

God Gives You Gifts – part 2

GIFTS FROM THE SON

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So far, we have learned that the greatest gift of all — the key, without which all other gifts remain fruitless — is the saving power of Jesus Christ, freely given to all who trust Him.

We also learned last week that God the Father has given every one of us Motivational Gifts that define our varied personalities and temperaments—that make us who we are—and guide our destiny in life. The Motivational Gifts are designed to promote mutual appreciation and cooperation in the Body of Christ (the Church).

Today, we will discover the Inspirational Gifts that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided to promote our maturity as the Body of Christ.

Why These Gifts?

Before I discuss those gifts with you, let the Apostle Paul provide us with the awesome context of this amazing grace:

Ephesians 4:4-10 (NLT)

⁴ We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. ⁵ There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. ⁷ However, he has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ.

⁸ That is why the Scriptures say,
“When he ascended to the heights,
he led a crowd of captives
and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹ Notice that it says “he ascended.” This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live. ¹⁰ The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the entire universe.

Three things are emphasized here:

- The *unity* of our relationship through Christ (v. 4)
- The *universality* and *diversity* of our giftedness (v. 7)
- The *ultimate* objective of God’s plan (v. 10)

With these truths as the backdrop, Paul then tells us *how* this will be accomplished:

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹ He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, ¹³ until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

By way of review, what is God’s Ultimate Objective? “So that [Christ’s] rule might fill the entire universe”

What is His Primary Tool for achieving that objective? The Church. The mature Church.

And how does the Church become mature? Through the function of the Inspirational Gifts of Christ.

Functional Gifts

God's gifts always have purpose. They are never given simply for the sake of giving. They have design and function for the individual who receives them, as well as others. So, they are not just for *having*, they are for *using*!

Let's take a closer look... what are the gifts Christ has given His Church? Paul lists them for us:

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Teaching Pastors

Some call these the "ascension gifts" because the commencement of their duties coincided with Christ's ascension to the Father in Heaven. However, I prefer the term "inspirational gifts" because it identifies their purpose (more about this in a few moments), rather than the time of their initiation.

Some refer to the "five-fold gifts of Christ" as most English translations suggest, but the original Greek wording links the last two roles as I have done here. A pastor who doesn't teach his people cannot bring them to maturity (he is an enabler of their dysfunctions); nor can a teacher who does not pastor his students (he informs their brains without motivating their hearts).

One thing is startlingly clear: Gifts from the Son are people! Gifted, called, appointed people.

Some refer to these as "offices" in the Body of Christ. Those who do usually also claim to have one of those offices—like a feather in their cap. The passage does not present "offices," but *functions*. What matters to men is titles and renown for themselves. What matters to God is their impact on the Body of Christ and the world.

My emphasis today will be on that impact, but I will describe these four varied functions briefly, referring to material presented in our membership class:

APOSTLES are dynamic church planters and tenders, pioneering and establishing new works and maintaining their fruitfulness by powerful preaching and teaching and confirming signs of the Spirit. This word indicates a special, personal commission from the Resurrected Lord (like the one Paul received when he was "sent...to the Gentiles").

PROPHETS are those who "speak forth" the words of God by the immediate inspiration and application of the Holy Spirit (as Ezekiel often described, "the Word of the Lord came to me, saying..."), for the purpose of grounding and guiding churches through their phases of growth in Christ.

EVANGELISTS are those whose special gift is to win others to faith in Christ, both by public proclamation and by private consultation. Their heart's desire (and corresponding ability) is to inspire and equip other believers to evangelize, as well.

TEACHING PASTORS are those whose primary calling is to nurture believers to maturity in Christian character and conduct by carefully watching their spiritual development and providing appropriate counsel and instruction from God's Word, "that they may grow thereby."

Are these the only "gifted people" Christ has given to the Church—these four, no more? I doubt it. If the other lists of gifts are suggestive and not conclusive, why should this be any different?

Another role I'm certain is a gift to the Body of Christ is INTERCESSORS, those who bear a burden to pray for God's work and His people in a dedicated fashion.

Another gift is WORSHIPPERS, men and women gifted with artistry to inspire the Body of Christ to offer high praises to God.

And so on...

A Gifted Team

These gifted individuals are members of a single team; a warrior unit. None is more important than the others, except for the moment, according to the immediate need of the Church. They are not competing with each other for the church's allegiance, or for their finances. They are a team.

These gifted individuals have a joint responsibility, a united purpose, and a shared goal.

Their joint responsibility is to "equip God's people to do his work."

Their united purpose is to "build up the church."

Their shared goal is the maturity of the Body of Christ, "until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord."

When each are present and active, they will also have a functional impact on the Church.

Their initial impact is equipping the people of God for doing God's work.

The Church has a work to do. It is the work God has given them. But they cannot do it unless they are equipped. Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, has specially prepared gifted individuals to equip us.

None of us achieves effective worker status without the help of others—usually many others. They are people who have believed in us, helped us discover our dreams, nurtured our character development, taught us skills of ministry, and prayed for our continued success.

Their secondary impact is building up the church—in love, unity, service, and number.

If their help was not absolutely essential, Christ would not have given these gifted people to us. We need them all. If we are well-equipped, we can be effective for the Lord.

Our love for one another will increase, which Jesus identified as the mark of our discipleship. Want to know what grade you received on the last test in the School of Life? Ask yourself, How did I love?

By their help, the church will develop functional unity—working together multiplies our effectiveness.

With their guidance, the service each of us provides in the name of the Son of God to those in our spheres of influence will reach farther and accomplish more.

As a result of all this the church will grow. The power for a church's growth is not in its pulpit or its programs alone, but in the spiritual growth and radiant service of its people.

The ultimate impact of these gifted people in our midst is the maturity of the church. Spiritual maturity is not an isolated, individual quality. It is a condition of the entire family. If you rest in your own spiritual maturity, while ignoring the needs of others in the Body of Christ, you're deceiving yourself. My spiritual maturity depends on *your* spiritual maturity, and yours upon mine. No one arrives ahead of the rest. So quit focusing on yourself alone, and get engaged in serving in the church.

Ephesians 4:14-16 (NLT)

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth.

¹⁵ Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Team Church

Under Jesus Christ's direction "the whole body is fitted together perfectly." Just as stones are shaped to fit snugly and firmly in their place in a rock wall, the Lord shapes our lives; and He shapes us for "fitting together."

There are no "Lone Rangers" in the Church of Jesus Christ. God has no isolated prophets, nor unattached apostles. Every child of God is to be fitted into the Church.

We occasionally say something like, "If you were the only person in need of salvation, Jesus Christ would have given His life for you." Insofar as that describes His earnest and personal love for every person, that is an accurate picture. And if you have not yet met this wonderful Savior, you can do so right here today, just by offering Him your life and inviting Him to lead you from this time forward.

But in actual fact, Jesus did not die for any individual. The Bible says, "He loved *the church* and gave Himself for it." He died for the sins of *the whole world*.

The Church is His dream, the love of His great heart, the vision of His grace, and His eternal bride and companion!

Fitted together, we fulfill His dream. "Each part does its own special work." And that work is to help every other part to grow spiritually with Christ. The *inevitable* result is spiritual health, vitality, and love.

Everyone is both a beneficiary and a contributor. Your part is to receive from those Christ has given to you. And your part is to give to those Christ has given you to.

Will you do *your* part?