

Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts

By Scott Sauls

Many Christians agonize over the question, “What is God’s will for my life—what is it, exactly, that God wants me *TO DO*?” We have made the answer to this question very complex—as if there were some major *mystery* that God is hiding from us, that we must unpack and discover. Biblically, however, we like the way St. Augustine answered the question. Essentially, his take was that if you want to do God’s will, then do two things, in this order: First, endeavor to love and obey God in *whatever* you are doing, and second, as you love and obey God—*do whatever you want*.

These things being said, let’s take a look at some principles derived from Romans 12:1-8¹, a passage that focuses specifically on the fact that God, in his mercy, gives a unique role to each individual in the service of his church. Each person is uniquely wired with *Spiritual gifts*, meant to be used to honor God and strengthen people and the church.

- **The *motivation for serving*.** There are two motivation-systems from which people will approach their service:
 - Religious motivations. Religious people tend to be motivated primarily, if not exclusively, out of a sense of “should” or duty. God is viewed as a “boss” of sorts, who will reward those who serve well and effectively, and punish those who don’t. Without dwelling too much on this motivation (it is *not* the one we encourage!), it is appropriate to state the inevitable outcome for those who “do good” and serve simply because they feel the *should*. First, there will be *fatigue*. If you operate like a slave, eventually you will feel like one. A slave does not feel loved by his master—rather, he feels used. As such he grows weary. Second, there will be *anger*. Religious, duty-driven people are usually very angry deep down. The reason is that they view their service as if it were part of a deal. “If I do this for God (people, the church), then I should expect that the favor will be returned.” When the “favors” don’t come, bitterness results in the religious person—he/she feels like a victim.
 - Gospel motivations. This is the only motivation that will bring joy to your serving (see Rom 12:1-2!). We “offer our bodies” to God and to others, not from a sense of slavish duty but “in view of God’s *mercy*.” If someone loves us, *really* loves us, we will *want* to do everything in our power to love and bless them in return. To respond to God’s mercy is like being a man in love—when he notices his beloved enjoying a U2 song on the radio, he just can’t help himself so he goes out and buys her the entire U2 collection. She savors a glass of merlot at dinner, and he can’t help but buy her a case of the stuff the next day. THE POINT: When our hearts are captured by something, we will give ourselves—our time, our service, our praise, our money—to him/her *effortlessly*. If we are unmotivated to serve God by serving people/the church, we haven’t grasped his mercy fully.
- **The *attitude for serving*.** Scripture calls both for a humble assessment of self, and a gracious assessment of others. That is:
 - You are not superior. Rom 12:3 reminds us to think of ourselves with “sober judgment.” In other words, if God has made us really good at something, we accept it as a sweet gift from him and don’t let it go to our heads. We are not to think of ourselves “more highly than (we) ought,” it says. The primary way this happens in churches is through *gift projection*—believing that if I am gifted/passionate about a certain area of service, then everyone else should be as well. In gift projection, an evangelist looks down on a helps person, a helps person looks down on a teacher, and so on. Scripturally, however, we are encouraged to see ourselves as *interdependent* with other fellow Christians, whose gifts aren’t rivals but complements to ours.
 - You are not inferior. Conversely, we are also to beware of our tendency to think too *little* of ourselves. All of us in various ways will struggle with self-comparison, thinking that others are better or stronger or more effective Christians because they have gifts that stand out, and we do not. But, as Martin Luther once said, the humblest serving maid’s service has as much value as that of the prince of all preachers. Why? Because her gifts, like the preacher’s, are unique gifts from God, given to serve a very valuable purpose in the overall picture of the “Big Story” of redemption. Further, God delights in our weakest efforts, just like a loving dad delights in his 3-year-old’s efforts to clean up spilled oatmeal. Even though the child makes a bigger mess trying to clean up the mess (!), the father *loves* the motivation beneath it.
- **The *practice of serving*.** Mercy calls us not to passivity but to loving action (Rom 12:3-8). This essentially means 2 things:
 - Do whatever you need to do to figure out how God has wired you. There are many tools and resources for this. Read carefully through the following spiritual gifts document from Mars Hill Church. Certain gifts may stand out as ones that you possess. In addition, ask yourself questions such as (1) *What problems do you notice most easily?* Does it kill you when you see that people are lonely and hurting? Does disorganization drive you nuts? Inaccurate theology? Lame music? Etc. While your concerns should never be used as an excuse to complain and grumble, they just may be a call to action for you—God’s subtle way of nudging you to become part of the solution (2) *What are you good at?* If you can’t assess yourself in this way, ask people who know you what they think. Take a Spiritual gifts assessment. The principle is...God does not want anyone serving in areas where they are not gifted—no square pegs in round holes! Rather, he wants us to identify our giftings so we will be effective in our particular role of service to the church and the world (3) *What do you enjoy?* Ever see Chariots of Fire where Eric Liddell declares, “When I run, I feel God’s pleasure”? This is Romans 12 personified! God’s intention is that when we serve, there be a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment—participation in a mission and purpose that is larger than ourselves, in a Story that we are part of.
 - Use your gifts with gusto. Find a venue in which to serve God, people and the church. Rom 12:3 reminds us that the call to serve is for “everyone,” not just the staff, the elders, the house group leaders, etc. With this view, it is the members of the congregation that are the true “ministers”—the staff, pastors and leadership are merely there (in their unique role of service) to *facilitate* service among all members of the family of God. Don’t devalue your ability to make a significant contribution—in faith believe that God assigns great value to your service, regardless of how seemingly small or large your role might end up being. Ephesians 2:10 is promising—it says that every Christ-follower is God’s “workmanship” (literally, “poem”). You are his work of art, whom he intends to put on display to show his creative genius to the world in which you live. Serve well, and feel his pleasure!

¹ Other spiritual gifts passages include 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-28; 1 Peter 4:10-11; and Ephesians 4:7-16.

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift(s)

Adapted from "The Gospel Class" at Mars Hill Church (Seattle, WA)

HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)

- First, you should seek the counsel of church leaders and mature Christians with wisdom (Acts 13:1-4, I Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).
- Second, you should begin serving in various areas to discover what seems like a good fit for you (Romans 12:1, Isaiah 6:8).
- Third, you should think through your areas of burden and joy because those may be areas that God is leading you for a ministry opportunity.
- Fourth, you should seek to recall in what ways God is already using you to bear fruit.
- Fifth, though serving the Lord can always be tiring you should expect to have a sense of accomplishment, energy, and enthusiasm if you are serving in your area of gifting.

ADMINISTRATION

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 1:17

Defined: The gift of administration is the God-given ability to give direction and to make decisions on behalf of others that result in efficient operation and accomplishment of goals. Often the mark of an administrator is the ability to accomplish things in a "fitting and orderly way" (I Cor. 14:40).

General makeup: Administrators often have a keen eye for detail. They may also possess the natural talents of organization, observing and using details, problem solving, and reasoning.

Illustrated Biblically: Joseph, Jethro, Titus (Titus 1:5)

Illustrated Historically: William Carey was born in England in 1761 and served as a pastor before going to the mission field where he served the Lord for 41 years preaching the Gospel and translating the Scriptures. Carey served at a time when there was some indifference and even hostility to missionary effort. But, his strategic plan for missions titled Enquiry clearly laid out a means by which the world could be evangelized. In this masterpiece on missions, Carey answered arguments, surveyed the history of missions from apostolic times, surveyed the entire known world as to countries, size, population and religions, and dealt with the practical application of how to reach the world for Christ!

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you find it easy to make decisions? 2. When you give advice to someone, do you seem to emphasize more in the area of "how" it should be done rather than "why"? 3. Do you find yourself frequently thinking of decisions that need to be made in giving overall direction to a group or organization? 4. Do you like to oversee the distribution of resources? 5. Are you organized and efficient?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that you have to make decisions quickly and decisively. Remember to seek wise counsel before making major decisions.

APOSTLESHIP

Place in Scripture: I Co. 12:28; Eph. 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Hebrews 3:1

Defined: An apostle is someone who has a mixture of gifts that enables him or her to proclaim the Gospel with boldness and plant new churches (Acts 13:3-4). This gift also includes the capacity to minister cross-culturally (Acts 10:34-35, Eph. 3:7-8).

General makeup: These people often have a number of gifts, such as; evangelism, teaching, leadership, faith, and exhortation and are motivated by difficult new tasks.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (see Acts 14:21-28, Acts 13-28 and many of the epistles trace Paul's numerous missionary/church planting journeys).

Illustrated Historically: Hudson Taylor. He did not have a theological degree. He was physically small, weak and frail. He was young, merely 19 when he began his ministry. He gave up a well-paying and respected career as a physician in England to live in poverty, obscurity and controversy in China. He refused to let money get in the way of ministry, to the point of even refusing to take an offering at meetings and funding ministry out of his own pocket. He worked at a feverish pace, at one point preaching in 58 Chinese cities in 25 days, 51 of which had never been visited by a Protestant missionary. Despite his critics, he adopted the clothing and cultural styles of China. Today, every Christian in China can trace their spiritual roots back to the efforts of Hudson Taylor.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you meet the biblical qualifications to be an elder? 2. Can you start a ministry from nothing by raising such things as leaders, money, etc.? 3. Are you burdened for lost people? 4. Do you love the church? 5. Are you able to work well in chaos and uncertainty? 6. Are you unashamed of the Gospel? 7. Are you a gifted leader that people naturally follow?

Dangers to be aware of: The failure rate among church planters is staggering and it is imperative that you be assessed, trained, and sent by mature and experienced church planters.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:10

Defined: The spiritual gift of discernment is the ability to give an immediate evaluation of what was spoken and the person who said it, as to whether it is of God or Satan.

General makeup: This person will have a solid understanding of God's Word and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. They easily detect insincerity and wrong motives in others. They tend to be perceptive, sensitive to moral issues, and personally steadfast.

Illustrated Biblically: John (I Jn 4:1), Paul (I Corinthians 14:29)

Do you have this gift?: 1. Have you felt a special responsibility to protect the truth of God's Word by exposing that which is wrong? 2. Have you often made an evaluation of someone or something that was said that others did not see, but yet proved to be correct? 3. Do you sense often that what is being said is produced by the devil rather than God, and has your judgment been correct?

Dangers to be aware of: Base your feelings on God's Word. Remember to have the courage to speak up when you know something is wrong. Remember to judge to correct and not to condemn.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: 2 Corinthians 2:16-17

Defined: The gift of encouragement involves motivating, encouraging, and consoling others so they mature in their walk with Christ.

General makeup: Christians with this gift have unusual sensitivity for and are attracted to those who are discouraged or struggling. People tend to pursue them for counsel. These people also tend to have a high degree of patience and optimism. They may also have the talent of singular relationships and prefer working with an individual or small group.

Illustrated Biblically: Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement." He encouraged Paul (Acts 9:27) and John Mark (Acts 15:39).

Illustrated Historically: The Great Reformer Martin Luther sought to purify the church and in doing so split the church into Catholicism and Protestantism. Involved in continual opposition and controversies, his life was in constant danger, his friends and church rejected and opposed him. As a result Luther struggled mightily with deep depression. The ill health of his final ten years further contributed to his depression. His wife, Katherine, was a gifted encourager who strengthened, supported and counseled her husband as he spearheaded the Reformation. Without her gift of encouragement it is doubtful whether Luther would have had the strength and will to continue pressing forward with his calling from God.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do people seek you out for advice and encouragement? 2. Do you enjoy walking with someone through difficulties? 3. Are you attracted to those who are hurting and needy? 4. Do you enjoy working closely with people who have personal and emotional problems? 5. Would you rather speak personally with someone about their problems rather than sending them to someone else for help? 6. Do you find it easy to express joy in the presence of those who are suffering?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to give biblical answers and solutions. Remember not to take on more needy people than you can handle.

EVANGELISM

Place in Scripture: Eph. 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 19:10

Defined: The gift of evangelism is the ability and desire to boldly and clearly communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; I Co. 15:1-4).

General makeup: Evangelists often care passionately about lost people and have a strong desire to see them come to faith. They feel compassion for the lost and seek to earnestly understand their questions and doubts. An evangelist often prefers being with people in the world rather than in meetings, an office or dealing with paperwork.

Illustrated Biblically: Philip (Acts 21:8), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5).

Illustrated Historically: George Whitefield lived from 1714-1770. About 80 percent of all American colonists heard him preach at least once. He would travel from town to town on horseback to preach the Gospel, often more than a dozen times a week. During his lifetime, Whitefield preached at least 18,000 times. He addressed perhaps 10,000,000 hearers in person, before modern media! God also gave him the natural talent of a strong voice, he could be heard by up to 30,000 at one time without a microphone. Whitefield once said, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them."

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy being with non-Christians and sharing the Gospel? 2. Are you able to effectively communicate to non-Christians? 3. Does the conversion of a soul bring you profound joy? 4. Do you feel frustrated when you have not shared your faith for a long time? 5. Do you enjoy teaching others how to share their faith? 6. Do you find it easy to direct a conversation toward the topic of Jesus Christ? 7. Have you been fruitful in witnessing and seeing people become Christians?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that you'll want to see people not only connected to Jesus but also to the local church where they can be trained and grow. Remember to spend time with non-believers and bring other Christians along so that you can train them.

FAITH

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of faith is the ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it even though it seems impossible to most people.

General makeup: Those with the gift of faith have a strong sense that God is going to accomplish something important through them or their ministry whether others see it as significant or not. They trust God in difficult, even impossible situations, when others are ready to give up. These people are often visionaries who dream big dream, pray big prayers and attempt big things for the Savior.

Illustrated Biblically: Caleb & Joshua who led Israel in conquering and possessing the Promised land. Nehemiah who got permission from a pagan king to rebuild Jerusalem. The poor widow who gave practically all she had to God (Luke 21:2-4). Stephen was a "man full of faith" (Acts 6:5). See especially Hebrews 11.

Illustrated Historically: George Mueller (1805-1895) said, "God delights to increase the faith of his children." Mueller was a man who lived by faith and prayer alone. Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist motivated Mueller to open the United Kingdoms first orphanage for orphaned boys and girls. He began without finances and throughout his life never asked anyone for financial support. His first orphanage began with 30 children. He would often pray with the children before meals, trusting God to somehow bring the meal they were to eat within a few minutes. Over his lifetime he cared for over 10,000 orphans and

printed Bibles and books, supported over 130 missionaries, and opened a Bible college. He taught in over 30 countries on faith and prayer and died in poverty having never kept anything for himself over the course of his life.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you view obstacles as opportunities? 2. Do you trust God for the impossible? 3. Do you have the ability to believe God for things other believers do not? 4. Do you find yourself feeling opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done or accomplished? 5. Do you find other believers coming to you when they face a seemingly overwhelming trial or task? 6. Have you seen God accomplish things in your life that others said could not be done but which you believed He could do? 7. Do you have an effective prayer ministry with many wonderful answers to prayers that were impossible from the human point of view?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to merely look at the problems and trials in life. Remember not to worry. Remember to pray with others who have the gift of faith.

GIVING/GENEROSITY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 7:7-12, 20:28

Defined: The gift of giving is the ability to give eagerly, wisely, generously, and sacrificially to meet the needs of others.

General makeup: Regardless of the amount, people with this gift genuinely view their treasures, talents, and time as on loan from God, and not their own. They are often moved to meet the needs of others. They enjoy giving of themselves and what they have. Even if they do not possess the resources to help, they earnestly pray for those needs to be met.

Illustrated Biblically: Tabitha (Acts 9:36).

Illustrated Historically: Throughout the history of the church, people with this gift are rarely seen. They tend to operate with great humility and prefer to do their work in quiet and secret by funding and supporting God's works with their monies and other resources.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you tend to see the needs of others more than other people you know? 2. Do you enjoy giving your time, talent and treasure to others? 3. Do you see giving to a worthwhile project as an exciting honor and privilege? 4. When you give some money to someone, do you find that you did not expect any appreciation in return? 5. Do you sense a great deal of joy in giving? 6. Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to give your money in response to needs?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to give out of pure motives with joy.

HELPS

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 7:16

Defined: The gift of helps is the remarkable ability to work alongside another and help that person complete the task God has given them.

General makeup: These people tend to demonstrate a servant attitude, loyalty, attention to detail, and responsiveness to the initiatives of others. They function well in positions of detail and assistant leadership. People with this gift often prefer to work behind the scenes and are encouraged to see other people succeed because of their help.

Illustrated Biblically: Epaphroditus Ex. 18:22, Nu. 11:17, I Tim. 6:2, Acts 20:35, Acts 6:1-3, 9:36

Illustrated Historically: Billy Graham has preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history—over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories—through various meetings, including Mission World and Global Mission. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film, and webcasts. Since the early days of his ministry a faithful team of helpers with gifts varying from music to administration have tirelessly labored behind the scenes to help Billy Graham in his very fruitful evangelistic ministry. Without their help, he could have not had the impact that God has given him.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy helping others become more effective in their work? 2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes? 3. When someone is doing a job poorly is your first instinct to help them, or criticize? 4. Do you prefer to work in a supportive rather than leadership capacity? 5. When you hear of someone with needs do you offer your services if possible? 6. Do you feel a burden to relieve others of their tasks so they are free to do their most important work? 7. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no? 8. Do you look for opportunities to serve others? 9. Are you humble?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to be afraid of criticism from others. Remember not to take on more work than you are able to accomplish. Remember to serve God first and not unquestionably comply with another person's wishes.

HOSPITALITY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:13

Defined: The spiritual gift of hospitality is the ability to entertain guests in your home with great joy and effectiveness.

General makeup: These people tend to have an "open home" where others are welcome to visit. This gift is often combined with the natural talent of cooking and provides a natural ministry in a loving home environment.

Illustrated Biblically: It is a qualification of the bishop I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8

Illustrated Historically: In the turbulent social chaos of the 1960's and 70's, God raised up a loving couple to address a lost and rebellious generation with the truth of Jesus Christ. Francis Schaeffer was a widely known apologist, theologian and evangelist. What is not as widely known, though, is the impact his wife had on his ministry. As their renowned pupil Os Guinness said, "Mrs. Schaeffer is the secret of Schaeffer." Together, they built an international ministry in the Swiss Alps called L'Abri, which means shelter. With modest beginnings, their ministry grew quickly as lost university students, eastern mystics, rebellious church kids, hippies and adherents to other faiths from around the world came to visit L'Abri. Francis would teach, debate and give answers for the faith. Edith illustrated it with a life of hospitable service. Over a hundred students would live with them at a time. Edith provided clean bedding, home cooked meals, fresh flowers, neat decor, paintings, sculptures, sketchings, music, endless hot cookies and artful table settings. She even published a book titled "The Hidden Art of Homemaking" to teach others in hospitality.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy having people in your home? 2. Do you enjoy serving behind the scenes? 3. Is your home the kind that most people feel comfortable in and drop by to visit unannounced? 4. Do feel that something is really

missing in your life when you cannot have guests into your home? 5. When you think of your home do you view it from the perspective of guests who will visit? 6. Do you consider your home as a place of ministry? 7. Do you like to connect people together for friendships?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to maintain some closed time for your immediate family's needs. Remember to always check your motives and maintain a good attitude.

LEADERSHIP

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 4:19, 2 Corinthians 2:14

Defined: The spiritual gift of leadership is found in people who have a clear, significant vision from God and are able to communicate it publicly or privately in such a way that they influence others to pursue that vision.

General makeup: These people tend to gravitate toward the "point position" in a ministry. Others tend to have trust and confidence in their abilities. They best serve others by leading them. They tend to operate with a strong sense of destiny.

Illustrated Biblically: Examples abound, including Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Josiah, Paul, Peter, James etc.

Illustrated Historically: The ministry of The Navigators began in the 1930's through the call of God to a young Californian, Dawson Trotman. He began to teach high school students and local Sunday school classes. Then in 1933, he and his friends began to extend their work among sailors in the U.S. Navy. Many hours were spent with individual sailors in Bible study, Scripture memorization and prayer with an emphasis on each teaching another what he had learned. By the end of World War II, thousands of men on ships and bases around the world were learning the principles of spiritual multiplication. At the same time, the high school students whose lives Dawson had touched went on to reach out to others around them in Southern California. Today, nearly seventy years later, they minister not only in the military and with students on college campuses, but in the marketplace with businessmen and women, among homemakers, ethnic groups, international students, in countries around the world—wherever there are people who need Christ.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do others have confidence in your ability to lead? 2. Do you enjoy being the "final voice" or the one with the overall responsibility for the direction and success of a group or organization? 3. When a difficult situation arises, do others look to you for input and leadership? 4. Do you usually take leadership in a group where none exists? 5. Do you find leadership enjoyable rather than frustrating and difficult? 6. Do others look at you to make the major decisions for a group or organization?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to learn to train other leaders and delegate responsibility and ownership to them. Remember to avoid being placed in a position that requires devotion to details and the implementation of particulars. Remember that leadership is service and requires humility.

MERCY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Defined: The gift of mercy is the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion and sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and to provide them with the necessary help and support to see them through these times.

General makeup: They have the ability to "walk in another's shoes" and to feel the pain and burdens they carry. They desire to make a difference in the lives of hurting people for Christ without being judgmental. They run the risk of being hurt and used. They may have a difficult time evaluating the intentions of others.

Illustrated Biblically: Dorcas "was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36). The good Samaritan Lk. 10:30-37

Illustrated Historically: Amy Carmichael was a missionary of the Dohnavur Fellowship with a compassionate heart for those in need. In India she witnessed many "child widows:" young girls who grew up to be temple prostitutes. In the 20th century, Amy fought this practice by weaning many girls out of this situation and into the Christian community. She elevated the status of women, showing them that Jesus loved and had compassion for them.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy visiting people who are sick or disabled? 2. Do you often think of ways to minister to those who are suffering physically? 3. Do you sense a great deal of compassion for people having personal and emotional problems? 4. Would you enjoy a regular ministry to those who are suffering physically? 5. Do you find that when visiting those who are suffering physically that it brings you joy rather than depressing you?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to be honest with people in confronting sin. Remember to balance God's mercy with his justice.

PASTOR/TEACHER

Place in Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: I Peter 5:1-4

Defined: The gift of pastor-teacher is associated with the office of elder (Acts 20:17,28, I Peter 5:2) and the qualifications of bishop (Acts 20:17,28, I Peter 5:1-4, Titus 1:5-9). The pastor-teacher shepherds a local flock (church) and oversees its growth by teaching the Word of God.

General makeup: The pastor-teacher must have a love for both studying God's Word and caring for God's people. They find great joy in the spiritual growth of others by equipping them to do ministry.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (Acts 20:17-35)

Illustrated Historically: Puritan Richard Baxter lived from 1615 to 1691. He entered vocational ministry at the age of 23 without any formal education. He pastored in a small English town of 2000 people. He took these "ignorant, rude and reveling people" and turned them into a worshipping church of 1000 people. He viewed teaching as his primary task and focused on the basics of the Christian faith. Each year he would personally visit the homes of each member of his congregation and did a great amount of counseling. He held a weekly pastor's forum for discussion and prayer in which he encouraged and trained numerous pastors. His gifted training of other pastors culminated in his classic book, *The Reformed Pastor*, which is one of his 200 writings.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you diligently study God's Word? 2. Do you desire to shepherd God's people? 3. Can you teach? 4. Are you qualified to be an elder? 5. Do you enjoy developing other leaders? 6. Is your family a good model for the church? 7. Do you enjoy mentoring others?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to train others to do the work of serving, rather than doing it all yourself.

PROPHECY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 12:10, 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Jesus is the Word of God through whom the Father speaks (John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3)

Defined: A prophet has a twofold ministry. First, they foretell the future (Jer. 35:15a). This function ended when the church was built and the Bible was completed (Eph. 2:20). Second, a prophet "forth-tells" God's Word, and this aspect of the prophet continues today (Jer. 35:15b-19). A prophet has the ability to recognize sinful behavior and a driving compulsion to confront individuals, groups, and/or cultures by proclaiming God's Word without compromise. In our present day, the prophet is called a preacher.

General makeup: They will easily spot compromise, sin, & error, and desire immediate change and action for Christ. They tend to be bold, sensitive to sin, and place a very high value on biblical behavior.

Illustrated Biblically: John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-11), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:27-35), Paul (Acts 28:30-31; 2 Timothy 4:2), Agabus (Acts 21:10-11).

Illustrated Historically: Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) is one of the greatest preachers in the history of the church. The combination of his clear voice, his mastery of language, his sure grasp of Scripture and a deep love for Christ produced some of the finest preaching of any age. Spurgeon was converted at age 16 and entered his first pastorate at age 17. At age 19 he was called to a prominent church which seated 1,200, but had deteriorated to 200 members. He pastored that church for 38 years, growing the congregation to over 6,000 and then moving to a new facility which grew to over 20,000 members. At age 26 he preached from John Calvin's pulpit in the Geneva cathedral. He often preached ten times a week. His funeral lasted for five days and at least 100,000 people attended.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you delight in the Word of God? 2. When you see sin or errors do you feel compelled to confront them? 3. Do you tend to see more evil, sin and error than others? 4. Are you capable of detecting and refuting false teachings? 5. Are you bold for Christ? 6. Do you love people and seek their best in Christ?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that not all issues are not equally important and that you must stick closely to the gracious Gospel of Jesus at all times. Remember not to neglect the love of God as you confront others. Remember not to become too critical and judgmental.

SERVING

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 20:28

Defined: The gift involves the capacity to recognize and joyfully provide assistance in meeting practical needs, thus making life a little easier for others, particularly those who cannot help themselves.

General makeup: These people generally like to work behind the scenes. They also tend to find joy in helping alleviate the burdens and responsibilities of others. This gift is usually accompanied with an attitude of humility and sacrifice, as well as an ability to perceive the needs of others.

Illustrated Biblically: Ex. 18:22, Nu. 11:17, Romans 16:1-2, Acts 20:35, I Tim. 6:2

Illustrated Historically: Souls in search of final blessing often came to the temple of a powerful Hindu goddess in Calcutta. But nearby, many discovered another source of solace: a small woman, wrinkled and bent, a willing companion to the dying. She tenderly cared for the abandoned and the sick, washing their wounds, soothing their sores, preparing them for death. "They must feel wanted, loved," Mother Teresa said. "They are Jesus for me." "People think we are social workers," she once told one of her spiritual advisers, Father Edward Le Joly. "We are not. We serve Jesus. I serve Jesus 24 hours a day." She was not some saintly relic but a willing servant of her God: "I am like a little pencil in [God's] hand. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used." Today some 4,000 sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, clad in white saris with blue borders, pursue her rigorous path, along with 450 brothers in a separate men's order. Mother Teresa created a network of 569 missions spread across 120 nations that operate workshops for the unemployed, food centers, orphanages, leprosariums, and refuges for the insane, retarded and aged.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Are you drawn to those in need? 2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes? 3. Are you burdened to relieve the needs of others? 4. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no? 5. Do you look for opportunities to serve others?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to learn to say no when you need to. Remember to learn to receive the service of others.

TEACHING

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7, I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: John 3:2, 13:14

Defined: The gift of teaching is the God-given ability to understand and communicate biblical truth in a clear and relevant manner so that there is understanding and practical application.

General makeup: Learning, researching, communicating, and illustrating truth are qualities that an individual will manifest when exercising the gift of teaching. These people enjoy studying and learning new information, and find great joy in sharing it with others.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (I Tim 1:6-7, 4:16, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, 3:15-17, 4:2-3), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).

Illustrated Historically: John Calvin (1509-1564) was one of the greatest and most significant teachers in all of history. Converted around age 23, he published his now famous Institutes for the Christian Religion at the age of 26. It was the first most thorough and significant outline of what has come to be known as Calvinistic theology. At age 28, Calvin settled in Geneva and soon established schools with intense academic teaching throughout the city. He later founded a university for more academic instruction. Calvin's passion for teaching has made him the father of modern education in numerous countries, including America. Wherever Calvinism spread, it brought with it schools and teaching. Calvin promoted education for everyone, which was a revolutionary concept that has now become a pattern throughout the world. By the turn of this century his impact was clearly seen worldwide. In pagan nations, such as China and India—with little exposure to the Word of God—the literacy rate ranged from 0 to 20 percent. Roman Catholic countries ranged from 40 to 60 percent. In Protestant

influenced countries, the literacy rate ranged from 94 to 99.9 percent. In America, the first 123 colleges and universities had Christian origins that were directly influenced by the teachings of John Calvin.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy intense studying and researching? 2. Do you enjoy imparting biblical truth to others? 3. Do others come to you for insight into scripture? 4. Do you love to answer questions about the Bible? 5. When you see someone confused in their understanding of the Bible do you feel a responsibility to speak to them about it? 6. Do you enjoy speaking to various sizes of groups about biblical issues you have strong convictions about?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember always to be a student who is learning from others. Remember to teach only what the Bible says without reading your own thoughts into it. Remember not to be thrust into other areas of leadership (leading/apostle) simply because you have a broad understanding of issues and principles underlying a ministry.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 2:47

Defined: The Word of Knowledge is the ability to seek out, remember, synthesize, and make effective use of a variety of information on a number of diverse subjects.

General makeup: These people enjoy studying a wide variety of information and ideas. They also enjoy sharing that information with others, though they are often weak at implementing plans they create.

Illustrated Biblically: Daniel (1:17-20; 2:19-23).

Illustrated Historically: Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was a French scholar whose short 39 years produced brilliant insight into a variety of academic disciplines. Pascal was a master of mathematics, probability science, physics, and philosophy. He created the first working barometer, first working calculator, laid the academic foundation for differential and integral calculus, conducted the basic research on vacuums and hydraulics. He also had a profound personal love for God and published one of the finest apologetic defenses of the Christian faith, the Pensees.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Have you found that you have a good memory that retains and compiles lots of information? 2. Have others frequently pointed out your ability to know and understand God's Word? 3. Do people often come to you with difficult problems and questions from the Bible, seeking your insight? 4. In studying God's Word, have you found that new insights and understandings of difficult subjects are simple for you? 5. Are you able to synthesize information with ease?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to become proud because you know what others do not. Remember to balance your time in study with the sharing of your insights with others.

WORD OF WISDOM

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 2:2-3

Defined: The gift of wisdom is the ability to have very practical insight into people and situations that is not obvious to the average person, combined with an understanding of what to do and how to do it. It is the ability not only to see, but also apply the deep mysteries of God.

General makeup: These people often have an ability to synthesize, the capacity to design, and a love of studying. When they speak people recognize their insight as being from God and specifically needed in that moment.

Illustrated Biblically: Joshua (Dt. 34:9), Solomon (I Kings 3:5-28), Jesus (Lk. 2:40-52, I Cor. 1:24,30).

Illustrated Historically: A.W. Tozer was born into a poor home in the hills of western Pennsylvania. Forced by his home situation to forfeit education, Tozer entered the ministry without either high school or college training. Tozer came to Christ at age fifteen, after hearing a lay preacher speaking at a street meeting at Akron, Ohio. He went on to a lifetime of faithful pastoral ministry. Thousands regularly listened to his preaching on the Moody Bible Institute radio station. He became a very gifted writer and spent a number of years editing the Alliance Witness magazine. Tozer's only education was years of diligent study with a constant prayerful pursuit of the mind of God. For example, when he desired to understand the works of Shakespeare, he read them through on his knees, asking God to help him understand their meaning. He wrote dozens of books, including The Pursuit of God while on his knees. With no teacher but the Holy Spirit and good books, Tozer became a theologian, a scholar, and a master craftsman in the use of the English language. His teaching was intensely practical as he taught how to integrate deep theological truths into practical daily living.

Do you have this gift?: 1. When studying God's Word with others, do you find that you discover the meaning and its implications before others do? 2. Do you seem to understand things about God's Word that other believers with the same background and experience do not seem to know? 3. Are you able to apply deep biblical truth to practical daily living? 4. Does God give you profound insights into people and circumstances?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to maintain a broad exposure to people and ideas. Remember to study Scripture and maintain a biblical worldview. Remember to remain humble. Remember to remain in continual prayer and walk in holiness so that God can speak to you clearly.

