

The Six 'Get' Booklets

In Acts 2, right at the start of the first church in Jerusalem, we see several distinct things happening to the new believers: they **got born again** through repentance, they **got water baptised**, they **got filled with the Spirit**, and they **got joined to a local church**.

These booklets reflect these 4 vital early steps for the new believer, and the fifth one called **Get Gifted** takes us on into the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Although they work as 'stand alone' reads, Godfirst Church runs regular courses of different lengths based on each booklet.

Get Started: To help you get going as a new Christian.

Get Started Daily: 30 days of bible reading for the new believer.

Get Baptised: To help you get water baptised.

Get Connected: About the vision, values and membership of Godfirst Church.

Get Filled: To help you get filled with the Holy Spirit.

Get Gifted: To help you get going in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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CONTENTS

Introduction		4
<i>Now about spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be ignorant...</i>		
Part 1: The Gifts of the Spirit from 1 Corinthians 12		7
Chapter 1	About these gifts	8
Chapter 2	The Gift of Discerning of Spirits	10
Chapter 3	The Gift of a Word of Wisdom	12
Chapter 4	The Gift of a Word of Knowledge	13
Chapter 5	The Gift of Faith	15
Chapter 6	The Gift of Healing	16
Chapter 7	The Gift of Workings of Miracles	17
Chapter 8	The Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation	18
Chapter 9	The Gift of Prophecy	21
Part 2: The Gifts of the Spirit from Romans 12		27
Chapter 10	About these gifts	28
Chapter 11	The Gift of being Prophetic	29
Chapter 12	The Gift of Serving / Helping	31
Chapter 13	The Gift of Teaching	32
Chapter 14	The Gift of Encouragement	33
Chapter 15	The Gift of Giving	34
Chapter 16	The Gift of Leadership	37
Chapter 17	The Gift of Mercy	39
Chapter 18	The Gift of Administration	40
Chapter 19	How might these gifts look at a dinner party?	42
Part 3: The 'People' gifts of the Spirit from Ephesians 4		43
Chapter 20	About these gifts	44
Chapter 21	The Apostle	45
Chapter 22	The Prophet	47
Chapter 23	The Evangelist	49
Chapter 24	The Pastor	50
Chapter 25	The Teacher	51

INTRODUCTION

Paul begins his most famous chapter on spiritual gifts saying: *'About spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant (1 Cor 12v1)*. This booklet is to help us become educated about these exciting spiritual gifts. The three main lists of spiritual gifts in the bible are found in 1 Corinthians 14, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. There are also a few other gifts (e.g. hospitality) that seem to be genuine God-given gifts, but that are not specifically mentioned in these lists.

Whilst I try to define each gift clearly to help people recognise them, there is **some overlap between the gifts**, especially with gifts that are similar or complimentary.

Here are **10 important points** to understand before we start to look at the various gifts:

1. Certain basic things need to be in place if you want to operate in the gifts of the Spirit

Firstly, you need to be born again. We know that this is a prerequisite because Paul opens the 1 Corinthians 12 chapter about spiritual gifts with the word 'Brethren'. Secondly, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit – it stands to reason that the fuller you are of him the more up-sized will be his gifts in your life. Thirdly, you need to acquire knowledge about the gifts. Remember, Paul opens 1 Corinthians 12 saying that he doesn't want us to be ignorant about the gifts. And fourthly, you need to act in faith and use your gifts. There is a biblical law of atrophy (see Mt 13v12 and Mt 25v29) that tells us that the more you use your spiritual muscles then the more they will grow and strengthen.

2. Love is the motive for using your gifts

Sandwiched between two of the great chapters on the gifts is 1 Corinthians 13 – a chapter all about love. Paul explains that being mighty in the gifts without the motive of love is "nothing", and he concludes "follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts". Also, straight after his teaching on the gifts in Romans 12, Paul goes on to talk about love – yep, you can safely conclude that Paul has a 'thing' about love accompanying the spiritual gifts! So, if you find yourself too shy to do your gift, then be drawn into doing it *because you love the people* who will be blessed as you play your part. God has made you unique and the body needs you badly. Don't hide your light under a bush! Go for it!

3. Spiritual gifts are God giving of himself to people through people

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul stresses that each of us have received gifts from God to be used for the good of the Body, and in Ephesians 4 Paul explains that Christ gave gifts of himself to men to build up the body. This helps us understand that the operation of the gifts through us is the way God has chosen to touch earth. Jesus himself actually embodies all the gifts, and has shared them out amongst us so that together we can be his body on earth. Take a look at this amazing array of gifts that make up who Jesus is:

- The Great Apostle (Heb 3v1)
- The Great Prophet (Mt 13v57; Mt 21v11)
- The Great Evangelist (Lk 19v10)
- The Great Pastor (Jn 10v11)
- The Great Teacher (Mt 23v10)
- The Great Leader (Col 1v18)
- The Great Giver (Jn 3v16)
- The Great Encourager (Rms 15v5)
- The Great Counsellor / Helper (Jn 14v16, 26 and Jn 16v7)
- The Great Administrator (Creation. Feeding of the Five Thousand)
- The Great Mercy Giver (Mt 9v36; Heb 4v16)
- The Great Servant (Mt 20v28)
- The Source of all Knowledge (Col 2v2-3)
- The Source of all Wisdom (Col 2v2-3)
- The Great Discerner of Spirits (Heb 4v12)
- The Author of Faith (Heb 12v2)
- The Great Miracle Worker (Jn 10v32)
- The Great Healer (Mt 9v35)

4. Eagerly desire the gifts (1 Cor 14v1)

Be passionate about learning what your gifts are and putting them into practise. Also, be open to new gifts in new seasons of your life.

5. Hold them loosely

Your security and identity should not be in your gifts but rather in the Giver of the gifts. The gifts that God gives to you are for the blessing of others. Also, when it comes to working out what your gifts are, you will probably have some understanding yourself but it is important to let other people recognise your gift and confirm it.

6. You will feel fulfilled and happy using your gift – it is what God made you to do!

7. All spiritual gifts need to be accountable to leadership

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul talks about the need for spiritual gifts to be used 'decently and in order'. One of the roles of leadership is ensuring that this happens. Paul goes on to command those with spiritual gifts to acknowledge leadership teaching and authority: *If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored (1 Cor 14v37-38).*

8. All the gifts are equally 'spiritual'

Although some gifts such as prophecy may sound more 'spiritual' than other gifts such as serving, they are all equally important and equally 'spiritual'. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us that one part of the body should not feel inferior (or superior!) to the other parts.

9. Each person and gift will vary in capacity and context

Within a certain spiritual gift there will be variety. For example, some teachers will flourish in a small-group setting, whilst others will flourish in front of large crowds.

10. How will I know what my gifts are?

They will probably be those things that you desire to do or are already doing, but trust God to show you what they are as you study the gifts in the following chapters. Also, the more that you serve people the more you will 'stumble' across your gifts. Often we start off as generalists and then through serving our specific gifts become apparent. It is also important to ask close friends and leaders what gifts they can detect in us.

PART 1

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 12

CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THESE GIFTS

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Cor 13v1-11).

These nine gifts (or eight if you combine the gifts of tongues and interpretation) can helpfully be divided into three categories:

The Revelation Gifts

- Discerning of spirits
- Word of Wisdom
- Word of Knowledge

The Power Gifts

- Healing
- Miracles
- Faith

The Speaking Gifts

- Prophecy
- Tongues
- Interpretation

There will often be a wonderful **collaboration between the gifts**. For example, the gift of discerning of spirits may show you what is going on behind the scenes in the spiritual realm, and then a word of wisdom will show you how to handle that situation. The ultimate collaboration is of course tongues and interpretation.

There is also sometimes **overlap between the gifts**. For example, it is sometimes tricky to know the difference between a word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits, and between the gift of faith and the gift of healing...because you need a whole lot of faith to minister a healing!

CHAPTER 2

THE GIFT OF DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Definition

This is a wonderful gift that cuts through ‘things-as-they-seem-to-be’ and reveals what is going on in the spiritual world. It is not the same as ‘discernment’ which refers to general wisdom and experience that most people develop to varying degrees, but rather to the special ability to know what spirit is operating in a person or situation. It may come as an impression, thought, audible voice, picture, vision or dream.

Biblical Examples

- When Jesus says to Peter ‘Get behind me Satan’ (Mt 16v23). Of course, it was Peter speaking not Satan, but Jesus discerned that the spirit behind what he was saying was a satanic one.
- When Peter discerned that Ananias and Sapphira had a ‘withholding spirit’ from Satan (Acts 5).
- When Peter discerned the motives of Simon the Sorcerer saying, ‘You have no share in this ministry because your heart is not right before God’ (Acts 8v18).
- When Paul discerned that an actually very ‘Christian’ sounding slave girl was in fact operating in a demonic spirit (Acts 16v16).

In what situations is this gift needed?

Parenting: Is that childishness or naughtiness? Is that disorganization or rebellion?

Business: Is this guy trustworthy?

Church: Useful for weighing prophecy. Useful for leading meetings – is God here or are we just going through the motions? Is he operating in godly zeal or carnal emotion? Is this sickness because you are run-down and tired, or is it because of sin in your life or demonic attack? Is she/he just strong-willed or actually Jezebelic?

Likely traits of a person with this gift

As it is a revelation gift, he will need to know Jesus well and be someone who practices the presence of God. He will probably be perceptive, insightful, sensitive, prayerful, and prophetic.

How can I use this gift?

Once you have discerned the spirit behind a person or situation, it is usually best to avoid charging in with your guns blazing your verdict, although sometimes a more direct approach is necessary. It is usually best to weigh

your views with respected others and proceed from there with prayer and possible confrontation depending on the situation.

You may find that you have a particular antenna for certain spirits or situations. This often manifests as an uneasy feeling about someone: 'I feel that we should proceed more slowly with bringing Bill into leadership'.

If you sense this is a gift that you have in embryonic form, then eagerly desire it by regularly asking God for more of it, learn from people who have this gift, and be alert to opportunities to use it.

Cautions

Avoid getting spooky-spiritual and discerning something behind everything! Also, make sure that you have others around you that can help confirm what you are discerning.

Because you will be often bringing unpopular news you will need to resist the temptation to keep quiet. Your best course of action is to go and tell the leaders what you are feeling. You don't want a situation where something happened and you say to yourself, 'Ah yes, I always felt uneasy about Bill but I didn't think it was my place to say anything'! It was your place...you had the gift of discerning of spirits!

CHAPTER 3

THE GIFT OF A WORD OF WISDOM

Definition

Everyone should of course be gradually increasing in wisdom and experience, and some people seem to live life so wisely that we could say that they operate in this gift all the time. However, this gift is the special ability to solve problems and know how to proceed in tricky situations. It is a 'breakthrough' gift making a way where there seems to be no way. It may come as an impression, thought, audible voice, picture, vision or dream.

Biblical Examples

- Two women came to Solomon both claiming that a baby belonged to them. Solomon ordered that the baby be cut in half so they could have half each. This proclamation caused the real mother to say 'No, give the child to her', thus revealing that she was the real mother (1 Kings 3v16).
- The profound advice that Gamaliel gave in Acts 5v34f.
- The re-designation of responsibilities in the church in Ex 18 and Acts 6.

In what situations is it needed?

Home: what form of discipline will work best in this instance? Which of my children are lying? How can I provoke the truth to come out?

Work: how can I best align these personnel to minimize friction whilst maximizing profit? How can I implement change in a peaceful yet speedy way?

Church: What advice can I give this person to help them solve this issue that they are struggling with?

Likely traits of a person with this gift

As it is a revelation gift, she will need to know Jesus well and be someone who practices the presence of God. She will usually be a sensible, insightful and practical person who lives a wise life herself.

How can I use it?

People with this gift can make excellent leaders, advisors and counselors. If you sense this is a gift that you have in embryonic form, then eagerly desire it by regularly asking God for more of it, learn from people who have this gift, and be alert to opportunities to use it.

Cautions

Beware not using it - when you see a situation, speak into it. Don't deprive the body of your wisdom from God. But equally, don't get resentful or pushy if your wisdom is either not asked for or not heeded.

CHAPTER 4

THE GIFT OF A WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Definition

This gift is not about biblical insight or having a deep reservoir of experience and knowledge. This gift is when the Spirit gives information through supernatural revelation about a person or situation that we have no way of knowing through experience or natural observation. It may come as an impression, thought, audible voice, picture, vision or dream.

Biblical Examples

- When Elisha knew that Gehazi was lying about his whereabouts (2 Ki 5v25). Maybe this overlaps with the gift of discerning of spirits.
- When Jesus knew the marital history and current marital status of the woman at the well (Jn 4)
- When Peter knew about Ananias and Sapphira's financial situation (Acts 5). Maybe this overlaps with the gift of discerning of spirits.

Where can it be used?

In church meetings: specific words of knowledge about people in the meeting often paves the way for other gifts to operate such as healing or evangelism. It brings to the person (and the meeting) great faith and a sense of God's love and concern for the individual. I recently felt that present in the meeting was the middle sister of three sisters who had recently suffered a severe disappointment. A lady whom I had no prior knowledge of responded and was amazed and touched that God knew her situation. She was prayed for and greatly comforted.

In the market place: This is a gift that shows you in a moment where a person is at so that you know how to act towards them. I recently sat down with a customs and excise agent, and I felt God tell me that this lady had recently suffered bereavement. So, I now had three choices how to proceed:

- A. I could keep quiet and simply pray for her in the coming days.
- B. I could boldly say 'I feel that God has showed me that you have recently suffered a loss...'
- C. I could take a less direct approach that would test whether I had indeed heard God correctly.

I took option C and soon slipped into the conversation that I was a pastor who had the privilege of helping people through hard times such as bereavements. When she heard this she started to cry and told me her son had been killed a few months ago in a climbing accident, and I was able to pray for her and get her literature to help her.

Another helpful example was when a friend of mine called Liz was in a lift with a young man. She felt God tell her that this man was very lonely. So, rather than saying (rather unhelpfully) 'I sense that you are a lonely guy with no friends', she struck up a conversation with him and invited him along to her Life Group.

Likely traits of a person with this gift

As it is a revelation gift, he will need to know Jesus well and be someone who practices the presence of God. He will probably be prayerful, observant, insightful and prophetic.

How can I use it?

Step out in faith! There is not much point in God showing you things unless you do something with it. Ask God for the gift of a word of wisdom to know how to 'capitalize' on your word of knowledge.

If you sense this is a gift that you have in embryonic form, then eagerly desire it by regularly asking God for more of it, learn from people who have this gift, and be alert to opportunities to use it.

Cautions

Knowledge is not always given to act on, sometimes only to pray into. However, the prime danger of those with this gift is that they don't use it! A word of knowledge can convert an average meeting into glory! Don't deprive the body!

CHAPTER 5

THE GIFT OF FAITH

Definition

This is not about the general measure of faith that we are given to be saved (Eph 2v8), or the faith that grows through hearing the word (Rms 10v17). This gift refers to a God-given super-sized measure of faith for a situation. It allows the believer to trust God for much greater things than he otherwise could. When you have the gift of faith for something you just *know* within you that it will come to pass.

Biblical Examples

- When Daniel and friends confidently told the king that God was able to save them from the fiery furnace (Dan 3v17).
- When David stepped out to fight Goliath (1 Sam 17).
- When Peter walked on the water (Mt 14v29).
- When the Centurion said to Jesus 'Just say the word and my servant will be healed...' (Mt 8v8).
- Most great leadership initiatives require the gift of faith (E.g. Abraham leaving his homeland, Noah building the ark, Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem).

Likely traits of a person with this gift

They might be optimistic, upbeat people, but not necessarily because this is a supernatural thing, not a personality thing.

How and where can I use it?

Some people seem to have this gift for special areas such as finance or healing. When you have it for a situation, then if you are the leader then you can use it to make the decision or take the action, or, whether you are the leader or not, you can use your gift to impart faith and hope to others by standing up and speaking or praying in such a way that you can impart your gift of faith to others.

This is a gift that often accompanies other gifts. For example, the gifts of miracles and healings require lots of faith.

CHAPTER 6

THE GIFT OF HEALING

Definition

Whilst we should all pray for the sick to be healed, the gift of healing is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to be used by him to regularly cure illness and restore health without natural means of any sort. The word is plural (healings) which implies that different kinds of healing are possible with this gift.

Biblical Examples

The bible is loaded with examples of healing. One such example is when Peter and John healed the cripple at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3v6).

Where can it be used?

This gift can be used in any context at home, work and church. It is an especially great gift to use on unbelievers and at work because (a) people very seldom decline the offer of prayer for their sickness, and (b) if they are healed it is a great entrée to talk about the gospel.

Likely traits of a person with this gift

The two key biblical traits of healers are that they are full of compassion for the person and full of a sense of God's authority.

How can I use it?

Step out in faith! Go for it! If you sense this is a gift that you have in embryonic form, then eagerly desire it by regularly asking God for more of it, learn from people who have this gift, and be alert to opportunities to use it.

I have devoted another whole booklet to this subject of healing.

CHAPTER 7

THE GIFT OF WORKINGS OF MIRACLES

Definition

It is the special ability that God gives to certain people to be regularly used by him to perform powerful acts that alter the ordinary course of nature. It seems that a miracles concerning health is synonymous with the gift of healing.

Biblical Examples

- When Jesus turned water into wine (Jn 2)
- When the disciples caught the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5)
- When they caught a fish with a coin in its mouth (Mt 17v27)
- The feeding of the five thousand (Lk 9v12)
- When Jesus took authority over the weather (Mk 4v41)
- When Paul did 'extraordinary miracles' (Acts 19v11)
- When Paul raised a dead man after he fell out of the window (Acts 20)

Where can this gift be used?

If we exclude miracles to do with healing the human body, then these other miracles are not as prevalent today as maybe they should be. I think that situations that fall within this gift include miraculous provision of food and finance, and taking authority over weather (e.g. breaking a drought, rebuking a hurricane).

Likely traits of a person with this gift

Workers of miracles need to be full of compassion for the person/people and full of a sense of God's authority.

How can I use it?

Step out in faith! Go for it! If you sense this is a gift that you have in embryonic form, then eagerly desire it by regularly asking God for more of it, learn from people who have this gift, and be alert to opportunities to use it.

CHAPTER 8

THE GIFTS OF TONGUES & INTERPRETATION

Definition of Tongues

This gift refers to a 'meeting-stopper' moment when a tongue is brought for everyone to hear. It does not refer to the 'personal' ability to pray and worship in tongues that people receive when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Also, it does not refer to those times in meetings when maybe everyone is praying or worshipping together in tongues.

Paul tells us that *'anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God whereas he who prophesies speaks to men...'* (1 Cor 14v2-4). This is a vital distinction: when you bring a tongue the dynamic is man-to-God, not God-to-man. So, tongues is a form of prayer or praise. Here lies the key thing about this gift – it is a gift to deepen our worship and revelation of Jesus.

Speaking in tongues is pure worship to God unhindered by the mind, and the interpretation will also be divinely enabled to search the deep things of God and illumine more of him to us. Oh, how we need more of this gift! This can bring a 'wow' to worship and manifest the presence of God in a mighty way. Nick Sharpe writes: *'Sometimes you might hear an interpretation being brought in the form of a God-to-man prophecy. I think this is a mistake. We often move too quickly into God-speaking-to-us-mode when we should press deeper into him through worship. Often a tongue sparks off the prophetic gifting and sometimes a genuine prophecy is brought too quickly as the interpretation. Hold back you prophets! Let's give room to this exciting manifestation first.'* (NF Mag June 2004).

Definition of Interpretation

This gift is when a person brings an interpretation for the tongue that has just been publically brought. It can either be brought by the person who brought the tongue (1 Cor 14v13), or by another person (1 Cor 14v26-28). Interestingly, this gift combination receives by far the most attention in 1 Corinthians 12-14, especially in Chapter 14.

How will I know if I have the gift of tongues?

If you have the ability to speak in tongues privately, then you have the potential to bring a tongue in public because the actual speaking of tongues is the same dynamic for the speaker whether done alone in his room or in front of 1000 people. But, not everyone has this gift of 'public' tongues.

In my experience, those that are gifted to bring a 'public' tongue that leads the people in spirit-worship of God, ***are those who have real worshipping***

hearts and who can speak confidently and expressively in public. Remember, tongues is man-speaking-to-God (invariably a declaration of deep worship and praise about some aspect of who God is and his dealings with man), so if you are leading the meeting for those few moments then you need a strong worshipping heart, a strong and expressive voice, and an attitude of faith. Without these things then the tongue is going sound rather feeble and boring and may not provoke much of an interpretation.

For me, it works like this: during a time of worship I sometimes feel a special urge to bring a tongue of pure praise God. At that moment I usually feel particularly thrilled and moved by God and I sense a nudge in my spirit to pour it out publically in a tongue. I just feel the need to do a deluge of praise unhindered by my mind. It is hard to explain but you know when you have it. In fact, at first you are not sure so you should just give it a go, especially if you know that someone who is gifted with interpretation is present. Also, early on it is usually best to find the leader of the meeting and say that you have a tongue ready to roll if and when he feels the moment is right. This will be an added source of encouragement and protection for you.

How will I know if I have the interpretation?

Theologically speaking, Paul assumes that some people are known to have the gift of interpretation (1 Cor 14v28), and ready to interpret any tongue that comes. Practically speaking, the best person to bring an interpretation is the one(s) who feel a rise of faith or excitement as the tongue is being brought, and who get a sense of the theme of the tongue – not the detail, just the theme. If that is you, then step out in faith and immediately (even as the tongue is being spoken) come to the front and get ready to unleash a river of interpretation.

When I start to interpret I only ever the idea of the first couple of sentences, and I find that as I start to speak God gives me the idea for the next sentence, and so on. Remember, it is important that the interpretation is man-speaking-to-God.

Those with the gift of interpretation will, like the tongue bringers, be those with ***worshipping hearts and who can speak confidently and expressively in public.*** Remember, your interpretation is a form of leading the people in worship to God!

Note that it is an interpretation, not a translation. This means that the interpretation will capture the theme of the utterance rather than the detail of each word.

Can a tongue have more than one interpretation?

Theologically I feel that this is possible because tongues is dynamic language rather than one with a dictionary, but practically it is pretty confusing to have completely different interpretations to one tongue. Tongues and interpretation is hard enough for new comers to cope with without adding the extra challenge of widely diverse interpretations! Therefore, it is usually best to only allow interpretations along a similar theme and ask those with other interpretations to graciously hold back.

Should tongues and interpretation be used in seeker-sensitive meetings?

Look at these two extracts from 1 Corinthians 14:

So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (V23-25)

He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified (V5)

From these scriptures we learn (a) that any tongue that is brought must be interpreted, and (b) if it is, it has a similar 'power' to prophecy that is potent for the unbeliever to be exposed to, but (c) that there are challenges with administering the gifts of tongues and interpretation in a way that is helpful to the unbeliever. For example, immature demonstrations of tongues and interpretation might technically pass Paul's criteria, but practically may give unbelievers an unnecessary hurdle to jump. Conclusion – if you are going to have these gifts in meetings where unbelievers are present, then do them decently and in order and with power and effectiveness.

CHAPTER 9

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

Definition

In the beautiful array of spiritual gifts, this one particularly catches the apostle's eye: 'Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy' (1 Cor 14v1). The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to some people to receive and communicate an immediate message from God to his people. Paul assumed meetings would be full of this gift (1 Cor 11v4-5, 1 Cor 14v31). I think of prophetic words in terms of the following three levels:

1. **General words of love and encouragement from God.** *E.g. "God wants you to be freshly assured of his total love for you, not dependent on your love or obedience to him..."* These words don't need weighing because they are actually a truth directly from God's Word, and whilst they are always relevant, when they are brought to you (or to the meeting) at just the right time, the general truth from God's word takes on a special intensity and relevance, doesn't it?
2. **Specific words.** *E.g. "I believe God is taking you to a new season of effectiveness, and that you will know greater intimacy with God and alertness to his spirit..."* Again, not much weighing is necessary for similar reasons to Type 1 prophecies.
3. **Highly specific words.** *E.g. "I feel God saying to you that you should move to London and join the church plant there" or "You should adopt a child" or "God is calling this church to divide into four new congregations and move to the four corners of the city".* These really do need weighing!

Prophecy is God speaking to man

Paul tells us that '*anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God' whereas he who prophesies speaks to men...*' (1 Cor 14v2-4). Prophecy is God-speaking-to-man via a person. This means that possible ways to frame the prophecy would be: 'I feel that God wants to say to us that...' or 'My Children, I say to you that...'. I prefer the second way which is speaking in the first person (as if you are God – don't worry, we know you are not!) as this is more immediate and intimate.

Prophecy will be encouraging

Paul says that '*everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort*' (1 Cor 14v3). This is an important guide line. Even if the message is something of a correction or redirection, it will come in a grace-filled and encouraging manner.

How can I learn to prophecy?

Most people learn to prophecy by listening to other people prophecy. But let me give you the different ways that prophetic words seem to come to my mind. I will give you two different scenarios:

Scenario 1: I am in a church meeting during a time of worship

Step 1: During the week, I ask God to alert me to any prophetic word that he would like me to bring at the Sunday meeting.

Step 2: During the opening song I whisper to God a request that he show me when and how to bring the word he showed me during the week, or if I don't yet have a word to please give me one that will encourage the people and help bring an immediate sense of God's presence to the meeting.

Step 3: Now for the important matter of how the content of the word actually comes into our minds. For me it can happen through the following ways:

- **A scripture:** either a verse will come to my mind, or I will be browsing Psalms (for example) and a verse jumps out at me. I could then turn that verse into a prophecy.
- **A line from a song:** sometimes a line from a song we are singing makes me want to elaborate on it.
- **Another prophetic word by someone else:** when someone else brings a word of some sort, that often gets my prophetic juices going and I want to build on that prophecy.
- **A picture in my mind:** sometimes an image leaps to my mind 'out of the blue'. When that happens I don't dismiss it as 'Satan trying to distract me', rather I meditate on it for a bit to see if I stumble on a prophetic application for that picture.
- **An idea stemming from something I see:** in a similar vein, sometimes an object in the building will catch my eye that can activate a prophetic word.
- **Common sense:** if there is some big and common issue on the go, such as a general election, or it is Easter Sunday, I am especially alert to bring a prophetic word along those lines that will comfort and encourage.
- **A prophetic sense:** for those who are maturing in their walk with Jesus and who have a maturing leadership or prophetic gift (who may even be on their way to becoming an Ephesians 4 prophet), they increasingly get what we call a prophetic burden about something. This means that as they think and pray about the church and the advance of God's kingdom, they will develop a sense of God wanting to do X or Y in or through the church, and it will be this theme that forms the content of the prophecy. These prophecies are usually 'big ones' that adjust the emphasis or direction of the church, and need to be thoroughly weighed by the leaders. For example, *"I sense that God is*

wanting to restore healings and signs and wonders to the church, and if you will step out he will honour his word and do the miracles through you...'

Step 4: Then you need to have wisdom to know when and how to bring the word that you have. Usually it is best to tell the leader of the meeting that you have a word along the following lines, and then let him direct you when to bring it. But bring it cheerfully, confidently, and loudly enough for all to hear it. Keep it short, probably between ten seconds and one minute, as anything longer than this is hard for people to stay engaged with.

Scenario 2: I am praying for an individual during a prayer meeting, or at the front of a church meeting

Step 1: Under my breath I ask God to give me a prophetic word that will encourage this person.

Step 2: I plunge in and start to pray 'normal' prayers i.e. I thank God for his work in their life, and I pray that they would know more of his love and more of the presence and fruit of the spirit. Here I am praying the general will of God for the person, and all the while I am open to God bringing to my mind a thought, impression or picture that I will then make into a prophetic word.

Step 3: I will pray into any specific thing that they have come forward to receive prayer for. For example, '...and Father, with this issue of anxiety that Fred is bringing to you today, I ask that...'

Step 4: By this time it is usual that some kind of thought, impression or picture will have come to my mind, and then I take that and say something like, 'Fred, I feel that God would say to you, "My dear son, I have seen your struggle with anxiety and say to you that....' Or, I would say, 'Fred, I feel that God is showing me that...'

Step 5: On the back of the prophecy I will probably then revert to prayer again to 'earth' the prophecy.

Step 6: Then I will gently ask Fred if he felt that the prophecy was on target. This not only helps you both weigh the prophecy, but it also gives you an insight into how he is doing, and if more prayer is required.

An exercise in prophetic activation

I have three sons all under the age of 10, and sometimes in the car we play a game called 'prophetic activation' which is a simple game designed to help them get into the groove of being prophetically stimulated by something that they see. Please note that the game is not producing 'proper' prophetic words, rather helping them with the dynamic of producing a prophetic word, so that they have the ability to do it when it is really from God. In the game, they have to spot something (a bit like 'I spy') and then say what God might be saying to us through that object. One of them said this one recently: *'Guys, you see that grass growing through the concrete at the edge of the road...I think God wants us to know that he will always make us grow and do well even if life is really hard like concrete'*.

Do not put out the spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies contempt. Test everything (1 Thess 5v19)

How can we treat prophecy with contempt?

- By not bothering much with prophesy
- By listening to prophesy passively rather than engaging with it and drinking it in
- By not responding to it in faith and action

How do we test or 'weigh' prophecy?

Prophecy needs to be tested and weighed because due to the human element:

1. Sometimes with the best of intentions we can miss the mark.
2. Sometimes we can get the word partially correct. For example, the church in Tyre had prophesied to Paul (Acts 21:4) through the Spirit about the suffering he would undergo in Jerusalem and so those prophesying urged him as part of their prophecy not to go. This was a true prediction but a wrong conclusion and application.
3. Sometimes there can be false prophecies and prophets (Jer 29, Mt 24v24, 2 Pet 2v1).

Here are four questions to ask to help test a prophetic word:

1. Is it in line with scripture?

- **If it is counter-bible** then toss it out. An example would be, *"God says that your current state of sin is OK, and that you can remain in adultery because he knows the pressure that you have been under, and he will make an exception for you..."*
- **If it is in line with scripture, or if scripture doesn't address the issue, then you will move to the next question...**

2. Does it settle well with my spirit? Colossians 3v15 speaks of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as an umpire who helps judge what we hear and bring a sense of either peace or unease. If in the minutes, hours and days following a prophecy over you, you get increasingly uneasy about it, then it is usually a sign that God's spirit in you is not confirming that the prophecy was from God. Alternatively, if you find yourself getting increasingly excited about it – although you may have no idea how or when it may come to pass – then it is probably God's spirit in you confirming that the prophecy was from God.

3. Does the counsel of respected others confirm? Don't run around seeking the advice of many or you will just drown the voice of the Spirit. Go to one or two other mature Christian leaders or friends to ask what they think. God has ordained wisdom and protection through other people. See Gal 2v1-2 where Paul goes to those "who seemed to be leaders" to test his "revelation". See also Proverbs 14v11.

4. Does circumstance confirm? Because God is in control of all circumstance, then if after prayer and appropriate action, the door refuses to open, then you have to conclude that the prophecy was either off the mark, or 'not for now'. Either way, don't despise it but rather simply say, *"Well Lord, I am going to just put that prophecy aside for now confident that you will bring it to pass if it is from you"*. Acts 16v7 is a great example of this: Paul felt prompted to go to Bithynia but was wrong and God closed the door....only to open a wonderful door into Macedonia.

PART 2

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FROM ROMANS 12

CHAPTER 10

ABOUT THESE GIFTS

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. (Rms 12v1-9)

This is a wonderful cluster of gifts that are sometimes called the Motivational Gifts. This expression comes from feeling that this group of gifts are more innate. For example, the 1 Corinthians 12 gifts are all clearly gifts that we 'do', whereas this group of gifts seem to be more gifts that 'we are'...they are within us (often recognisable in some form even before we get saved). They represent desires or leanings within us, describing our natural, inner inclinations – the way that we are naturally *motivated*. They describe the way that God seems to have made us. As the gifts are described, you will find yourself thinking, 'no, that is just not me' or 'yes, I seem to be like that', or 'interestingly I seem to be becoming more and more like that'.

The gifts from Romans 12 are:

- Prophecy
- Serving / Helping
- Teaching
- Encouraging
- Giving
- Leading
- Mercy

We will also add on the gift of administration from 1 Corinthians 12v28.

CHAPTER 11

THE GIFT OF BEING PROPHETIC

Definition

In keeping with the 'motivational' theme of these gifts, you will have immediately noticed that I am calling this gift 'being prophetic'. I am not calling it either 'the gift of prophecy' like the one in the 1 Corinthians 12 cluster of gifts, nor 'being a prophet' like I will in the Ephesians 4 cluster of gifts. However, as you would imagine there is significant overlap between these three distinctions.

Prophetic people (the group that we are looking at here) will usually have the gift of prophecy, and some will mature into full-blown Ephesians 4 prophets. But – and some of you will be relieved to hear this – it is possible to be prophetically motivated but not be much inclined to bring prophetic words. For you, it is the way that you think and speak and act that is prophetic. Let's have a look and see what I mean...

Characteristics of prophetic people

- They tend to have a very direct way of dealing with things. They tell things 'the way they are' and see things as right and wrong. They are outspoken. They need to speak to express what they think. They are direct, frank and don't waste words. They are verbally motivated. E.g. John the Baptist (Mk 6v18) – he just told Herod straight!
- They are provocative. Prophets provoke us to think about things in a new way.
- They tend to be uncompromising, bold, and forthright, and are concerned about the things of God. They like to motivate people to righteousness, and can therefore make strong leaders.
- They have an intuitive sense about where people are at, and how things really are. They see through facades. "How are you?" "I'm so blessed." "Rubbish!" They have the capacity to identify, define and hate evil. But it is righteous anger. They get angry because the person is ruining their life! They hate the devil! Sin enrages them.
- They tend to make passionate and fervent pray-ers. They have a heavy concern for the reputation of God and His agenda.
- They like to confront things and to deal with issues then and there. Unless they hear the person say, "Yes, I am wrong, you are right, I will do that," they are not convinced! They also like to see a visible change in a person.
- This gift often works well with the gift of prophecy, discerning of spirits, and intercession.

Misunderstandings / Weaknesses

- Their frankness may be perceived as harshness, and they usually have to learn how to speak the truth *in love* and present truth in the most helpful possible way with minimum offence. They can come on too strong. In their passion to 'fix it' they sometimes struggle just to listen and express empathy.
- Their focus on right and wrong (no grey areas) may be seen as intolerant.
- They can be rather intense and often need to learn to lighten up a bit.

How can a person like this help you?

So long as you can survive what they say and how they say it, the advice they give you can help you very much indeed because they cut right to the heart of the issue.

Growing my gift

Pray for more of it. Study it. Use it. But stay accountable and work on the "in love" side of things!

CHAPTER 12

THE GIFT OF SERVING / HELPING

Definition

We are of course all called to be servants as servanthood is a Christ-like quality. However, people with this gift have special grace to invest their time, talents and treasures into the lives of others. They are people who feel fulfilled by being the arms and legs of the ministry...they are the engine room! They love to be the support team who get the job done.

Examples from Scripture

The group of women who often looked after Jesus would be one example, and John Mark would be another, who 'was with Paul and Barnabas as their *helper*' (Acts 13v5).

What does this gift look like in real life?

People with this gift make superb Personal Assistants and team members. They are most fulfilled serving another person / vision and *implementing* and *representing* this person. There is sometimes overlap with the gift of administration.

This is a vital gift

Rather like the gift of encouragement, I feel that this is another gift that is not well understood and utilized, and too quickly dismissed as a 'light-weight' gift. I believe more people than we think have this gift. To use the phrase 'Chiefs and Indians', this is an 'Indian' gift. Chiefs desperately need those with this gift to faithfully tuck in behind and represent them and implement the vision. When this happens the effectiveness and enjoyment of the ministry can sky-rocket.

How will I know if I have this gift?

Whilst you will not be a push-over, you will be most comfortable tucking in behind a 'No 1' type leader. You may well be drawn to a particular project or person and just want to serve there.

How can I grow my gift?

Firstly, recognise that you have it. Then pray and study to develop it, and get doing it – this might mean approaching a person and making yourself available to them.

CHAPTER 13

THE GIFT OF TEACHING

A Definition

It is the special ability that God gives to people to explain and apply the Bible, in a way that helps others learn easily, enjoyably and effectively. It is a pre-requisite of being an elder/pastor (1 Tim 3v2&9 and Titus 1v9-16). The 'person' gift of the Teacher mentioned in Ephesians 4 would be a person that has a very mature and recognized gift of teaching.

Examples from scripture

- Neh 8v8: *'They read from the book of the law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read'*
- Acts 18v24-28: *'Apollos was a learned man with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures...he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately... he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.'*
- Peter in Acts 2 and Paul later in Acts exhibit the gift of teaching from Old Testament scriptures.
- Jesus: referred to as the Great Teacher in Mt 23v10.
- Heb 12v26-28: Teachers are those who (1) Read scripture (2) Explain it (3) Apply it to our lives.

How will I know if I have this gift?

You will enjoy research, study and reading, but you will also be a gifted communicator. You will be concerned for biblical accuracy and context. When you discover a new truth, you will long to pass it on to others. You will get great satisfaction out of someone 'getting it'. The best teachers are those with both good content and good delivery. People will tell you that they enjoy the way you preach/teach/lead the bible study. People will be pleased when they find out it is you who is preaching/teaching. Please note that some people are excellent researchers and very studious but are no good at delivering the truth to others. These people are better off serving someone who is good at the delivery side of things by researching and writing books and so on. Also remember that there are different capacities and types of this gift, so not everyone will be suited to the same teaching context. Some people thrive on small, interactive groups, and others on preaching to large groups.

How can I grow in this gift?

Pray for more of it. Study diligently. Seek out a mentor to learn from with the same attitude of Elisha in 2 Kings 2v2-9.

CHAPTER 14

THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Definition

There are two schools of thought about this gift: some believe that it simply refers to actions and words that bring encouragement to individuals churches. Others believe that it also refers to a 'deeper' ministry of counselling and consolation. I think that both are valid expressions of this gift. Some people may be better at one aspect or the other. Those with this gift are skilful in considering how they may spur others on to love and good deeds (Heb 10v24).

An under-utilized gift

I feel this gift is not properly understood and utilized, and too quickly dismissed as a 'light-weight' gift. On the contrary, it is a mighty gift of apostolic importance that is necessary to counter the accuser of the brethren. Churches and individuals desperately need courage put into them by people operating in this gift.

Examples in scripture

- Acts 14v21: *'Paul ... won a large number of disciples, strengthening and encouraging them to remain true to the faith'*.
- Acts 16v40: *'Paul ... met with the brothers and encouraged them'*
- Acts 11v23: *'Barnabas encouraged those at Antioch'*. Barnabas means 'Son of Encouragement' (Acts 4v36). He believed in Paul and got him into his main ministry.

How will I know if I have this gift?

Like Barnabas, you will believe in people and loyalty and stickability comes easy to you. You will communicate this faith and hope that you have through words, letters, gifts and actions. You will be able to look beyond the trial and try to motivate others with the coming victory (Gal 6v9-10). You will be able to compliment and praise people without flattery, and you will naturally see the best in others. You gain satisfaction from seeing another person 'fired-up' again and going on with God. People will feel better after being around you, feeling hope and faith – courage has been put into them. A preaching gift laced with this gift of exhortation can be a powerful mix. Referencing the counselling aspect of this gift, you will find that you have patience and wisdom to give people advice.

How can I grow my gift?

Pray for more of it. Study diligently. Seek out a mentor to learn from with the same attitude of Elisha in 2 Kings 2v2-9.

CHAPTER 15

THE GIFT OF GIVING

A Definition

Whilst all are called to give liberally and with generosity, the gift of giving is the special ability that God gives to people to make lots of money and give lots of money away. They have a well-developed spirit of generosity and are usually strong in the gift of faith. Both 'poor' people (e.g. the Widow's Mite) and rich people (e.g. Joseph of Arimthea) can have this gift, but it is difficult for your cup to overflow to others if there is not much in it in the first place!

Examples from scripture

- God is of course the ultimate giver (Jn 3v16).
- King David gave his *business profits* and *personal resources* to the building of the temple (1 Chron 29v1-5).
- The Widow who, proportionally speaking, gave away a huge amount (Mk 12v41f).
- Barnabas' extravagant gift must class as the gift of giving (Acts 4v36).

It seems that this gift can operate in whole churches for a season or forever:

- The Israelites had to be asked to stop giving when building the temple (1 Chron 29).
- The Early Church exhibited a lifestyle of giving to the point where there were no needy among them (Acts 2v45, 4v32-36).
- The Macedonian Churches had a special 'grace of giving' shown by giving beyond their ability and even fighting for the privilege of giving (1 Cor 8v1-5).

How will I know if I have it?

You will find yourself more alert than others to needy situations, and you derive satisfaction out of meeting those needs. You might be happy to do without yourself, but don't like others to do without. You love to hear that your gift was an answer to prayer. You will also like to encourage others to give. You will not usually be gullible to fake needs.

Misunderstandings

Because they often have the ability to make lots of money, and because they often keep quiet about their giving, they can be unfairly regarded rich misers! They can sometimes appear carnal and fleshly because they handle and talk about money in a direct manner.

Accountability required

God gives all of the gifts for the benefit of the body, not the individual, and there should therefore be accountability for all the gifts. I mean, imagine an unaccountable prophet or teacher or miracle worker – dangerous! The gift of giving is rather unique in that it centres around money which is itself a powerful thing (note the weighty warnings of 1 Tim 5v3-10 and 17v19), and because, more than any of the other spiritual gifts, it appears on the surface that the *individual* is ‘responsible’ for making the money, and by extension might therefore feel that he doesn’t need the same level of accountability that other *more spiritual* gifts might need.

I think this means a willingness on the part of the giver to recognise that his gift of making and giving money is for the good of the body (just like all the other gifts), and therefore also requires some level of accountability and direction.

The challenge of secrecy

It is sometimes hard for someone who consistently gives large amounts of money to the church to not feel that he/she has a right to be publically acknowledged, or to receive special treatment by the leadership. Whilst we certainly want to honour all spiritual gifts and those that labour so hard in different ways, those with the gift of giving need to be convinced that they will receive their reward from God who sees everything. Have a look at these verses:

MT 6:1 "Be careful not to do your `acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. MT 6:2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

GAL 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

JN 5:41 "I do not accept praise from men, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

JN 12:42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

The challenge of laying it at the feet of others...

Often big givers are themselves CEO's in the business arena and used to influencing leadership decisions. However, this does not necessarily translate into leadership authority in the church. Givers need to be content before God that their responsibility is to make money and lay it at the feet of the leaders (Acts 4v35) without strings attached, and trust the wisdom of the leaders to distribute it appropriately.

How can I grow in this gift?

Pray for more of it. Study it in scripture (especially 2 Cor 8 & 9) and through good resources. Learn from other givers. Stay accountable. Keep stretching yourself. Pursue generosity (Rms 12v8).

CHAPTER 16

THE GIFT OF LEADERSHIP

A definition

This is a special ability that God gives to some people to influence and lead other people into the place that God wants them to be in. Because it is a God-given gift, we must realise that we cannot make people into leaders – that is God’s job. Our job is look for the gifting of leadership on people and honour the gift. Terry Virgo writes: *“throughout the Old Testament, God chose whom He would to lead His people. The same principle applies in the New Testament church. Jesus, our ascended Christ, gave gifts. We cannot make people into leaders. We cannot simply vote them into office. We can observe and note the grace of God on people. We can see the anointing and respect the gift of God. A church that honours God's gifts honours God, and experiences God's ongoing favour”*.

And John Stott says, *“The New Testament never contemplates the grotesque situation in which the church commissions and authorises people to exercise a ministry for which they both lack the divine call and the divine equipment”* (John R W Stott, *God’s New Society*, IVP, 1979).

Examples in scripture

- **Adam** commissioned to lead in the garden and in the home (Gen 1v28, 2v15).
- **Abraham** commissioned to Father God’s people (Gen 12v2).
- **Saul** anointed to lead. *1 Sam 9v17 says, ‘This is the man who will govern my people’, and 1 Samuel 10v1 says, ‘Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance?’ and 1 Samuel 10v6 says, ‘The spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power and you will be changed into a different person’.*
- **David** anointed to lead. The eighth son - what a ridiculous choice! *1 Sam 16v13 says, ‘Then the Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him. He is the one.’ So Samuel took the horn and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.’*
- **Acts 13v1-3:** During worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit initiated the setting apart of Barnabas and Paul to a new apostolic role.
- **Acts 20v28:** ‘The Holy Spirit has made you leaders’.
- **Ephesians 4:** Christ himself appoints the leadership roles of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Different capacities

Like every spiritual gift, each leader will have a different capacity. In Exodus 18, Moses appointed different men over 10's, 50's, 100's and 1000's. It is important to have a sober assessment (Rms 12v3) of the current *capacity* of your leadership gift, and *context* where it can best be used.

How do I know if I have it?

If you have a leadership gift you will have a *desire* to lead (1 Tim 3v1), but sometimes this desire tries to hide, a bit like Saul hiding amongst the baggage (1 Sam 10v22)! Also, you will be showing some signs of influencing others. When you say "let's do this" people find it easy to agree and get behind you. You will be able to see the bigger picture and enjoy organising people and resources towards an end goal.

How can I grow my gift?

Pray for more of it. Study diligently. Seek out a mentor to learn from with the same attitude of Elisha in 2 Kings 2v2-9. Faithfully do your gift in small contexts.

A final word...

This gift is not only for church leaders, but for all in a god-given leadership role (E.g. Dads, Mums, Teachers, CEO's, etc). Because all authority is given by God (Rms 13v1-2), if you find yourself in a position of leadership (even if it is rather a surprise for you) then this grace gift of leadership is available to you. When God appoints he also anoints and equips. Because it is a gift, you can ask for more of it: more of a servant heart, more wisdom, more capacity, more people skills, and so on. Ask him to grow the leadership gift in you.

CHAPTER 17

THE GIFT OF MERCY

Definition

The gift of mercy is the special ability that God gives to certain people to feel empathy and compassion for individuals who are in some kind of distress, and the ability to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering. This gift is particularly on display through people who are happily and consistently involved in ministering to people in desperate situations. It often fuels other gifts such as the gift of healing.

Examples in scripture

- Mt 20v29-34: Jesus exhibited this gift when healing the two blind men.
- Lk 10: The Good Samaritan clearly had this gift.
- Acts 6: The early church carefully selecting people to be involved with caring for widows and orphans.

Characteristics of people with this gift

They are sensitive to peoples' needs and situations. They have a special attraction to, and understanding of, people in distress.

Misunderstandings / Potential Weaknesses

- They are often non-confrontational and poor at saying 'no' and maintaining boundaries.
- They can become a bit intense – always asking how you *really* are! Ironically, they often struggle to be vulnerable and open to others caring for them.
- They sometimes appear to be guided by emotion rather than logic. Due to the pressured context of ministry to especially needy groups, and due to their selfless attitude, people with this gift need others to help them channel their compassion. *They must work in team and remain accountable.* This will safeguard them from burn-out, depression and poor delegation.
- They are prone to getting depressed, which is maybe why Romans 12v8 exhorts them to minister "with cheerfulness" rather than getting too sucked into the problems of those that they are serving.
- They can also get critical of others who are not gifted or interested in the same situations that they are.

CHAPTER 18

THE GIFT OF ADMINISTRATION

The following information on this gift of administration is mostly from Nigel Ring who has been Terry Virgo's administrator for 25 years.

Definition

The gift of administration is the special ability that God gives to people to clearly understand the immediate and long-range goals of a group or leader and to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals. This gift is mentioned in 1 Cor 12v28 where the original word carries the idea of a *pilot of a ship* who is commissioned with authority to do a job within parameters set by the owner.

Administration principles from Acts 6

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6v1-7)

- V2: 'It would not be right'. It is not right that those with other gifts have to waste their gifting by doing certain things that they are not good at and don't enjoy doing....like administration! We need people to operate in their gifting.
- V3: So the solution is to find administrators! This is a spiritual gifting requiring the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- V7: Result = Spread of the gospel!

Administration principles from the Feeding of the 5000

Here, a miracle was needed...along with good administration!

- Step 1: Leadership decides what the need is i.e. to feed 5000
- Step 2: Assessment: What resources do we currently have? Not much...so we are going to need a miracle. Administrators need to develop their faith so they are not always pointing out reasons why we cannot do things.
- Step 3: Dividing the people into groups of 50's and 100's. Good organization enables the food to get to the people efficiently.
- Step 4: Jesus allowed his disciples to participate in giving out the food. Administration is about involving others and delegation.
- Result: People are satisfied.
- Step 5: Finally, they clean up and don't waste resources.

How will I know if I have this gift?

You will have a servant heart and be happy to work to implement another's vision. You will probably be an organised and tidy person who like things to be done decently and in order. You will have an eye for detail.

How can I grow my gift?

Pray for more of it. Study diligently. Seek out a mentor to learn from with the same attitude of Elisha in 2 Kings 2v2-9. Faithfully do your gift in small contexts.

CHAPTER 19

HOW MIGHT THESE GIFTS LOOK AT A DINNER PARTY?

When Fred walks in from the kitchen carrying a huge ice-cream cake, he trips on the step and sends the ice-cream cake flying. How would you respond?

Mercy

You poor thing! It could have happened to anyone. I remember once when clumsy old me ...

Serving / Helping

No problem. I'll just get a mop and quickly clean that up.

Prophetic

That's what happens when you're not careful! A great lesson for all of us to learn...

Teaching

The reason that fell is that the plate was wet and slippery.

Encouraging

This is not a train-smash, guys. Don't worry! You are usually brilliant at carrying trays...

Giving

I'll just nip out and buy some more ice-cream.

Leading

Listen up team: this is a momentary hic-up, but take heart as it won't interfere with our greater long-term objectives.

Administration

Jim, would you get the mop. Sue, please help pick it up, and Mary, could you quickly make something else, please?

PART 3

THE 'PEOPLE' GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FROM EPHESIANS 4

CHAPTER 20

ABOUT THESE GIFTS

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4v11-13).

Definition

We call these 'people gifts'. These gifts refer to people who have the gift in such a significant way that it is not an exaggeration to say that they personify or embody the gift – they are the gift. There are five gifts, or four if you combine pastor and teacher.

- Apostle
- Prophet
- Evangelist
- Pastor
- Teacher

What is their function?

Paul says that they function to prepare God's people for effectiveness and maturity. They do this by (a) doing their gift themselves, and (b) training others to do their gift. For example, an evangelist will actually preach and win souls himself, but also equip the saints to be evangelistic.

If a church is going to mature into all that it should be, then that church needs regular exposure to all of these five gifts. Sometimes a church is fortunate enough to have one or more of the gifts resident in the church (hopefully a pastor/teacher at least!), but where there is lack then they need to invite the other gifts into the church from time to time.

How do I know if I am one of these gifts?

Remember, these gifts are very mature expressions of each gift, and so it takes a while to grow into being one of them. And, they are not for everybody. Whilst everyone is encouraged to prophecy, only some will be genuinely prophetic, and fewer still will end up as prophets. The important thing is that your gift will be recognised by other senior leaders, so you just need to keep being yourself and faithfully serving the church with your gifts, and if God wants to promote you to the office of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher then relax....the Holy Spirit will organise for others to spot you and honour the gift of God in you.

CHAPTER 21

THE APOSTLE

The role of apostles

The apostles Paul and Peter both considered elders/pastors to be the ones that God had appointed to lead local churches (Acts 14v23, Acts 20v28, 1 Tim 5v17, 1 Pet 5v1f). But that is not the end of the story, because the apostles operated in a role of genuine authority *over and into* the churches and their elders. Here is a brief overview of what apostles do, although I devote a whole book to this theme in *The World Needs More Apostles*.

Apostles plant churches: ‘Apostle’ means ‘sent one’ and so apostles are gifted to open up new territory to the gospel. Jesus, our great apostle, was always eager to move on to unreached regions (Mk 1v35-38), and Paul was also relentless in moving ahead to new towns and cities. Apostles will start churches, either themselves or via an appointed delegate.

Apostles lay the foundations of churches: Apostles are wise master builders and foundation layers.¹ This is not just a role they play at the outset of a church (although they will probably need to be more ‘hands-on’ in that season), but it is also an on-going role. Foundations are key elements that keep a church on course in matters of doctrine, leadership and church life.

Apostles appoint elders: The appointment of an elder through the public laying on of an apostle’s hands demonstrates the primary role an apostle plays in confirming the rightness and readiness of a man to become an elder, and then in setting him in place.

Apostles envision and equip elders in an on-going manner: Paul and Peter evidently saw an important part of their role as input into the lives of elders. Some of the epistles are addressed to the *elders* and the church, and in Acts 20 Paul gathers the elders of the region of Ephesus together to deliver some instruction to them. 1 Peter 5 is of course one of the prime apostolic exhortations to elders.

¹ 1 Cor 3v10f

Apostles regard themselves as *fathers*: Paul clearly considered himself to be the father of churches and individuals. This speaks of a loving relationship not void of authority².

Apostles can also speak into the detail of church life: As well as teaching the broad apostolic doctrines, Paul also gave input into the detail of church life. He was concerned with marriages, matters of discipline, obedience to civil authorities, and everything else that was believed and practiced in the churches. These areas of detail are obviously 'elder areas' but Paul and Peter, as fellow elders³ and apostles, wanted to help shape every aspect of life in the church.

Apostles are known by the members of the church, and not just by the elders: Just like Jesus divided his ministry between his core of leaders and the crowd, so also did Paul. He lived amongst the people and was known by them,⁴ and he addressed most of his epistles to the church. It is not always possible for an apostle to spend all the time that he would like getting to know the people of the church, but it is essential for the people to feel that they know him. A mutual 'knowing' is especially important in a case where the apostle has to bring correction or rebuke to an elder or the church as a whole.

Apostles often interfaced with churches and elders through delegates: Paul released Titus and Timothy and others to represent him in the churches, and he asked the churches to receive these brothers as they would receive him.

How then can we conclude?

We conclude that apostolic men are a gift to elders and their churches, given to equip and mature the church. Elders should acknowledge and welcome genuine apostolic authority, and should soften themselves to receive the imprint of God through these men. Elders should understand their autonomy within the context of their apostolic covering. They and their churches are caught up with other churches on apostolic mission! Hallelujah!

Attitudes of mutual respect and acknowledgement of gifting and calling, under-girded by genuine affection and friendship, will pave the way for a beautiful and effective partnership between elders and apostles.

² 1 Cor 4v14f

³ 1 Peter 5v1

⁴ 1 Thess 1v5 and

CHAPTER 22

THE PROPHET

Definition

Whilst we are all called to pursue the spiritual gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14v1), and whilst some of us will have more of a God-given prophetic temperament, God raises up some people with a proven, anointed, effective and consistent prophetic ability. The Old Testament is loaded with prophets, but a fine example of a New Testament prophet is Agabus:

*During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named **Agabus**, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11v27-30).*

*After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named **Agabus** came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." (Acts 21v10-14)*

How can I develop into the office of a prophet?

Follow the teachings and principles laid out in the two previous chapters of this book pertaining to the 'gift of prophecy' and 'being prophetic', and faithfully serve the church with your gift. If this is an office that God has for you, he will promote you in due time by others recognising your growing gift.

Prophets will bring weighty words

Prophets will be able to bring the full range of prophetic words, but will be unique in that they will bring weighty words that can shape a whole church or region of churches. For example, the prophecy of Agabus regarding the famine was weighed and acted upon by the leaders in Antioch, including Barnabas and Paul. The group of prophets seem to have been sent by the Jerusalem church and it led to a corporate response in a well led and well taught church.

Prophets should be accountable

Luke describes the prophets who went to Antioch as 'from Jerusalem' (Acts 11v27). It is important to know where prophets come from and whether they are recognised as prophets at home base.

Prophets should operate in submission to apostolic ministry

Paul tested those who claimed to be prophets by whether or not they recognized his apostolic doctrine and practice: *'If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored (1 Cor 14v37-38).*

Prophets should not be insecure and melancholic

Dave Devenish writes: *'Sometimes prophets are described as being insecure or easily suffering rejection or having melancholic tendencies, but we will be hard pressed to find that consistently in scripture, although Jeremiah and Elijah did have some 'bad days at the office'. We need to see what is lack of sanctification or unresolved personal history and what is genuinely prophetic sensitivity. It is particularly difficult though for prophets if what they say is ignored or not commented upon which may in fact be because we agree but have not told them! Sometimes living with a future picture that has not yet been fulfilled or listened to can be frustrating for a prophet. However Silas seems to be a model of balanced, patient leadership to which we should encourage prophets to aspire.'*

Prophets will operate in the other revelation gifts (discerning of spirits, word of wisdom, word of knowledge) and often in the gift of healing as well.

CHAPTER 23

THE EVANGELIST

Definition

Whilst we are all called to evangelize (Mk 1v16-18), an evangelist is someone with a proven, anointed, effective and consistent evangelistic ability to win souls to Christ, and to equip believers to be evangelistic.

Biblical Examples

Philip: *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city (Acts 8v4-8).*

Paul: Paul has to be our primary example of an evangelist. He was totally committed to going into a new town or city and preaching and living to bring people to faith in Christ.

How can I grow towards the office of an evangelist?

By giving yourself to personally winning people to Christ. As you increasingly do this you will learn how to be effective in it yourself and how to teach others to be effective in it. Read books and take courses on evangelism. Spend time around a genuine evangelist to learn from them.

CHAPTER 24

THE PASTOR

Definition

The words *pastor and elder and overseer and shepherd* are used interchangeably in the New Testament. He is one who is gifted by God to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. He guards, guides and governs the flock, as a shepherd would do to sheep. He is also able to equip others to be pastoral. I devote a whole book to the office of the pastor in *The World Needs More Elders*.

Qualifications for Pastors/Elders

There are comprehensive lists of some of the necessary character and gifting qualifications for pastors in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Pastors Guard

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears (Acts 20v28-31). Watch your life and doctrine closely (1 Tim 4v16)

From these scriptures we can see that pastors must **guard themselves** from sin and the works of the world, flesh and devil, and **guard the flock** from heresy and from divisive or dangerous people.

Pastors Guide

Pastors guide the church like shepherds do their sheep (Acts 20v28f and 1 Peter 5v1-4). Pastors are out-in-front as the primary vision-bearers and pace setters. They lead their church into the likeness of Christ, and on mission into the neighbourhoods and nations.

Pastors Govern

Governing means to direct the affairs of the church (1 Tim 5v17) which needs to be done diligently (Rms 12v8). Pastors govern the church through:

- Setting the vision, strategy, direction and pace of the church
- The appointment of leaders (1 Tim 5v22)
- Through handling the finances (Acts 11v30)
- Thorough discipleship of the believers
- Performing church discipline when necessary

CHAPTER 25

THE TEACHER

Definition

The teacher is someone who has a proven, anointed, effective and consistent gift of teaching God's word. He is also able to develop others in their teaching gift. There is reason to believe that Paul referred to the pastor / teacher as one gift, so whether you agree with that or not, it is hard to imagine a pastor that can't teach, or a teacher who is not pastoral!

How could I develop into being a teacher?

See the Gift of Teaching in the Romans 12 cluster of gifts. Keep doing that and see if God promotes you to the office of a teacher.