

Spiritual Gifts

Identify and Use them
Through the P.R.I.Z.M.
of God's Grace

g u t t e r

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DAVID L. ROGERS



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This book is affectionately dedicated to
Dr. Howard Bixby,
mentor, teacher, friend, and counselor,
without whom I may not be who I am today,
through whose encouragement I have advanced toward
becoming the man of God He designed me to be.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If you are like me, you probably skip over the Acknowledgements page in most books. I humbly ask you to save that practice for other books, but not this one.

As far back as I can remember in our church planting experience in Chile, I can recall people's names and faces who have finally made sense of their spiritual giftedness, and it fills me with joy. New churches, middle-aged churches, and even a few second-generation churches have benefitted from the truths that I have attempted to capture in these pages. If I have not accurately captured them, it is not the fault of my students but of their instructor. A topic like spiritual gifts rarely leaves one the same once it becomes clear and that is what has motivated me to put these concepts in writing: the expectation of change. But I would not have done it were it not for the persistence, the faith and trust in how much these ideas have impacted and will continue to impact local churches. I have received encouragement from people like the national pastors it has been my joy to serve alongside; from teachers and national award-winning educators; from young, inexperienced Bible college students; and experienced, veteran college teachers. To each of them I owe a debt of gratitude because they kept telling me, "Don't give up! We need clarity and practicality in the topic of spiritual gifts!"

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corrected, and questioned me about the content. Some are fellow missionaries, including Joseph Arthur and Douglas Kreeger. Others are pastoral friends, like Todd Harker, Brady Cortner and Mark Ashley. Still others tested the questionnaires, probed me for the meaning and worked to polish the questions. My editor, Linda Riggs Mayfield, was especially insightful in perfecting the questions. And over one hundred twenty students from the New Life Baptist Church in Santiago, Chile, and others in churches spread throughout Latin America, have completed and proven the questionnaires clarity and usefulness. I can only name those that have invested time more recently, since this project began over ten years ago. These are Jaime Palma, Ruth Ann Rogers, and of course, everyone who completed the course on discovering spiritual gifts that I have taught at New Life Baptist Church.

As with all written works, once in print, it may be a light to the path of some, for which I hope and long, but it also can be a source of criticism and questions for others. If you are of the first group, let me encourage you to not go it alone but to look for other likeminded searchers. Learn by listening, share together the adventure. If you are of the second group, I can only ask that you treat the volume with charity as I have attempted to write and transmit my ideas in a charitable spirit.

As a young intern in the ministry school where I was mentored and discipled in pastoral praxis, a fellow intern once said to me, “David, your spiritual gifts prompt others to learn and to dig into the Word. As Proverbs 20:5 states ‘The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.’ By using your gifts under the direction of the Holy Spirit others too, will discover theirs.” If this book does that for you, my purpose will be fulfilled.

Finally, my sincerest thanks and heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Linda Riggs Mayfield, who painstakingly edited this work, and because of whom this book is better than if I had completed it alone. It would not be an

exaggeration to say Linda increased the accessibility, ease of use, and value of this book.

For Him alone,
David L. Rogers
Santiago, Chile
April, 2023

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CHAPTER 1

Why Do Christians Need to Discover and Develop Spiritual Gifts?



“Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you...”

1 Timothy 4:14a

Do you spend time exercising? Exercise can provide many physical benefits. When I exercise, I feel better, I think more clearly, and I have more stamina and more motivation. When I do not exercise, my body feels sluggish and run down. Our muscles are designed to lift, to pull, to stretch, and to function regularly. When muscles are not exercised, the result is lethargy and a poor state of health.

Think about how often you exercise your spiritual “muscles.”

I lived the first 15 years of my Christian life without much spiritual exercise. The extent of my efforts amounted to little more than just occasionally giving a public testimony, reading the Bible in public, or playing the trumpet for a church service—not really much of a “stretch.” My spiritual exercise was not more than an occasional good work for someone or to a group of people. Worse yet, I had no sense of God’s grace working through me to bless others. The things I did were about me.

God’s grace is shown to us by granting us spiritual gifts—abilities that increase our devotion and obedience to God, give us the joy of supporting others in the Church as brothers and sisters in Christ, and provide the

satisfaction that comes with knowing we are using what He has given us to the best of our abilities. I did not understand the importance of discovering my spiritual gifts. Without understanding them, I did not employ them effectively in service.

For many years I had no idea of what the Bible teaches on the topic of spiritual gifts.

Then while I was in Bible college, I began taking steps to learn about spiritual gifts, but I still only partially understood the concepts. I thought that I knew something about the subject, but spiritual gifts were still not a priority for me. However, when a pastor friend invested time to mentor me concerning the definitions of and the proper exercise of spiritual gifts, it was as if the lights came on! Until then gifts were a mystery, confined to those special people we called “the Charismatics” who seemed to do nothing else except talk about gifts. For some reason, I had come to believe that I could be “spiritual” without a correct biblical understanding of “spiritual” gifts. I could not have been more mistaken!

To you, maybe spiritual gifts are left to other religious traditions, or seem to be like merely decorative ornaments in the Christian life: pretty but not essential. If you think in either or both of these ways, you are in the company of many Christians, some of whom live with no idea of which gift or gifts they have received. Perhaps you, like many, are uncertain about the meaning, discovery, or the use of spiritual gifts. If so, you’ve come to the right book!

Spiritual Gifts and the Local Church

Many Christians are uninformed concerning the biblical parameters of using their spiritual gifts in a local church, and their lack of knowledge and application negatively impacts the cause of Christ. Regular weekly activity in traditional evangelical churches is declining. According to a recent study (Rainer, 2018), 60% of professed Christians were inactive in their church.

Are you one of those Christians who sits in the background, observing but not edifying the church? If you are, then you may not understand how crucial the exercise of your spiritual gifts is to the well-being of your church family!

Thom Rainer, researcher and former president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, stated that more than 90 percent of the churches in the U.S. were losing ground in the communities they served (Rainer, 2018). Only about 6% of churches in the U.S. were actually keeping up in growth with their surrounding communities. The North American Church has been losing ground due, in part, to inactive believers and uninvolved Christians. What does the future hold for the North American Church if her members do not understand their special part in it?

The U.S. data Rainer cited serve as a warning to all churches around the world. Christians dare not drop our guard concerning how our local churches are ministering to the communities where they are located. When believers everywhere function effectively, the church will be a vibrant place where each person employs their gifts and where others receive the benefit of that spiritual exercise, both within the local church and outside it.

Spiritual Gifts and the Believer

Christians dare not ignore the key role that spiritual gifts play in the health of the spiritual life of a believer. The proper use of gifts is commanded in the Bible. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you” (1 Tim. 4:14a). Be sure you know what gifts you have, because every believer will answer to the Lord Jesus Christ for what they did with those gifts. We are commanded to “...be of sound judgement and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another” (1 Peter 4:7a-8b). The Scriptures also command us to minister to one another “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”

(1 Pet. 4:10). We are ALL stewards of God's rich, abiding, enabling grace and demonstrate it by using our spiritual gifts. They must not be neglected.

Purpose of This Book

The central goal of this book is to help the reader objectively understand and apply practices and methods to discover and use their spiritual gifts. This chapter is an introduction to an understanding of spiritual gifts and how to identify them. Receiving a biblical introduction and specific instruction about serving and edifying the Body of Christ greatly multiplies the believer's potential for using spiritual gifts.

The P.R.I.Z.M. of God's Grace

For many years I have been teaching and training national believers in Chile how to discover and develop their spiritual gifts. Out of those discussions, classes, and lively interaction with pastors and members of the church, a process took shape. That process is called the P.R.I.Z.M. of God's Grace. It is a step-by-step way of looking at the ways in which the Christian manifests Christ through serving others. Each of the five letters in P.R.I.Z.M. identifies a step to be taken. This book provides a guide through each one of them.

The future is bleak for those churches that are full of spectators and not participants. I want to strongly encourage not only pastors and other leaders to evaluate their church's methods of guiding believers to find their gifts, but also, I encourage every Christian to take a close look at their own involvement and effectiveness in the church. Ask yourself, "What fruit can I point to that is clearly the work of the Holy Spirit and not the consequence of my human efforts?" Do you see God's hand at work through you over time? Are your spiritual gifts being exercised for the benefit of others? What evidence is there that you are serving within your

area of giftedness? Asking such questions should not be done with a critical spirit, but a spirit of genuine concern for the future of churches everywhere!

Reasons to Identify, Understand, and Use Your Spiritual Gifts

These are several scriptural reasons to identify, make sure you understand, and increase your awareness and knowledge of how to use your spiritual gifts. Understanding these reasons will allow you to understand and be more aware of them while you learn how to use them. Four of them are explained and discussed here. As you read through the reasons ask yourself which of them applies to you.

First Reason: To Maximize Fruitfulness

The first reason to discover one's spiritual gifts is that this is the key to being as spiritually fruitful as possible. Spiritual unproductiveness or unfruitfulness often shows itself in ways such as feeling frustrated about your church involvement or feeling doubtful about your personal effectiveness as a Christian. Maybe you subconsciously compare yourself to other believers who seem to be more effective in their service for the Lord than you are. If your life is unfruitful or unproductive as a Christian, perhaps you are not serving within the area of your giftedness. You may be serving in ways that seem to meet needs no one else is meeting, but maybe you are not using your gifts in the best ways possible, or perhaps you don't have an accurate understanding of how you fit in the church body.

Traits of Lack of Fruitfulness

When you are unfruitful in your Christian life, you will see one or more of the following traits in your day-to-day spiritual walk:

Frustration. Frustration results when you do not see God working in you. There is a sense of spiritual sterility.

Pre-occupation. Unfruitful believers are focused on the external or the emotional, including being a “crowd pleaser.” This will cause you to often miss the joy of walking by faith as the Holy Spirit guides you and leads you to new ways of investing yourself in the work of the Kingdom.

Stagnation. Stagnation appears as a lack of joy or drive to serve a local body of believers. You are just as content to stay home as you would be to get up early and go serve in the nursery, the teens’ class, or in some behind-the-scenes function. You don’t think serving others in the church brings out the best in you.

If you discover your gifts, however, you will experience a greater fruitfulness, a greater joyfulness, and more confidence that you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit. This is because spiritual gifts produce spiritual fruit as a result of being submitted to the Spirit’s leading. Thus, a lack of fruit signals a need to understand how God has gifted you to build up the church.

Habits to Avoid

Beware of remaining in a state of unfruitfulness or a lack of motivation to minister. In that situation you may be setting yourself up to get trapped in emotionalism or sentimentalism. While both are habits to avoid, they are different.

Emotionalism. Emotionalism is characterized as living as though you must feel some “emotional high” or “spiritual high” to make you feel good about yourself. Don’t be trapped by this kind of counterfeit spirituality! Emotions do not produce godliness, and spiritual fruit is not the result of getting out of control or being overcome by a strange experience. Living day by day in simple, intentional, obedience to the Spirit will generate spiritual fruit.

Sentimentalism. Excessive expression of tender emotions such as

sadness or nostalgia, whether in words or actions, is *sentimentalism*. Living based on one's feelings alone is a trap that leads to carnal living focused on oneself, rather than leaning on the Spirit of God. It is necessary to intentionally avoid the subtle seductiveness of sentimentalism as well as the attraction of emotionalism.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus taught His disciples to be fruitful. The explanation of how they could be fruitful spiritually is found in His Upper Room teachings from that night (John 13-16). He provided them with the imperative of being Spirit-led and filled. If the matter of godly and spiritually minded living was that important to Jesus our Lord on the last night before his death, then it should also be important to you and me!

Ch. 1 Application Assignment #1

Take a few minutes now and read four chapters in the New Testament--John 13 through 16, and ask the Lord to teach you just what He expected of His disciples. Ask Him to teach you what their relationship was to be with the Holy Spirit. Make notes of what the Spirit of God teaches you about your own condition of fruit bearing. Then commit those things to prayer as we continue studying the spiritual gifts.

Second Reason: To Show Evidence of the Holy Spirit in Us

Another good reason to understand spiritual gifts is that **the Spirit of God indwells all Christians**, teaching us that those spiritual gifts flow from the His presence and work. Romans 8:9 clearly states that **all** genuine Christians possess the Holy Spirit from the moment they receive the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation--He is there with them and indwelling them. From that day forward, every believer enjoys a real relationship with God!

No Christian can live an enduringly fruitful life without dependence on the Holy Spirit. You and I will be hindered in the exercise of spiritual

gifts if we have a false understanding of His work in us, starting with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, “For **all** who are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons *and daughters* of God” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Rom. 8:14). In other words, fruitful and joyful Christians depend on the Holy Spirit to be led by Him according to God’s guidelines. Spiritual people will be spiritually minded, and spiritually minded people avoid acting without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How to Know the Holy Spirit is Working in You

How do you know if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you? Here are three ways to know: God’s seal of promise, the desire to obey, and the presence of joy. Each provides clear evidence.

God’s Seal of Promise. The most important way we know we have the Spirit is because all Christians are assured of the indwelling work the Spirit which God has promised to us as the *seal of our redemption* (see 2 Tim.1:12-14; 2:19). We ought to believe God’s promises.

We have many ways to seal and secure things today, from sticky flaps on envelopes to electrical tape. When Paul wrote about being sealed with the Holy Spirit, he was almost certainly thinking of the kind of seals he would have used on his letters to the churches--a seal made of wax. When a letter was written on a scroll, the scroll was then rolled up and the edge was sealed by dropping hot wax on it. While the wax was still malleable, a signet ring or other kind of personal symbol was pressed into it. That permanently identified it with the owner of the seal. Once the imprint of that seal that was there, only the designated recipient was permitted to break that seal and open the scroll. It was protected until the designated recipient broke the seal. God states that He seals all believers with the Holy Spirit, and this was clearly in Paul’s mind when he wrote the Ephesians and said, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

Salvation occurs in the life of the believer at the moment of trusting

Christ as Savior, who were then “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it...” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Eph.1:13b-14). That pledge is a promise of a future happening—experiencing our inheritance of eternal life. If you or I do not possess the seal of the Spirit, then we do not have Christ. And if we do not have Christ dwelling in us, then we are not saved! But the opposite is also true: *all who have Christ* have the Spirit and all who have the Spirit have the eternal pledge as the confirmed guarantee of future redemption and glory in heaven with God.

The Desire to Obey. Seeking to live out God’s commands in Scripture as a normal way of life is evidence that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you. Any command given in the Scriptures implies the assumption that we as Christians are able to fulfill it with the Spirit’s help.

The life of the Christian flows from living in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul commanded, “...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). The Spirit-filled Christian is the expected way to live out our faith--walking in obedience to the Lord because that is what He enables us to do.

The Presence of Joy. Another evidence that the Spirit indwells all Christians emanates from the relationship that a Christian enjoys with Him. Spirit-controlled Christians joyfully obey, surrender to, and follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. When Christians grieve the Spirit that His power and assurance is lost. The Apostle Paul instructed the believers in Ephesians 4:30 (*English Standard Version*, 2001), “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Only a Spirit-indwelled person longs to operate within the parameters of a genuine relationship with God’s Spirit. We ought to pray that we do not lose the joy of His working in and through us.

These three ways focus on knowing what it means to possess the Holy Spirit. The point is that it is impossible to be a Christian and not possess the Holy Spirit. We can be assured that all Christians possess the Holy

Spirit in full measure. With this foundational matter settled, we will have the real potential to live confidently in the power of the Holy Spirit and be directed by God in our daily walk. That is how Paul could say, “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge” (2 Cor. 5:5).

Baptism in the Spirit. When the foundation has been established for why it is important to discover and understand spiritual gifts, a common question that arises is this: What does it mean to be baptized in the Spirit? This is a legitimate question and one that too often causes confusion among Christians.

Definition of the Term. Begin with a simple definition of the baptism in the Holy Spirit: Baptism in the Spirit is when God joins the believer to the life of the Body of Christ for the purpose of equipping them for service. The *Body of Christ* is another name for the Universal Church. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the “doorway” into the Church. After this baptism occurs, believers may operate in their proper place in the Body of Christ, that is, where they will function most effectively and fruitfully within the Church. For this reason, the Apostle Paul said, “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism...” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Eph. 4:4-5).

Expanding on that definition, the baptism in the Spirit is the spiritual, invisible act by which God works to unite the believer to the Church, at which time He gives the believer the Holy Spirit and seals, indwells and empowers him or her for service to the Body. Here is the means by which you become a member of the spiritual Body of Christ. At the moment someone places his or her faith in Christ, the Bible says they become different, a “new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). Two aspects of being a new creation are that we receive the Holy Spirit and we receive spiritual gifts.

When becoming a Christian, He makes you anew in Him (Rom. 6:4). To be new in Christ is to be equipped to glorify Him through your life.

That is why we must understand that it is not the Holy Spirit who baptizes, but it is Christ who baptizes or joins the believer into His Church, which is described in Scripture as His body (see 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:12-16). The believer is joined to the spiritual life and unity of all Christians around the world, the Universal Church in all ages and in all nations from the day of Pentecost until the day of Christ's return (see 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6).

When a person repents of their sins, believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and receives the Holy Spirit, they also receive the spiritual gifts that equip each believer for their personal role or function in the body of Christ. Christ's baptism of the new believer in the Holy Spirit is His means of qualifying you to possess and use spiritual gifts.

The Timing of Spirit Baptism. If you understand the baptism in the Spirit as related to *both salvation and spiritual enabling*, this brings clarity to the debate over whether a Christian is baptized in the Spirit at salvation or at some point later in his life. Bible-believing Christians of both the Pentecostal and the non-Pentecostal traditions agree that salvation comes through the Spirit's indwelling presence. The Spirit's presence comes when the individual trusts in Christ as Savior. If someone has been born again, that new birth *must be* the result of the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation cannot come through the keeping of the law or through practicing religious habits. Salvation is the result of being born into the family of God. Thus, it is the Spirit that saves, and that same Spirit of God indwells the believer.

The Apostle Peter observed the truth of being baptized in the Spirit at the point of salvation when the family of Cornelius was saved in Acts 11. Peter observed the work of the Spirit in Cornelius and his family, and he concluded that all believers are baptized in the Spirit. Later Peter recounted this event to the Church in Jerusalem, and he quoted the words of Jesus Christ who said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Acts 11:16). In

other words, the fact of all believers receiving this baptism at the point of salvation is in direct fulfillment of the promise given by Christ Jesus. That was what Peter understood took place with Cornelius and his family and that is what he testified about when he explained it to the Church in Jerusalem. This was a transitional moment in the expansion of the church, wherein the role of the Holy Spirit was clear and decisive as a connection between the Jewish and the Gentile churches and as such, established a pattern that was intended for the future of the church.

The Process of Sanctification. The indwelt believer is *sanctified* or set apart for service. Therefore, the baptism of the Spirit is foundational to both salvation and sanctification. No one ever needs to doubt that these come through the Spirit's work in the heart of the believer. Reminding the Christians in Rome that the Spirit of God is present and working, Paul stated "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Rom. 8:15). Therefore, the act of Christ baptizing the believer in the Spirit is essential to using spiritual gifts: He connects us to the body of Christ, He provides a unique way to serve God, He builds the church because He is working in us. We were baptized into the church or the body of Christ at the point of regeneration.

Third Reason: To Grow in Grace

The third reason to discover and develop spiritual gifts is that when we faithfully practice using spiritual gifts the result is growing in grace (see 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Grace is unmerited favor. In these verses Peter identified why we ought to regularly and faithfully use the gifts received, which flow from an undeserved enablement and equipping as a reflection of God's work of salvation—that is, His grace. As a child of God, you are saved by grace and that makes you a steward of it. Herein lies one of the most noticeable features of a Christian whose faith is robust and healthy: they exude

graciousness, patience, and especially Christlikeness, as a consequence of the grace of God at work.

Stewardship

What does it mean to be a steward? A steward is someone who takes care of something that belongs to someone else. We are members of Christ's Body, the Church, and have been entrusted as stewards of His Church. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul wrote, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards, that they be found faithful" (*English Standard Version*, 2001). Christians are stewards because that which is received is not ours: everything comes from Christ and is to be used for the glory of Christ. This is done by showing forth His grace in daily living within His Church and in the world. Discovering one's gifts changes everything about how one lives the Christian life. Life as a Christian who is moving toward spiritual completeness ought to be the goal.

Good stewards are careful not to ignore or bypass the foundational truth that all that is done with spiritual value comes through grace alone; otherwise, the steward has missed the point of who they are in Christ. Spiritual gifts are the vehicles or the instruments that He gives every individual who has been regenerated to show forth "the praise of his glory" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Eph. 1:12) and thus be a faithful steward in the church.

Obedience

These New Testament examples of commands to believers substantiate the goal of living as vessels of God's grace:

Be Strong. "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

Think With Sound Judgment. “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith...since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them properly*”(Rom. 12:3, 6a).

Use the Grace.

...of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all people as to what the plan of the mystery is which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; so that the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known through the church...” (Eph. 3:7-10a)

It is God's grace at work in you which allows others to see Him in your life. Therefore, it is extremely important for the Holy Spirit to fashion you into a “minister of grace” for His work. You and I are works of grace that God is perfecting. His plan is that the world sees in us the reality of a life of faith and service. Such a life will not be selfishly focused. To properly exercise one's spiritual gifts as gifts of grace, He invites the believer to trust in the Spirit while confidently living out their faith. When Christians live out their faith, they will become more visibly an example of God's grace, not the results of their own efforts or talents.

Notice what the Apostle Paul affirmed: “...I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace...this grace was given...so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church...” (Eph. 3:7, 8, 10). The spiritually minded are constantly reminding themselves that the church is not a building. It is not a program nor

much less is the church limited to vocational workers or full-time persons. Rather, the Church is comprised of *every believer, saved by grace, and united to the Body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit*. The Church is God's way of showcasing His renewing and transforming grace.

The Church is comprised of believers world-wide and consists of those who have placed their undivided trust in Christ Jesus. So, what Paul did, and what anyone may do, for the Church, in the grace of God, and controlled by the Spirit of God, helps build His Body. We are a way for the light of God's Gospel to shine into hearts, homes, happenings, and all human experience. When God's redeemed people are living in step with His grace, the world will take notice! Therefore, all Christians must discover, use and understand their individual contribution to the body of Christ, His Church.

Fourth Reason: To Maximize Your Contribution to the Kingdom

And finally, a fourth reason to discover and learn how to use about gifts that Jesus gave His church is that He has created in each one a unique, one-of-a kind package or blend of unique gifts that are amalgamated with their personality and experience, talents, yearnings, and potential. No one else brings to the Church and ultimately to Christ's Kingdom the same package of gifts and talents that you do.

Spiritual Gifts vs. Human Talents

Sometimes people confuse spiritual gifts with human talents, but the two are not the same. Spiritual gifts come at the point of salvation, as evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in us. A spiritual gift is God's work through us, granted by His grace, to generate some spiritual effect or spiritual fruit in others. Talents are not spiritual qualities but are personal characteristics. They are those natural inclinations and human abilities which God gave to us through our heritage and our genetic design. We

are born with the aptitudes, and we have the responsibility to develop and use them, too.

Personality Traits

How do you function when facing the pressure of being in the presence of people of authority, or who have high ranking positions? Are you uncomfortable? Do you feel overly conspicuous, as if the whole world is looking at you? Or, by contrast, is your mind set on high alert, your pulse accelerates slightly, and you move into “high output mode”? If you are activated and motivated when in the presence of authorities or in moments of stress, then you probably have a personality or character makeup that allows you to grow and thrive under tension.

Others, however, shrink from such situations and feel inadequate, nervous, confused, and tongue-tied. These folks have a personality that is more at ease in the background or in more casual situations. Neither personality is better than the other, but one functions well under pressure, and the other does not. It is simply a matter of personality and make up, not a spiritual strength or weakness.

Individualized Combinations

The spiritual *gift blend* is an amazing way that God’s grace is revealed in each of His children, each Spirit-equipped believer who becomes a trophy of His transforming power. The combining of spiritual grace at the point of salvation with their personal qualities, personal interests and experience is the result of how God blends the spiritual and the human to form a unique *gift package* in the life of each Christian individually.

Notice how the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:3, “...I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Then he continued, “...since we have gifts

that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them properly...*" (Rom. 12:6). It is both the faith that God grants and the grace that he provides to each believer that becomes one's unique expression of His work in you and me. While the gifts come at salvation and the talents (skills, personality, aptitudes) are part of your genetic make-up, it is the particular combination of these two that is your special way of serving the body of Christ. No one is the same and even though some will have the same *spiritual gifts*, each personality and set of talents are unique. The two together form a blend or package that is God given and God determined. They are God's differing grace to each of us.

The P.R.I.Z.M. of God's Grace

How do we identify our own personal spiritual "gift package"? It starts with prayer, then can be followed by a number of tools to apply. One tool that I developed out of my own ministry and education is the P.R.I.Z.M., pronounced just like the word it resembles—*prism*. A geometric prism is a figure with specific shapes for its sides. An optic prism is a transparent object shaped like the geometric prism. It allows light to pass through it. A white light beam that enters one side emerges from the other side separated into a spectrum of colors.

The P.R.I.Z.M. model will allow you to shine the "light beam" of the grace God has given you, as an individual, through the prism of five types of questions that will help to identify the spectrum of your spiritual gifts that will show on the other side—thus, the answers you have when you have completed the questionnaires. The "P" stands for Personality, the "R" is for Spiritual Reality, the "I" for Interests, the "Z" for Zeal or passion, and the "M" for Ministry experience. We will walk through the process of using the P.R.I.Z.M. model later in the book.

The P.R.I.Z.M. model is a picture of the way God's grace shines in a Christian, as light though through a prism is refracted or broken

into its component parts, and in turn, is variegated like a rainbow. Each Christian shows God's grace but in particular and unique ways, as with a rainbow. It is still God's white light of grace, but it shows up as various gifts represented by red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. Each person's gift of God's grace is according to His design and His special provision.

To grow in grace is, in part, contingent on exercising our gifts faithfully in the context of a local church. Let us be responsible servants of the King, knowing that we will give account for how we glorified Christ in the proper use of our spiritual gifts! When we exercise spiritually, the effects are healthy! And the results glorify God.

Conclusion

Believers who identify, develop, and use their spiritual gifts benefit the local church, and they also receive benefits themselves. Identifying gifts acknowledges the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. As the gifts are used, they produce spiritual fruit. The believer grows in grace, and in doing so, maximizes their own contribution to Christ's kingdom. The P.R.I.Z.M. model for identifying spiritual gifts helps a believer identify the gifts of grace they received when they received Christ.

When learning new skills, such as how to ski or sail or snorkel, it is wise to keep in mind that mistakes can be costly. When I coached young sailors at a Christian camp located on Lake Erie in the Midwest of the U.S., I saw the damage done to the sail boats and the water skis because the person using them did not know how to slow down, how to stop, or how to regain control. The damage done to the equipment could have been avoided if the novice had paid more attention to all the instructions and not merely about how to begin the activity.

The next six chapters provide an integrative process to guide you into learning about spiritual gifts. Remember, an impatient beginner in any sport will usually suffer some hard consequences if they do not grasp

the entire scope of the game or skill, and that pattern holds true in other learning opportunities, as well. So be patient, going from the basic to the more detailed, from the easy to the more demanding, as we work through the next chapters. And if all goes as planned, before long you will be enjoying the all-new sense of freedom and joy as you employ your spiritual gifts to the benefit of your church. Just take it one step at a time.

Ch. 1 Application Assignment #2:

1. How would you describe your own understanding of spiritual gifts before you started reading this book?
2. In your experience, is the emphasis on spiritual gifts aimed at visible manifestations (tongues, miracles, healing) as the normal and expected pattern for the use of gifts? If so, why do you think that this is true and how has such an emphasis influenced your view of gifts?

CHAPTER 2

How Can Christians Be Spiritually Minded?



“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

(English Standard Version, 2001, 1 Cor. 2:15-16)

No one enjoys being near an elementary-school-age child who insists on behaving or talking like an infant. Dealing with children who are in their teen years, but who act like grade school children, is also unpleasant. Immaturity in a teen, an adult, or anyone can be a very uncomfortable thing for others to endure. Likewise, a Christian whose spiritual life reflects immaturity can introduce real angst into a group setting. Worse yet, an immature person often causes serious conflict and tension with others who must deal with their immaturity.

In 1 Corinthians, chapters 2 and 3, Paul contrasted believers who were still “natural” or “carnal” with believers who were “spiritual,” and could understand things that were “spiritually discerned.” In 3:1-3, he explained that those who were understanding and behaving as carnal Christians were like babies who had not matured enough to eat solid food yet. Believers need to grow and mature spiritually so they can more effectively deal with