

Dr. Larry Gilbert

Once at a Sunday school convention I taught two workshops, “*Teaching Spiritual Gifts in the Sunday School*” and “*How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift*.” The “teaching” workshop attracted 30 people while the “discovery” workshop attracted about 150 people, both to a room that seated 35. People are curious and long to discover more about themselves. Approximately 100 people stood willingly during the hour-long presentation hoping to discover their spiritual gifts.

Much material is available to help people recognize, discover, and define their particular spiritual gifts. Most Christians, however, do not understand the relationships of spiritual gifts—how a spiritual gift relates to their lives, other people’s lives, the local church or to the body of Christ as a whole.

Therefore, identifying and understanding God-given spiritual gifts should be a high priority in every Christian’s life. Likewise, pastors who understand spiritual gifts in light of their relationship to other areas of ministry will better understand their own roles.

Here are eight reasons why identifying and understanding your God-given spiritual gifts, and the gifts of those around you, should be a high priority.

1. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you understand God’s will for your life.

Spiritual gifts are tools given by God for doing the work of the ministry. Different people are given different gifts to handle different tasks. For example, if God gives you a hammer, He wants you to drive nails, not cut boards. If He wanted you to cut boards, He would have given you a saw rather than a hammer.

Understanding your gift in light of this principle will enable you to make decisions about where to serve God, how to serve Him, and in many cases, help you choose your occupation. But in all cases it will help you set priorities for your life.

What God has called you to do He has gifted you to do, and what He has gifted you to do He has called you to do.

2. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you know what God has not called you to do.

After selling my business of fourteen years, selling my home, moving my wife and three children 300 miles away to prepare for the ministry, probably the greatest discovery I ever made was that God had not called me to become a pastor.

The more I understand what God *has not* called me to do, the more I understand what He *has* called me to do. No doubt, recognizing what you are not supposed to do can be as important as recognizing what you are to do.

If you realize God has not given you the gift of “mercy,” you can easily turn down a position that would require that gift, without worrying that you might miss God’s calling. The same is true with all the gifts.

3. Knowing your spiritual gift relieves you from serving out of “duty.”

If the truth were known, many active church workers have no business doing what they are doing. They are only doing it because the pastor asked them to, a committee elected them, or they feel obligated to do something; but they are not serving where they were gifted.

Christians have many reasons for serving in areas that keep them busy but not fulfilled. It boils down to this: many serve out of *duty* instead of *God’s calling*. By discovering and utilizing your God-given gifts, it will reduce your chances of serving out of duty, and allow you to serve through the joy of your calling.

4. Knowing your spiritual gift helps you understand how the Holy Spirit works through you.

God has chosen people through which to do His work here on earth. Dr. Elmer Towns teaches a principle he calls “*the division of labor*,” based on [1 Corinthians 3:9](#), which states, “*For we are laborers together with God.*” This principle simply states that “*God will not do what He has commanded you to do, and you cannot do what God has reserved as His authority.*” Certain areas of ministering to people are reserved as His authority or duty. Certain areas of ministering to people are reserved by God to be done by people, and God will not step into these prescribed boundaries to do your job for you.

For instance, in [Luke 6:38](#), Luke pens, “Give (meaning, you give to God’s work), and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” God’s method for giving His people material rewards here on earth is through people. There won’t be any pennies from heaven; just God’s faithful servants rewarding as He directs.

Spiritual gifts are God’s provision for the Holy Spirit to minister to people, through people. Without spiritual gifts people can minister one to another only in the flesh. You and I are the only vessels the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish His work here on earth. We must yield ourselves to the Spirit and learn as much as we can about how the Holy Spirit works through us. Years ago I received a little desk plaque from Millhuff Ministries, which sums it up best, “*God can if I will.*”

5. Knowing your spiritual gift fills a deep inner need or void in your life.

Have you ever visited a hospital? You may have met the mean old nurse who bites your head off every time you sit on a patient’s bed. But overall, a hospital is a place where you find a staff of people who are getting more fulfillment out of life than the average person. Why? Because they are in the “*people-serving business*.” They are willing to wrap their lives in the lives of other people. They are meeting an inner need that God has put into the souls of all people, Christians and non-Christians alike. Your spiritual gift will complement this inner need God has placed in you.

Stop and think for a minute of the most miserable, unhappy person you know. Without a doubt that person is very self-centered and only does for others when it benefits him or her in return.

6. Knowing your spiritual gift builds unity among Christians.

When you understand the characteristics of spiritual gifts, you see how gifts influence your desires, motivation, and behavior. You will begin to realize why other people do not always see

things, or react to a situation, the same as you would. It's all part of God's plan. The different gifts complement each other.

A young lady approached me at a seminar I was teaching and said, "Now that I understand my husband's spiritual gifts, I understand why he is so willing to jump in and help family and neighbors with a multitude of projects around their homes." Her husband had the gift of *Serving* and received true fulfillment by working with his hands and helping others.

Understanding spiritual gifts will also prevent you from imposing your gift or lifestyle on others and will help you recognize God's individual calling for your life. Unfortunately, too many Christians are living God's will for someone else's life rather than their own.

7. Knowing your spiritual gift equips you to fulfill God's purpose for your life.

Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* became the number one best-selling book of all time (other than the Bible). Since its publication in 2002, combined hardcover and paperback sales have topped 32 million copies. Why? Because people find a real void in their lives and feel they lack purpose. Understanding your spiritual gifts gives you a clearer understanding of God's purpose for your life. God has created each one of us uniquely and has given us different gifts, talents, personalities, temperaments, and passions to outfit us to accomplish His unique purpose for each of us. True significance in life comes when we discover and apply that purpose and calling.

Introducing spiritual gifts in [Ephesians 4:1](#), Paul exhorts us to "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*." Today when we use the term "vocation" we are referring to our job or career. But in Bible times and in the Scriptures it goes far beyond career. It actually takes in all aspects of our life, career, family, ministry, hobbies, etc. It's our *calling* in life. In fact, later translations of Scripture define the word "vocation" as "calling." Your calling in life is the purpose for which God made you.

It has been said, "Career is what you're paid for, but calling is what you're made for."

8. Knowing your spiritual gift adds to your self-acceptance.

Recently, a man who had just discovered his spiritual gift and its effect on his life expressed to me, "I love to teach, and I teach every chance I get—I've never done anything in the church but teach. I really don't want to do anything but teach, nor do I intend to do anything but teach. If I go for any period of time without teaching, I become irritable and hard to get along with. I've taught for years, but you know something, for the first time in my life I don't feel guilty because I'm not pastoring a church."

Undue guilt is the greatest tool Satan uses to keep Christians from living up to their potential. Many believers consider themselves unspiritual because they cannot live up to someone else's expectations. Trying to live up to others' expectations of you always equals failure if your expectations are not in line with what God expects of you.

Think of the greatest Christian you know. Now consider this: *God has called you to do what this person cannot do*. Your God has given you a special endowment that suits you perfectly for your

special position on the Team. The Christian who knows he has the gift of *Serving* will not belittle himself because he is not a pastor. He can accept himself knowing his Lord has given him a special endowment that suits him perfectly for this special position on the Team. The Christian who knows that her gift is Administration, and is functioning effectively in her capacity, will not think herself unworthy or unnecessary because she is not a Teacher.

PURSUING GOD'S STEWARDSHIP

In reality, spiritual gifts involve God's stewardship. He assigns us certain tasks (see [1 Corinthians 12:18](#)), and then equips us to do them in a manner that brings glory to Him and fulfillment to us (see [1 Peter 4:10-11](#)).

When we think of *stewardship* we automatically think of finances and material resources. But the parallel between gifts and finances is remarkably the same. Many Christians think that God has commanded us to tithe and give to the church because the church wouldn't be able to function, support its ministries, and pay its bills otherwise. But the God who owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (see [Psalm 50:10](#)) could surely finance His ministry in other ways if He wished. The truth is, when we do not give we are incomplete as a person. (Only a person who has been tithing for some time can truly understand this principle.)

The same is true with spiritual gifts. God could send a legion of angels to do his work here on earth. But, he doesn't. He elected to use you and me because if we are not using our gifts to serve others we are incomplete and will never receive the blessing and fulfillment He has in store for us.

A young man received an envelope from his grandfather upon graduation from high school. He decided not to open it until he had finished college. After all, he knew it contained bonds promised him for years. So he decided to discipline himself by keeping them to help start his career rather than using them for college. So for four long years he attended school during the day and worked evenings and nights. Finally the day he had restrained himself for had come. With degree in hand, ready to start his new career, he opened the gift his grandfather had left for him years before. Just as he had anticipated, it contained several thousand dollars worth of negotiable bonds; but to his dismay, it also contained a fully paid scholarship to one of the finest colleges in the land.

God has also given you a gift, but it is up to you whether or not you open it. It is your birthday present, given to you by God at the time of your spiritual birth. Once you open it and examine it, you too may be surprised. Don't miss out on the blessings God has for you. Your challenge is two-fold. First, you are to do as commanded in [2 Timothy 1:6](#): "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you." And second, to do as admonished in [1 Peter 4:10](#): "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

NEXT STEPS

Once you have identified your dominant spiritual gifts, begin to discover and understand how that gift relates to your life, other people's lives, the local church, and the body of Christ as a whole. Some ways to do this include exercising your gift, paying attention to how your gift might affect your vocation, paying attention to how other people's gifts are evident in their lives, studying

about gifts, looking for how the different gifts relate or fit into everyday life and ministry, and becoming aware of ministry opportunities and considering how your gift might play a role.

Review the eight reasons why every Christian should know their spiritual gift and apply them to yourself. By better understanding and exercising your gifts, you will begin to fulfill God's purpose for you. Be a good steward of the gifts and responsibilities God has entrusted to you. Remember to press forward to do what God has gifted and called you to do. Don't let someone else's expectations of you stand in the way of God's best for you.

For the shorter version of this article, [CLICK HERE](#)

Dr. Larry Gilbert is founder and chairman of Ephesians Four Ministries, and founder of [ChurchGrowth.org](#). For more on spiritual gifts, see Dr. Gilbert's books from which this article was excerpted [Your Gifts: Discover God's Unique Design for You](#) (for individuals and small groups) and [Team Ministry: Gifted to Serve](#) (for pastors and group leaders) published by [ChurchGrowth.org](#) Copyright © 2015 [ChurchGrowth.org](#). Other Team Ministry spiritual gifts resources are shown below, including the [Your Gifts Spiritual Gifts Survey](#). For a free online Spiritual Gifts Survey, [click here](#)

Permission granted to copy, forward, share, post and reproduce everything in this article, please include this link [Source: ChurchGrowth.org](#), [CLICK HERE](#) to subscribe for FREE

Here are more free articles, one for each of the nine Team Ministry Spiritual Gifts...

- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Evangelism?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Teaching?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Exhortation?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Shepherding?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Serving?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Mercy-Showing?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Giving?](#)
- [Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Administration?](#)

Each of these nine Team Ministry Spiritual Gift articles was excerpted from the book [Your Gifts: Discover God's Unique Design for You](#).