2000 years, the universal church of every denomination has been edified by his life, his prayers and his teaching. All through God’s grace and the gifts of the Spirit! We dare not claim any great gift or ability or talent—it has been entrusted to us by grace! And if God gives the gift, He will surely give the ability to utilize it. The following is a powerful passage penned by Paul through the Holy Spirit, breaking down the individual gifts that are imparted to not only the leadership of the church, but to all who will be faithful to activate and use the gift in its appointed place and time.

“In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.” Romans 12:6-8

As we close this lesson, consider what is the one predominant gift that the Holy Spirit has distributed to you—and in what way are you using it.
