



SPIRITUAL GIFTS



10



How not to Operate Gifts

1

Do not be ignorant of spiritual gifts.

2

Do not overdifferentiate between gifts & talents.

3

Do not be waiting to be pushed.

4

Do not violate Biblical principles.

5

Do not exceed your measure.

6

Do not underestimate less spectacular gifts.

7

Do not function independently.

8

Do not neglect devotional disciplines.

9

Do not merchandise the gifts.

10

Do not overlook the fruits of the Spirit.



How not to Operate Gifts

Introduction

- This is one of the most neglected and at the same time misunderstood subjects.

- The longest passage in the NT on spiritual gifts:

1 Cor 12,13 & 14

This is actually a “corrective” teaching to the Corinthian Church on their abuse of spiritual gifts.

It is from this passage most of the modern teaching on Gifts is developed!

- One may ask —

As far as the disciplines such as prayer and meditation are concerned, such a corrective teaching may be appropriate.

But as far as the “spiritual gifts” are concerned, there’s more of **disuse** than **abuse** —

then why this approach?

Answer: Disuse or non-use has mainly been the reaction to abuse or misuse.

Hence this teaching:

- To correct abuse
- To encourage proper use

How not to Operate Gifts

1. Do not be ignorant of spiritual gifts.

- Interestingly, in Paul's corrective teaching on the subject (1 Cor 12,13,14), the first exhortation:
*"I do not want you to be **ignorant** of spiritual gifts"* (1 Cor 12:1)

The conclusion is — 14:38

*"If anyone wants to remain **ignorant** ..."*

- The Church reads 1 Cor 11 so often; especially, about the Lord's Supper (vv 17-34)
Why do we stop with 1 Cor 11?
Why don't we move on to 1 Cor 12 also?
Again we skip 1 Cor 12 and go on to 1 Cor 13.
Then we skip 1 Cor 14 also! Why this purposeful oversight?
- Some Churches have stopped with Crucifixion —
That's why they keep worshipping the crucifix!
Others have stopped with Resurrection—
They don't move on to Ascension.
That's why no talk on "Spiritual Gifts" ...
Peter: Acts 2:32,33... *being exalted... poured out this*
Paul: Eph 4:7,8 ... *He ascended ... gave gifts ...*
Anticipated in the OT:
David: Psa 68:18 ... *ascended ... gave gifts ...*

■ What is a Spiritual Gift?

It's a Spirit-given ability for Christian service.

You don't need gifts if you just want to go to Heaven.

But you do need them if you want to take others there!

■ There are 5 lists of Gifts in the NT —

Mk 16:17,18 ... *Worldwide* Evangelism

Rom 12:6-8 ... Christians in *Rome*: Political capital

1 Cor 12:7-10,28 ... *Corinth*: A philosophical
and immoral city

Eph 4:11 ... *Ephesus*: An idolatrous and wealthy city

1 Pet 4:10,11 ... Pilgrims all over the *world*

Yes, gifts are necessary for any Church in any place!

■ There are atleast 3 things about Gifts
that we must not be ignorant of —

a) Gifts are for TODAY.

Some quote 1 Cor 13:8-10 and argue
that the Gifts have ceased!

— We will be made "*perfect*" only at the
Second Coming of Christ.

— If prophesying and tongues have ceased,
what about "*knowledge*" (v8)?

Are we void of any knowledge today ???

This passage refers only to II Coming —

"face to face" (v12)

This interpretation fits with what Paul wrote
at the beginning of this letter —

1 Cor 1:7,8 ... *short in no gift ... waiting for... Christ*

Gifts are for us who are living in the *last days*

(Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:16-18)

b) Gifts are for EVERYONE.

— This truth is repeated so often ...

Eph 4:7 ... *“to each one of us”*

1 Cor 12:7,11 ... *“to each one”*

1 Pet 4:10 ... *“each one”*

— The clergy-laity division is unscriptural:

OT: Only Levites were priests (Num 18:6,7)

NT: All believers are priests (1 Pet 2:5,9)

Last days: *“on **all** flesh”* (Acts 2:17)

But today's Church = Cricket field:

13 men on the field desperately in need of rest;

1000s sitting on the stands desperately

in need of exercise!

Result: 1 Sam 13:19,20 ... *No blacksmiths in Israel*

:22 ... *Leaders had swords; people had none*

OT: Analogy: Flock of God, Army of God,

Vineyard of the Lord

NT: Exclusive analogy: BODY of Christ —

No non-functional organ!

eg) Rom 12:4,5 ... *many members ... one body*

The very next verse: *“having then **gifts** ... use them”*

c) Gifts are NUMEROUS.

eg) Rom 12 ... 7 gifts

1 Cor 12 ... 9 gifts in vv 7-10

8 gifts in v28

Eph 4 ... 5 gifts

There are overlaps and repetitions.

Some have counted 19!

It's not just 9 or 90!

God is able to give us *exceedingly abundantly **above***
all that we ask or think! (Eph 3:20)

■ **Conclusion**

Having become aware of the existence of spiritual gifts,

we are to a) Desire them (1 Cor 14:1)

b) Ask for them (Lk 11:13)

Ignorance will lead to impotence!

How not to Operate Gifts

2. Do not overdifferentiate between gifts & talents.

■ The difference:

- Talent = a natural ability, aptitude

eg) a talented teacher
a talented musician

This may be inherited even at birth —
sometimes from parents!

We talk about a family of teachers ...

family of musicians ...

This is called “family trait.”

- Skill = the ability one develops by training and practice

eg) a skilled mason
a skilled surgeon

- Spiritual gift, on the other hand,
is what is generally received at Rebirth.

It can be totally independent of talent or skill.

Natural talents can be called as Birthday Gifts;

Spiritual Gifts can be called as Rebirthday Gifts!

- Because there can be overlaps and mergers,
we must not overdifferentiate between one another.

Hairsplitting definitions or fighting over the labels
must be avoided.

What's important is “functioning.”

- Let's see from the Scriptures why we must not overdifferentiate between gifts and talents —
 - Moses: Skill developed in Egypt before he was 40 (Acts 7:22)
 God-given wisdom after he became 40 (Ex 4:12)
 (Both worked together in his ministry.)
 - David: Skilled in slinging as a shepherd boy.
 This was used by God to fell Goliath
 (1 Sam 17:40,48,49)
 - David was a musician & song-composer
 1 Sam 16:18; 2 Sam 23:1,2 ... *"Sweet" Psalmist!*
 Did not Solomon inherit it,
 besides receiving wisdom from God? 1 Ki 4:32
 — music as family trait: Gen 4:21
 - *"Sons of the Prophets"*
 — may be, prophets in the making
 under the training of Prophet "Elisha" —
 2 Ki 6:1 *"School" (?) of the Prophets*
 - Daniel & Co.
 Skill & training (Dan 1:4)
 ... *wisdom ... language ... literature ...*
 Gifting (Dan 1:17) ... *God gave them knowledge ...*
 - Jesus *"grew"* in wisdom (Lk 2:46,52)
 Jesus *"gifted"* with wisdom (Isa 11:1,2)
 ... *The Spirit upon Him ...*
 - Parable of Talents:
 This was to teach about the *"Kingdom of God"* (Mt 25:14)
 Talents distributed *"according to ability"* (v15)

Lesson: When God distributes gifts,
He does take into account what we are capable of !

- Paul: Childhood training *under Gamaliel* (Acts 5:34; 22:3)

Then *Revelation*: Gal 1:11,12

His training was handy

when he had to write so many Epistles.

- Apollos: Before becoming a Christian

Acts 18:24,25 ... *“only the Baptism of John”*

A bold and eloquent orator

After understanding the NT Grace —

Acts 18:26-28 ... *more accurately ... greatly helped*

Yes, natural talents can become a channel

for the exercise of spiritual gifts!

- My personal testimony —

Leadership: Class Pupil Leader

NCC Rank holder

Writing: School magazines

Teaching: Mummy a school teacher

God’s gifting came upon all these

when I dedicated them to God at Rebirth.

- God gives gifts and talents

not only as a Father to His children

but also as the Creator to men & women created by Him!

Just because something is a natural talent,

don’t despise it or undermine it!

Even if it is a natural talent, who gives it?

1 Cor 4:7 ... *“who makes you to differ?”*

A Potter's desire to make whatever he wants out of the clay—

Rom 9:21 ... *vessel ... honour ... dishonour ...*

Thank God

— for skilled surgeons performing complicated
surgeries to save lives

— for distinguished scientists making discoveries
for the good of mankind!

Not all of them are Christians!

But *every good and perfect gift is from Above* —
(Js 1:17)

How not to Operate Gifts

3. Do not be waiting to be pushed.

- Let's us look at the examples of two men who hesitated to move forward:
 - a) Moses Ex 4:10-12 ... *slow of speech and tongue ...*
Physical handicap
How God overruled it!
 - b) Gideon Judg 6:11-15
v11 ... just doing farmwork
v13...discouraging situation— oppressed by Midianites
v15 ... poor family background
God's answer: *Go in **this might** of yours!* (v14)
- Example of two men who volunteered:
 - a) David 1 Sam 17:26,32 ... *I will go and fight ...*
What David did was in accordance with the prophecy in Psa 110:1-3
... enemies ... volunteers ... power ... youth ...
 - b) Peter Mt 14:25-29 ... *walked on water*
We preach more on Peter sinking in water than walking on water!
He was better than the eleven!
It's better to be emotional than to be immotional!
- Most of us suffer from an inferiority complex —
We think we are useless
because we are not highly talented or gifted.

Look at the Biblical correction —

Eccl 9:11 ... *race not to the swift*

:10 ... *do whatever ... with your might ...*

- The 2-talented man was not worrying or wondering why he was not given 5 talents!

He just went on with the job

using whatever was given to him (Mt 25:22,23)

- God does open doors according to what He has gifted us with—

Prov 18:16 ... *a man's gift makes room ...*

But it's our responsibility to walk into the "open door," not worrying about our "little strength" — Rev 3:8

— Go where folks are dominated by witchcraft:

(Philip: Acts 8:5-7)

God will use you to cast out demons!

— Go where folks suffer without medical facilities:

God will manifest the gifts of healing thro' you!

— Go to help those in sorrow and heaviness of mind:

Isa 61:1-3 ... *anointed Me ... comfort ... mourn*

God will manifest the gift of comforting thro' you!

— Go to the religious and intellectual people to testify:

God will grant you the Word of Wisdom/Knowledge

(1 Cor 12:8; Acts 17:17)

- The reason why most of us do not volunteer or venture to do anything for God —

"FEAR"

There's nothing that paralyses us like fear!

3 kinds of fear —

a) Fear of the supernatural realm

They are even afraid of asking God
lest they get a counterfeit!

Lk 11:11-13 ... *bread ... fish ... egg ...*

b) Fear of making mistakes

The gifts are perfect;
but no operator of gifts is perfect,
and no operation of gifts is perfect.

That's why —

While talking about gifts,
Paul writes about —

"When I was a child ..." (1 Cor 13:11)

Specifically while talking about prophesying
he refers to *"learning"* —

1 Cor 14:31

Paul includes himself in this learning process—

1 Cor 13:9 ... *"WE" prophesy in part ...*

Gifts develop by practice, practice and practice!

c) Fear of past failures

eg) Prayer for the healing of others:

There could be so many reasons why people are not healed—

- Unbelief on the part of the candidate
- Chastisement from God to teach something
- To keep humble as in the case of Paul ... *revelations*
- God's choice to heal thro' medical means
- Mortality of the body — age, etc.

- Do not let any of your gifts sleep inside of you
2 Tim 1:6,7 ... *stir up the gift ... in you*
- God who grants you the “*desire*” is the one who enables you to “*do*” it also — Phil 2:13 ... *both to will and to do ...*
- I would like to close with a warning —
If you don’t use your gift,
the loss will be dual —
 - a) Personal loss
Disuse of a limb results in paralysis or atrophy.
You will lose it ... eg) Single talented man (Mt 25:28)
 - b) Corporate loss
The Church/Body is not able to function well —
Eph 4:16 ... *every joint ... every part ... its share*
- Start doing today whatever you can!
You will have God’s commendation:
“*She did what she could!*” (Mk 14:8b)

How not to Operate Gifts

4. Do not violate Biblical principles.

- The Holy Spirit will never contradict the written Word—

2 Pet 1:20,21 ... *Holy Spirit is the Author ...*

- The Scripture is the yardstick to check the operation of any gift.

This is how Jesus discerned the scheme of the devil when the devil suggested to Him to operate gifts —

eg) *turn stones into bread ... Mt 4:3,4*

On the face of it, the suggestion appears quite legitimate; but Jesus discerned the violation of a Scriptural principle.

eg) *Jump down from the pinnacle (vv 5-7)*

Yes, discernment is primarily thro' the WORD —

Heb 5:13,14 ... *the Word ... reason ... discernment*

- See how the Apostles verified unusual manifestations of the Spirit by the Word —

- Day of Pentecost

— Prophet Joel (Acts 2:16) ... *This is that ...*

- Outpouring in the house of Cornelius

— Prophet Amos (Acts 15:14,15) ... *as it is written...*

“Power of God” and “Word of God” not to be separated —

Mt 22:29 ... *mistaken because ...*

- If anyone speaks,
let him *speak according to God's Word* (1 Pet 4:10,11)
(context: gifts)

eg) John the Baptist:

- “*spirit and power of Elijah*” (Lk 1:17)
- “*Word of God came to him*” (Lk 3:2)
- John’s message: “*As it is written*” (Lk 3:3-6)

If it is not according to the Word of God,

it’s only *chaff*— Jer 23:28

■ Conclusion of Paul’s discussion of gifts —

1 Cor 14:36,37 ... “*Word ... commandments ...*”

□ Sports competition

“*according to rules*” (2 Tim 2:5)

□ Testing of a building

“*by fire*” (1 Cor 3:12,13)

“*Is not My Word fire?*” (Jer 23:29)

Reason: Gifts operation fallible —

“*imperfect*” (1 Cor 13:9)

Word of God “*infallible*”

“*perfect*” (Psa 19:7)

■ Let’s look at some practical aspects:

□ Confusion and disorderliness in gatherings

where gifts operate—

a) *God is not the author of confusion*

1 Cor 14:33

b) Regulation and Control — human responsibility

1 Cor 14:32,33

“*... spirits of prophets subject to prophets*”

□ Speaking in tongues:

Restriction: 1 Cor 14:28

“*no interpreter ... keep silent ...*

... speak to yourself and God”

(Quiet praying like Hannah — 1 Sam 1:13)

- Gifts of healing:
 - Do not pray over the oil.
 - Do not call anything as “anointed” oil.
 - Anoint the **person** with oil (Mk 6:13; Js 5:14)
 - Biblical principle: God does not anoint or sanctify objects,
but only people.
 - Blessed cloth: Not the normal/regular practice
 - An extraordinary situation (Acts 19)
 - Paul did not send it; people took it.
 - Biblical teaching: *Go and lay hands ...* (Mk 16:15,18)
Call for elders for prayer ... (Js 5:14)
 - Need for “*law*” + “*testimony*” (Isa 8:20)
i.e. teaching and examples
Context: v19 ... enquiry of the dead ...
- Casting of demons:
 - Do not ask the devil to promise anything!
He is a liar and father of lies (Jn 8:44)
- Operation of Gifts must not distract people from the
preaching/hearing of the Word —
 - eg) Jesus: *To hear and to be healed* (Lk 5:1,15-17)
 - eg) Heb 2:3,4 ... What’s “*great*” is *Salvation*, not the *gifts*!
 - eg) Immediately after concluding a long treatment
of the subject of gifts, Paul **defines** the “*Gospel*”
according to the Scriptures — 1 Cor 15:1-5
- Saturate yourself with the study of the NT Epistles
in order that you may operate gifts the Biblical way.

How not to Operate Gifts

5. Do not exceed your measure.

- We should not limit **God's** power;
at the same time,
we must not forget **our** limits!
Rom 12:4-8 ... *A list of gifts*
Look at the introduction: v3
"... everyone ... not to think ... beyond measure ..."

This was the principle on which the apostles
functioned in their ministries — 2 Cor 10:13,14

"... measure ... limits ... sphere ..."

- We must never forget that we are only
"earthen" vessels — even though
the "gift" is a *"treasure" from God* — 2 Cor 4:7
Divine enablements do not remove human limitations.

— Then comes a question:

Does not God *give His Spirit without measure?*

No, it's only to His Son —

Jn 3:34 ... These are John the Baptist's words—

*"In **Him** all the fullness of God"* (Col 1:19)

:31 ... *We are of earth!*

This is exclusively for Jesus —

Heb 1:8,9 ... *"above Your companions"*

— Then what's the meaning of doing *"greater" works
than Jesus?* Jn 14:12

“Because I go to the Father ...” —

i.e. thro’ the power of the Holy Spirit

“greater” works = “much” fruit

The very next chapter (15:5,8)

The reference is to *“testifying to the Gospel”* (15:26,27)

(Interpret difficult passages within the context.)

- Let’s take some practical examples on this aspect of *“not exceeding the measure” —*

- Prophesying:

We don’t have prophets today in the “specialized” sense for writing the “Word of God” as in 2 Pet 1:20,21.

But believers can still function as prophets today

as in Acts 2:17 ... *sons and daughters prophesy*
and Eph 4:11 ... *some prophets*

Therefore,

instead of beginning words of prophesy with words like,

“Thus saith the Lord!”

you can say,

“I feel this is what God wants us to do!”

This is the meaning of prophesying *“in proportion”* to faith

(Rom 12:6c)

- Paul was not only an Apostle but also a Prophet —
(Acts 13:1; 15:32)

but he was humble enough to write:

“Not I but the Lord” (1 Cor 7:10)

“I, not the Lord” (1 Cor 7:12)

“my” judgment (v40) i.e. my “opinion”

- Prophet Agabus + Evangelist Philip’s daughters
 Their prophecy to Paul was supposed to be just
 an “information,” not an “instruction” —
 Acts 21:8-14
 “pleading ... persuading ... weeping” (v13)
 Who was right? Paul was right (See Acts 23:11)
 That’s why Paul wrote: *“We prophesy **in part**”* (1 Cor 13:9)
- Another example —
 miracles, especially over nature
 Joshua — Sun & Moon (Josh 10:12-14)
 “Never before or after”
 Do not assume to perform such “exceptional” miracles!
 eg) Elijah: 3½ years drought and then rain
 This is not to make such daring statements
 before a heathenic king or non-Christians—
 but for *praying for one another* —
 Context: Js 5:16
- When you confine yourself to the “nature” and “measure”
 of your gifting, you can set your priorities right —
 eg) Acts 6:2-4 Teaching vs. Tables
 Do not spread too thin.
- The apostolic restrictions on **women’s** ministry
 in public must also be accepted
 — Equal standing before God: Gal 3:28
 — But no “authoritative” role in the operation of gifts
 1 Cor 14:34 *“... submissive ...”*

How not to Operate Gifts

6. Do not underestimate less spectacular gifts.

- Of the 5 lists of the Gifts in the NT, the longest and the famous and the most frequently referred to is
1 Cor 12:8-10
This 9-gift list begins with non-spectacular gifts:
“*Word of Wisdom + Word of Knowledge*”

The next longest list is in Rom 12:6-8
(*Gifts of grace* = charismatic gifts)
7 out of 8 in this list are non-spectacular —
“*prophesying*” — the only spectacular gift
- The Corinthian Christians were not interested in less dramatic gifts—
That’s why a set of questions by Paul:
1 Cor 12:28 ... *helps ... administration ...*
He leaves out “helps & administration” in his 7 questions! (vv 29,30).

He does not ask,
Do all do helpful deeds? !!!
Meaning: All are supposed to **help** one another;
and this is to be “*desired*” (v31) above the rest.

eg) Stephenas (1 Cor 16:15-18) — 4 verses
eg) Rom 16 26 *helpers!*
Beginning with “Phoebe” (vv 1,2)
10 women in this list!

eg) William Carey's sister was a paralytic for over 50 years —
She could not even speak;
but she wrote lengthy letters of encouragement
to Carey and prayed for him!

If we don't have missionaries like Carey today,
it may be because we don't have "helpers" like Carey's sister!

■ Oh, how much we need the gift of **encouragement!**

Rom 12:8a (exhortation = encouragement)

An outstanding example: Barnabas

Acts 4:36 ... "*Son of Encouragement*"

An Encourager

— It was he who cultivated Paul including introducing him
to the Apostles

Acts 9:26,27 (Jerusalem)

11:23-26 (Antioch)

— It was he who salvaged **Mark!** (Acts 15:39/ 2 Tim 4:11b)

Paul wrote 13 Epistles

Mark wrote 1 Gospel

—Totally 14 Books in the NT,

though Barnabas never wrote a book!

■ Another least spectacular but most necessary gift:

Rom 12:8c "*Gifts of Grace*" (v6) — Charismatic gifts
"*Showing **mercy** with cheerfulness*"

An unusual smile worn by those working among the
"unloved" and "unlovable" is the proof of their gift!

eg) Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity

- These gifts may not be “spectacular;”
but these are definitely “supernatural!”

They appear “*feeble*,” but they must be considered
more “*honourable*” than the rest — 1 Cor 12:22-24a

Even the “*head*” (at the topmost) cannot despise the
“*feet*” (at the bottommost)

- Examples of a few other less glamorous gifts —

- Celibacy (1 Cor 7:7)

- Hospitality (1 Pet 4:9,10)

- Intercession: Not everyone can lament
day and night like Jeremiah (Jer 9:1),
or like Paul (Rom 9:2; 10:1).
Similarly, Rees Howells (1879-1950)
and Praying Hyde (1865-1912)

- Writing — Otherwise how could uneducated men like
Peter and John write so much? (Acts 4:13)

- Most of the Prophets, especially those who wrote the Bible,
performed no **miracles** —

eg) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos ...

According to Jesus, John the Baptist was the greatest
among the prophets (Mt 11:11a)

— He even came in the “*spirit and power*” of Elijah,
a miracle-worker (Lk 1:16,17)

— But John *performed no miracles* (Jn 10:41)

- Also in history several outstanding men of God
did no spectacular miracle:

George Muller (1805-1898)

— he had faith to feed 1000s of orphans

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

— he had faith to move into the inland of China

Adoniram Judson (1788-1850)

— no convert in Burma for 6 years

When asked about the work, he said,

“The prospects are as bright as the Promises of God!”

So many missionaries have this gift of faith —

That’s why they venture into interior places

and hostile situations!

- Another less glamorous gift is —

“*administration*” (1 Cor 12:28) = leadership

Even though we recognise this gift,

we think of high level leadership only —

eg) Jethro — Moses (Ex 18:21,25)

Appointing rulers over 1000s, 100s, 50s, 10s —

What about the leaders over the 10s?

- **Conclusion**

Only when we respect all gifts equally,

we can see the functioning of “every”

member of the Church —

Otherwise most of the Church members will be

either “unemployed” or “underemployed!”

How not to Operate Gifts

7. Do not function independently.

- “Not independence but interdependence”
— This is the law of the Kingdom of God.

No one has “all” the gifts —
Otherwise the “body” analogy won’t fit.

Immediately after listing the 9 gifts,
Paul straightaway explains the functioning of the “body”—

1 Cor 12:11 ... gifts distributed to “*individuals*”
:12 ... functioning to be “corporate”

See the long treatment: vv 12-27 — “body”—
17 times in 16 verses!

- No one is gifted enough,
wise enough,
or strong enough
to live apart from others!
“another ... another ... another” (1 Cor 12:7-10) ... 8 times

See the challenging questions and statements—

- “**In fact** the body is **not** one member but many”
(1 Cor 12:14)
- “If they were all one member, where would the body be?”
(v19)

The Holy Spirit does not **dump** all the gifts on one person,
but *distributes* — 1 Cor 12:11

Even if one person has more gifts than the other
there’s no ground for boasting —

Gifts given purely on “GRACE” —

Rom 12:6 ... *Grace*

Eph 4:7 ... *Grace*

1 Pet 4:10 ... *Grace*

■ Gifts are the best argument for **team ministry** —

Let’s look at some examples:

□ Moses & Aaron

Ex 4:14-16 ... mouthpiece for Moses

The rod of Moses: Ex 4:1-4,17 (Before God)

The rod of Aaron: Ex 7:8-12 (Before Pharaoh)

What magnanimity on the part of Moses!

□ An example from Church history:

William Booth: When he could not attend an important gathering to preach,
he sent a telegram: “Others!”

It is usually difficult for “gifted” leaders at the top level to equip and involve the nextliners —

“*head*” to “*feet*” (1 Cor 12:21)

i.e. Pastors & leaders must do all that’s possible to equip and encourage the entire congregation/group to involve in the ministry—

To individuals ... *stir up the gift* (2 Tim 1:6)

To congregations ... *impart some gift* (Rom 1:11)

Otherwise — 1 Sam 13:22 — Swordless saints/soldiers!

This is the condition today over which we must lament with Deborah — Judg 5:8b

□ Another classic example:

Peter & John: “*Look at US!*” (Acts 3:4)

“*Peter **and** John*” (vv1,3,11; 4:13)

The secret of the “*notable*” *miracle!* (4:16)

The “unexpected” happens only in a TEAM ministry:

— Power to exorcise when sending the 12 (Mt 10:1)

— Only to heal while sending 70 (Lk 10:1,9).

That’s why the excitement: “*even demons!*” (v17)

Officially the power was given later (v19)

— *Satan “fell”* (v18) ... The power of a TEAM ministry

Team “spirit” — *70 returned with joy!* (v17)

□ Another example —

Paul & Barnabas in Lystra (Acts 14)

A cripple healed! What a stir!

(v12) — Barnabas: Zeus (Jupiter) — a leader god in Greek

The organizer!

Paul: Hermes (Mercury) — a messenger god in Greek

The speaker!

No competition but complementation!

Operation in cooperation!

■ A word to the leaders:

In the name of correction, don’t give place to negativism.

Negativism kills people.

eg) Paul’s corrections were coupled with encouragement—

1 Cor 14:26b, 40 ... Do **ALL** ... *but for edification*

:31 ... *ALL may learn and be encouraged*

:39 ... *Do not forbid tongues*

(Neither overuse nor underuse!)

(I consciously keep this in mind in all my corrective teaching.)

- This mutual dependence should not only be within our own group — We must associate with groups which operate gifts different from ours —
eg) Churches need Missions and vice versa.
Missions: Essentially quarrying
Churches: Essentially sculpturing or chiseling

Jesus spoke about,

one *sowing* and another *reaping & gathering*;
one is outreach, the other is inreach!

Both *rejoicing “together”* (Jn 4:36)

Rejoicing over one another’s labours!

The principle of “unity in diversity!”

- The complementary nature of gifts is another argument for interdependence 1 Cor 12:7-10,28; Rom 12:8

Wisdom & Knowledge

Healing & Miracles

Tongues & Interpretation

Apostles & Prophets

Pastors & Teachers

Administrations & Helps

Leadership & Mercy

Because we fail to do these things —

equipping the believers ...

learning from others ...

functioning as teams ...

it takes 1000 Christians plus 6 Pastors

over a period of one full year to win a single convert to Christ!

(Statistics by Campus Crusade for Christ)

How pathetic!

■ Great Commission:

Mk 16:16 ... *He ... He ...*
:17,18 ... *They ... They ... They ...*
:20 ... *They ... Them ... Amen!*

■ A hymn by Charles Wesley (1707-1788):

*Move, and actuate and guide;
Divers gifts to each divide:
Placed according to Thy will,
Let us all our work fulfill;
Never from our office move;
Needful to each other prove;
Use the grace on each bestowed,
Tempered by the art of God!*

(See also Pages 59-61, 303-306, 350-351, 517-519, 546-549,
642-646)

How not to Operate Gifts

8. Do not neglect devotional disciplines.

- Jesus had given “*power*” to the disciples
to cast out demons, in Matthew 10 itself —
Mt 10:1

But in the 17th chapter they were not able to deliver a boy
from demon possession — Mt 17:16

Why? (vv 19-21) ... *faith ... prayer ... fasting*

There are atleast three disciplines we must be
constantly looking at—

a) Intercessory prayer

- Jude 20 ... *Praying in the Holy Spirit*
= “building up” i.e. warming up
- Lev 6:12,13 ... *Fire on the altar* (A pictorial instruction)
- Lev 9:23 ... Moses & Aaron first went IN to meet God
before coming OUT to bless people.
- Prayer for wisdom will sharpen the Gift of Wisdom
(1 Cor 12:8/Js 1:5)
- Elijah was a prophet of unusual power —
stopping the rain for 3½ years and
then opening up the heavens was not an ordinary act!

But the stress is on prayer —

Js 4:16b, 17,18 ... *prayed ... prayed again*

- The early Church had learnt this lesson —
Acts 2, Pentecost; Acts 3, Miracle

But Acts 4:30,31 ... *prayed ... filled ... spoke*

(Miracles were already there!)

More prayer, more power;

less prayer, less power;

no prayer, no power.

This was the reason why Jesus, with all His power,
withdrew Himself often for praying in solitude.

Mk 1:32-35; Lk 5:15,16

b) Painstaking Bible meditation

Paul's admonition to Timothy (1 Tim 4:13-15)

Faith is basic to all the gifts:

*"These signs will follow those who **believe**"* (Mk 16:17)

This faith grows thro' the Word of God (Rom 10:17)

The gifts of

Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge

and *Discernment* are sharpened

by the Spirit-guided study of God's Word —

Jn 16:13,14 ... *Spirit of Truth* ...

1 Cor 2:7,13 ... *Words which the Holy Spirit teaches*

Heb 5:12-14 ... *Solid food ... discern ...*

As we become more and more acquainted with the
Biblical principles, we will learn to operate the Gifts
within Biblical boundaries.

c) Personal sanctification

Gifts do **not** reside in us;

they reside in the Holy Spirit who resides in us!

Gen 41:15,16 ... *not in me ... but God ...*

Accepted by Pharaoh (v38)

That's why they are called the gifts **of** the Spirit!

The Holy Spirit is *the Gift* of gifts (Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17)
... *gift of the Holy Spirit* ...

Gifts are actually the “*manifestation*” or the “*expression*”
of the Holy Spirit — 1 Cor 12:7

Therefore, we must do nothing that will
“*grieve*” or “*quench*” the Holy Spirit.

eg) bad words, anger, etc (Eph 4:29-31)

The Holy Spirit must be given total freedom in our lives —
No privacy! (Psa 139:7,23,24)

- Gifts are given according to **God’s** grace
and not based on **our** merit —

We don’t perform miracles *by our godliness* (Acts 3:12)

However the *vessel* must be *cleansed* (2 Tim 2:21,22)

This truth was stated in the OT itself —

Josh 3:5 ... *sanctify today ... wonders tomorrow*

- The climaxing work of the Holy Spirit is to lead us
to walk in the “*fear of the Lord*” —

Isa 11:2 ... The climaxing aspect!

“*Fear of the Lord*” & “*Comfort of the Spirit*” go together:

Acts 9:31

“*Fear of the Lord*” means doing nothing that would
displease Him.

- Instead of faithfully attending to these devotional disciplines,
people try short-cut methods:

eg) laying on of hands

There’s a warning:

1 Tim 5:22 ...*lay hands...suddenly on no man* ...

i.e. instead of dealing with the “sins” & “shortcomings” in their lives, they just want someone to lay hands and pray.

■ We already “have” the gifts —

Rom 12:6 “... *Having then gifts ...*”

God has already given it (v3)

1 Cor 12:7 “... *is given ...*”

:28 “... *has appointed ...*”

Eph 4:7 “... *was given ...*”

What’s necessary is to —

(a) Identify them.

Where is your interest?

Local Church ministry?

Inter-Church ministry?

Outreach ministry?

Don’t try to copy someone and be frustrated.

eg) Saul’s armour won’t fit David (1 Sam 17:38,39)

If God has called you to be a nose,

don’t try to become an eye! (1 Cor 12:17)

(b) Stir them up and sharpen them.

Along with devotional disciplines, receive training also —

eg) “*helps*” & “*administrations*” (1 Cor 12:28)

Management Seminars ...

Leadership Training ...

eg) “*showing mercy*” (Rom 12:8c)

World Vision/Missionaries of Charity/ etc.

(c) Use them.

“*Gifts*” to carry out “*ministries*;”

“*ministries*” to accomplish God’s “*works*” (1 Cor 12:4,5,6)

God is glorified; people are blessed!

(See also Pages 68-70, 259-262, 651-656, 691-695, 735-737)

How not to Operate Gifts

9. Do not merchandise the gifts.

- Jesus foresaw the possibility of commercialising the gifts, when He spoke about it in the first instance itself —
Mt 10:8-10 ... *freely received ... freely give ...*
— even while not allowing them carry money purse!
— even while saying they were worthy of “*food*” (= hospitality)!
- Greed in ministry is not a new phenomenon —
Prophets ... Priests ... Peace ... Peace ...
Jer 6:13,14

A classic example of such a greed was **Prophet** Balaam
Jude 11 ... *run greedily ... error of Balaam*
- At the same time,
the Scripture is full of several praiseworthy examples also—
 - Prophet Elisha
2 Ki 5:15,16 ... though nothing wrong
in accepting such a token of gratitude
But Gehazi used the same language — “*as the Lord lives*”
— but operated on a spirit of greed ... 2 Ki 5:20 (cf. v16)
 - Prophet Daniel
Acceptance of gifts from Nebuchadnezzar
Dan 2:47,48 (gratitude)
Refusal of gifts from Belshazzar
Dan 5:16,17... *If...* (bargain)
 - Apostle Peter
Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18-23)

“... *perish ... heart ... wickedness ... poison ... bitterness ...
bound ... iniquity ...*”

(even though baptized and associated with Philip — v13)

- While talking about commercialisation of the Gifts of the Spirit, I want to serve five specific warnings —

a) Do not seek popularity.

- John 7:2-6 ... *anyone who wants to be popular ...*
Don't be overinfluenced by supporters.
Pray and decide to go only where God wants you to go
— “*My time ...*”

- Gen 49 ... Prophecy of Jacob concerning his sons (v1)
He was frank in whatever he said —

v4 ... Reuben ... *you shall not excel!*

vv 5,6 ... Simeon & Levi ... *Do not enter their council!*

v21 ... Naphtali ... *goodly words*

v22 ... Joseph ... *fruitful bough*

v27 ... Benjamin ... *ravenous wolf*

Look at the conclusion: v28 ... “*blessing to each!*”

Rebuke is also a *blessing!* Very rare today!

eg) Prophesying — 1 Cor 14:3

(a) edification (b) exhortation (c) comfort

Nowadays it's mostly (c) only; what about (a) & (b)?

Be like Prophet Micaiah, even if beaten up —

1 Ki 22:7,8,13,14,24

The Holy Spirit first “*convicts*” — then “*comforts!*”

“*Fan*” to gather the grains; “*Fire*” to burn the chaff !

(Mt 3:12)

b) Do not attract people to yourself.

- John 1:35-37 ... graciously lets his disciples go after Jesus!
- The very first lesson in Gifts: 1 Cor 12:2,3 (*Jesus is Lord!*)
- Acts 3:12 ... Peter & John ... *Why ... Why ... look at us?*
- Acts 14:14,15 ... Paul & Barnabas in Lystra—
 ...tearing the clothes ...
 running out ... *Why ... vain things ...?*
- Ex 34:29,30 ... Moses' *face shining ... he didn't know it;*
 but Aaron and people saw it!
 (True humility: Num 12:3)
 Greatest among prophets ... *face to face*
- Do not use prophesying to manipulate people —
 to enslave them — **mindreading**
 2 Cor 1:24 ... *dominion or help?* enslave or equip?

c) Do not make any show-off.

- People falling down while laying hands need not be shown
 again and again in the TV.
 What purpose does it serve?
- Jesus did not allow the demons speak! (Lk 4:41)
 (We will even give the mike to the possessed)
- Jesus did not jump from the pinnacle! (Mt 4:6,7)
- Gifts are only to “*serve*” others; not to make a show
 (1 Pet 4:10)

d) Do not exaggerate results.

- Especially while reporting—
- Blind man ... *second touch* (Mk 8:22-25)
 (Blaming people when not healed; boasting otherwise)

- Paul's testimony: (Rom 15:17-19)
"I dare not ... signs ... wonders ... power ..."

e) Do not go after attractive things.

- eg) Every preacher need not sing — to make CDs.
Do not yield to people's pressures!
Billy Graham does not sing!
1 Cor 12:17 ... If everybody ... *eye ... ear ... nose?*
Remain in your calling (1 Cor 7:20,24)
Do not copy attractive ministries.

There's a scarcity for "hidden workers" —

Who are they?... heart... lungs... liver... kidneys... (vital organs)

In conclusion:

- Do not attach price tag to any ministry
eg) Special prayers, personal interview, special visit, etc.
These are all obnoxious to a holy God!

How not to Operate Gifts

10. Do not overlook the fruits of the Spirit.

- The longest recorded Sermon of Christ is the Sermon on the Mount —
In this, the Lord spoke more about the “fruit” of the Spirit than about the “gifts” —
Beginning with the Beatitudes —
only one reference to gifts: Mt 7:22
Even here, the preceding words are on the “fruit” (vv 16-20)
- Christians can be broadly classified into 2 groups —
Charismatics: those who emphasize GIFTS
Non-Charismatics: those who emphasize FRUITS

The Corinthian Church was a charismatic Church —
1 Cor 1:7 ... *lacking in no gift ...*
but *carnal (3:3)*

Paul did not decry the gifts —
rather he combined both: 1 Cor 14:1
... *Pursue LOVE **and** desire spiritual GIFTS ...*

It is NOT: Gifts without fruits
It is NOT: Fruits without gifts
but: Gifts with fruits
and: Fruits with gifts
This is the Biblical balance.
- This balanced emphasis runs throughout the NT, especially in Paul’s writings —

- Rom 12:6-8 ... *gifts*
:9,10 ... *love*
- While listing out the gifts,
the emphasis is on “oneness”
1 Cor 12:8,9,11 ... *same ... same ... same*
:4,5,6 ... *same ... same ... same*
- Exercising of “gifts” is more exciting
than manifesting the “fruits.”

This was the problem in Corinth.

That’s why the purpose of 1 Cor 12,13 and 14 was not to teach about gifts, but to instruct how to use gifts to develop love and unity!

- Even while stirring up the gifts in Timothy—
2 Tim 1:6,7 ... *spirit of “power” and of “love”*
- Paul’s personal testimony of signs & wonders —
2 Cor 12:12 ... *signs ... **patience** ...*

- The Holy Spirit is the greatest Unifier;
while talking about Him, if unity is lost,
we’ve got it all wrong —
1 Cor 12:13 ... *“ONE” ... “ONE” Spirit*
Jews vs. Greeks ... racial/regional
Slave vs. Free ... social distinctions
- This was the immediate outcome of Pentecost
Acts 2:4,44-46
Don’t stop with v4; move on to v44
- Prophetically portrayed in
Psa 133:1-3 ... *unity ... oil and dew ...*

- The supreme purpose of the Spirit’s work in our lives is to produce “goldly living.”
 - Baptism with the Holy Spirit
 - Mt 3:10-12 ... *fruit ... fire ... chaff ...*
 - “Power” and “Promises”
 - 2 Pet 1:3,4 ... *power ... godliness ... divine nature*
 - Against the works of the flesh ...
 - Gal 5:16 ... *Spirit vs. flesh*
 - :19-21 ... *works of the flesh*
 - :22,23 ... **BUT** *the fruit of the Spirit*
 - “against such there’s no law!”*
 - i.e. Nothing beyond it = No further argument!
 - If “gifts” are the “means,”
 - “fruits” are the “end!”
 - The daily ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - 2 Cor 3:17,18 ... **being** *transformed ...*
 - glory to glory ... image*
 - “Holy” Spirit!*
- The tragedy of the day:
 - We are either **without** using the gifts;
 - or we are using the gifts **without** love!

The correction:

 - 1 Cor 12:31 ... *“greater” gifts*
 - “more” excellent WAY*
 - This is LOVE (13:1)

Misuse of gifts:

 - eg) Lk 9:52-55 ... *Samaritan village ... fire .. what “spirit”...*

- Gifts are not a measure of spirituality —
This is where it can be so misleading —
 - Moses ... disbelief and dishonouring the Lord's Name
(dishallowing)
Num 20:7-13 ... *speaking ... striking*
But water came!
Dt 32:48-52 ... No entry into Canaan
 - King Saul ... prophesied even after he was
rejected for disobedience
1 Sam 10:11 ... When anointed as King
:15 ... disobedience ... Amalekites
19:23,24 ... After backsliding
 - Samson ... Lost his power at Delilah's lap ...
he didn't know it (Judg 16:20)
God used him again (vv 28,30)
- Why is this so? How is it possible?
Answer: God does not withdraw gifts quickly —
Rom 11:29 ... *gifts ... calling ... irrevocable*

- A concluding thought:
These are not "our" fruit,
but the fruit **of** the Spirit!
- Gifts are **of** the Spirit.
Similarly, fruits are **of** the Spirit
Jn 15:5 ... *Vine ... branches ... sap*
- That's why Jesus said, *MY love* (Jn 15:9)
MY joy (15:11)
MY peace! (14:27)

■ **Conclusion**

Let's use all the GIFTS the Holy Spirit has given us;
let's produce all the FRUITS in our lives thro' the Spirit.

Happy Pentecost!
