

*Using Faithfully*  
**GOD'S GIFTS**  
*To His Glory!*

**12 Lessons**

Prepared by:  
**PAUL E. CANTRELL**

2006



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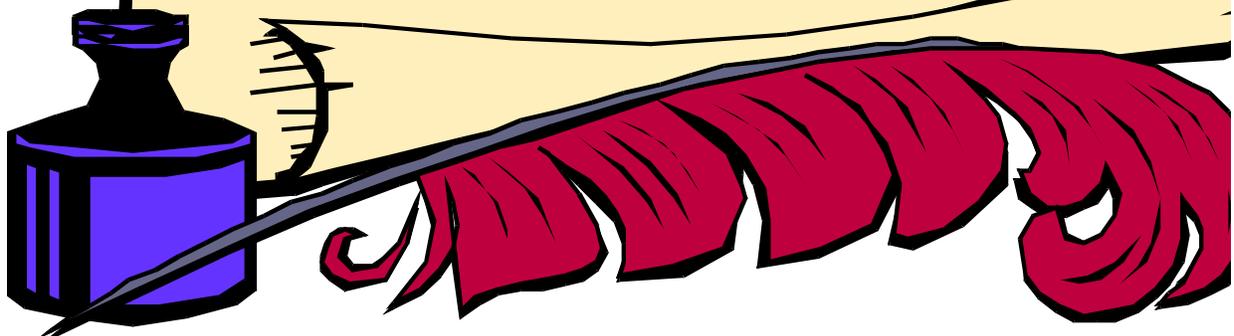
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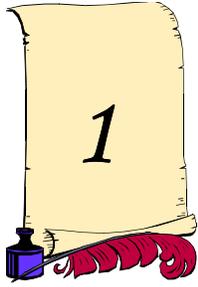
**2006**

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## "Gifts from God"

(Romans 12:3-8)

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."*

(James 1:17).

While it should be obvious that man is a responsible being with the power of choice that God has granted him, but at the same time man has been designed by God and has made many variations in mankind. These variations are good and have purposes to perform in God's great scheme of things. Man has the choice as to whether he will use what God has given him to His Glory, or to his own glory! This may be the reason why the Apostle states in Romans 12:3 that it was God's grace that gave Paul what he had and that it was not the results of his own making. His question to the church at Corinth drives this point home very well: *"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"* (1 Corinthians 4:7). A gift is something we receive from another and it is not of our own making. It is a gift, not something that we have earned on our own. Wages is something we deserve. The Apostle also said that that the "wages" of sin is death—that is what we deserve—but the gift of God is everlasting life which we do not earn or merit on our own (Romans 6:23).

### TWO EXTREMES

God, speaking through the Apostle's writing to the Romans, states that it is important that we understand that these gifts come from God. We must not become puffed up with pride over a gift that God has given to us. This emphasis is intended to take all the pride out. We were all sinners, but we have been saved by the grace of God. What do we have to boast about? The glory goes to God, not us! One of man's besetting sins is to think too highly of himself. We are prone to exaggerate our own abilities and merits. We try to cover up our faults—no matter how bad they are at times and how obvious they are to others. There is a tendency to depreciate the gifts of others and magnify their failings—trying to boost our own abilities. But there are two extremes that man can go to: (1) Out of carnal pride, he can think more highly of himself than is proper! (2) Or, out of a false humility, he can depreciate even the gift(s) that he has been given and try to hide it. There is not to be an unholy rivalry among God's people over who has the greatest gift(s). Paul was chosen to be an Apostle, but he was determined not to let it go to his head! What he had was due to the "grace of God!"

### THREE KINDS OF GIFTS

God has blessed all mankind with gifts! These gifts are not given to just His People, but to believers and non-believers alike (Matthew 5:45). But there are gifts that God may offer to all mankind, but only gives them to His People (Ephesians 1:3). If non-believers were all given what the believer has been given, then what would be the point in becoming a believer? So, it should be obvious that we have to make some clarifications in the concept of gifts from God. We

believe that there are possibly at least three distinctions in the New Testament usages of this concept of gifts. They are:

- 1) The gifts that He gives to all mankind, whether a believer or not. These gifts are what we also call natural abilities or natural gifts. They seem to be built into us at birth and they become more obvious as we mature.
- 2) The gifts that God gives only to the believer that are referred to as blessings or "spiritual blessings."
- 3) The "miraculous" gifts that God gave to the Apostles and also to members of the body of Christ at large through the laying on of the hands of the Apostles. A listing of these gifts are given in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 13:1-3, 8-11; 14:1-40. In some of our translations these gifts are referred to as "spiritual gifts." These gifts were given to help to ground, build up, edify, and equipped God's people for the work of God (Ephesians 4:11-16). These gifts were to last until the "perfect" or "complete" had come—which we believe to be the completing of the New Testament. These gifts were to cease at that time.

### **GIFTS IN ROMANS 12:3-8**

Thus, our study will be looking at those natural gifts that all mankind have been given, but which they have a choice in whether to use it to God's glory or to their own glory. The only word in the listing in Romans 12:3-8 that would be a possible exception to this understanding would be the word "prophecy." However, if this is referring to those who preach God's Word from their own study of the Word of God; then, it does not have a miraculous connection in its use here—but a natural use!

#### **7 NATURAL GIFTS**

1. Prophecy
2. Serving—ministering
3. Teacher
4. Exhorter
5. Giver—charitable
6. Leader—ruler
7. Mercy-giver

We believe that these gifts or abilities were given by God at birth to all mankind. However, some feel that these gifts may been given by God to His people when they become Christians. This would tend to make it a "miraculous" gift because it is something special that God gives when we are older. I tend toward the idea of what we have been given at birth seems to be the better approach to these gifts. The main stress is on the fact that God has given them to us and we are not the originator of these gifts. Our study will be looking at all seven gifts individually and encouraging the

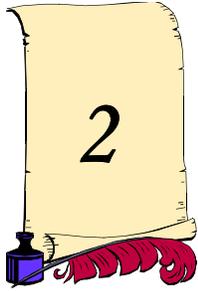
use of such to Glorify God and to build up the kingdom of God throughout the world.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

We may not be able to pin down just how God gives these natural gifts to mankind, but the important thing is to give recognition that they come from God (whether at physical birth or at spiritual birth). We are to use them to bring glory to God!

**QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

1. How is the word "GRACE" used in Romans 12:3?
2. Why is it important to warn against thinking too highly of one's self? (Rom. 12:3)
3. How is the word "GIFT" used in Romans 12:6?
4. Is there a difference in the kinds of gifts God gives to man?
5. List the seven gifts given in Romans 12:3-8 and group them under two headings:
  - a) Speaking Gifts:
    - 1)
    - 2)
    - 3)
  - b) Serving Gifts:
    - 1)
    - 2)
    - 3)
    - 4)
6. Why stress the idea that gifts differ? (Rom. 12:6)
7. What is the purpose of giving gifts unto Christians? (Eph. 4:11-16)



## ***"One Body, But Many Members"*** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

***"For in fact the body is not one member but many.....And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body."*** (1 Corinthians 12:14, 19-20).

In our first lesson we talked about there being several different gifts, but the New Testament also seems to indicate that God has given three different kinds of gifts or blessings to men. We believe that Romans 12:3-8 are all natural gifts or abilities that all men receive at birth. We also believe that 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 is giving a listing of miraculous (spiritual) gifts that were given to Christians to be used in the church. It is interesting to notice that the same basic principles are mentioned in both references in how these gifts were to be used and how to view them. A strong emphasis is stated in both references about the "oneness" that needs to be recognized in regards to the church! So, these gifts should be used to maintain that unity and harmony in the church—whether natural gifts or miraculous gifts.

### **THE MANIFOLD FUNCTIONS OF THE ONE BODY**

There is one body, but that body is made up of many "different" members. The key to a healthy body is that it functions together in harmony with itself. Each member of the body does its part to keep the body functioning at its best. In Romans, Paul states that the members do not have the same function in the body (i.e., they have different functions to fulfill) (12:4-5). In 1 Corinthians, Paul states the same thing, but more in detail. He points out that every part of the body has its special function and each member is needed to do its part for the body to continue healthy (12:12-21). He makes it very clear that one member has no right to say we don't need you, for no one member is the whole body. Even the weaker members of the body are necessary (12:22). Human pride would say: *"I want the best gift!"* and at the same time would demean or put down the lesser gifts. Just as all members of the body are needed, so all spiritual members of Christ's body are needed—especially to make use of their gift to the building up of the kingdom. These gifts (whether natural or miraculous) are important as a part of a functioning body.

### **MUTUAL CONCERN FOR THE BODY**

While each member should be concerned for other members of the body, but we must not just key in on one or two members and forget about the rest or say we don't need them. We do need them! We need each other and what each member has to offer to the body as a whole. Each member should have ***"the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."*** (12:25-26). This not only keeps harmony in the body, but it prevents "schisms" or "divisions" in the body. A very important truth can be seen here—it takes more than one person to build and to keep the **body of Christ functioning as it should!** It takes all of us working together to have the best possible functioning body of Christ! We have a greater effect upon the community when they can see that we are functioning together as one body—rather than division. Jesus' prayer on the night of His betrayal was that His followers would function in harmony and oneness before the

world so that the world could be brought to belief in Him (John 17:21). Pride, arrogance, self-conceit, or even false humility can cause us to show the wrong image of what God wanted the church to be.

### **MIRACULOUS GIFTS**

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, we have a listing of the miraculous gifts that were given by God for the early church to make use of for its existence and growth as a people. There are nine gifts that are specifically mentioned:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Word of Wisdom      | 6. Prophecy   |
| 2. Word of Knowledge   | 7. Discerning of spirits                                  |
| 3. Faith               | 8. Different Kinds of Tongues                             |
| 4. Gifts of healings   | 9. Interpretation (translating) of<br>Tongues (languages) |
| 5. Working of Miracles |   |

Even though these gifts were given by the Spirit of God, it was possible for the gifts to be misused and to have a wrong attitude about the gift or the use of the gift. This is probably the reason for these three chapters in 1 Corinthians (12, 13, 14). The very fact that Paul had to write and instruct the Corinthians on how to view and use these miraculous gifts shows that it didn't keep them from mishandling the gifts. The unity of these gifts is obvious—it was the same Spirit that gave them! But, the disunity comes from the men who have received the gifts and have not had the proper view of them nor used them correctly. The same could also be said of the "natural" gifts that come from God. We need to have the proper view of them and we need to use them properly to the glory of God. And again, we emphasize....WE NEED TO USE THEM!

### **FOUR PURPOSES OF GIFTS**

Whether the gifts are natural or miraculous, there are basic reasons or purposes for these gifts. At least four good purposes could be suggested for their use:

1. To enable the body to function in a systematic, coordinated way.
2. To provide a place for every member of the body to perform a useful service.
3. To expel disharmony from the body.
4. To glorify God who has "tempered the body together....."

Other reasons could be given, but we believe that these four are primary and necessary to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. Since the miraculous gifts are no longer with us; then, it would seem obvious that the "natural gifts" should be used by every member to the fullest of his or her ability. **May we offer a thought here that we feel is important!** Even though we may not have special ability to perform services in the church, that does not mean that we cannot be used in those areas—if we will make up our mind to do the best that we can! However, it would seem logical that the person with the gift would probably do a better job if he also put his heart and body into doing the best that he can do. Many people have served and served well where they may not have had the natural ability to accomplish such a work easier.

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The ideal is to have a church full of people with mature gifts that can be used in oneness and harmony to build up the body of Christ. We must work to help point out, develop, and put to use every gift that is among us. May we glorify our God through the proper view and use of our gifts from Him.

## **QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

- 1. Why emphasize that we are all in "One Body" by the work of the "One Spirit?" (1 Cor. 12:12-13).**
- 2. What is the point of saying that the body is made up of many "differing" members? (1 Cor. 12:14, 17).**
- 3. What is meant that God has "placed" members in the body as it pleased Him? What is its application? (1 Cor. 12:18)**
- 4. Which should be more important—one member or the whole body? (1 Cor. 12:27)**
- 5. What is inferred when one member says: "*I have no need of you?*" (1 Cor. 12:21)**
- 6. What has God done for those members that are covered up? (1 Cor. 12:22-25)**
- 7. Give some reasons for having various gifts in the church?**



## "Discovering My Gift(s)"

(Matthew 25:14-30)

*"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability...."* (Matthew 25:15).

The master of these servants entrusted to them large sums of money for them to put to use to gain more money for him. It stated that the master only gave the amount that each was "capable" of handling well. He knew his servants well, loved them, trusted them, and had a right to expect that they would serve him well—to the extent of their abilities. It was obvious that the first two men understood that they were expected to put the money to use to multiply itself. The application is simple—God expects us to use what He entrust to us (possessions or abilities—gifts) to bring about good in this world and thus glorify the Great Giver of Gifts! The one "talent" man failed in this task! He was "fearful" and went and hid the money and did not gain any more money from its proper use. The master rebuked this "wicked and lazy servant" and told him he could have at least given it to a bank to draw some interest. He was certainly an "unprofitable servant!" However, the other two servants doubled their money and were praised with these words: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."* The lesson is obvious—be a good and faithful servant of all that God entrust to us! But how do I know what all God has entrusted to me—or—how do I know what gifts that God has given to me that I must put to use?

### HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY GIFT(S)?

For some people it may be easy to realize where their special abilities lie; but with others, it may take some greater effort. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- 1) Study and try to understand all seven gifts listed in Romans 12:3-8.
- 2) Try to participate in all areas that you can.
- 3) Take special notice of your personal desires and inclinations.
- 4) Be sure to look inward to see that you are really concerned about using the gift God has given you for the good of the church.
- 5) Recognize that we must exercise our gift and function in our place.
- 6) Delight and satisfaction should come to him who is using his gift well.
- 7) Let others help us to discover where we may be especially gifted in serving God and others.
- 8) Look for ways to serve others.
- 9) Discern your motives...why do you want to help?
- 10) Each gift has its own peculiar characteristics—watch for such.

On the next page will be the beginning information about a test that can help a person to identify their gift(s). Please read the instructions carefully and take the test.

**FINDING MY GIFT**

**Instructions:** 1) Place a 1 in the blank that best describes you in each category!  
2) Place a 2 in the blank that next best describes you!

**CATEGORY #1**

- \_\_\_ 1. I am quick to meet obvious needs around me. Because of this, I may appear at times to be pushy.
- \_\_\_ 2. I feel confident in dealing with large sums of money. This may appear to others to be a focus on temporal values.
- \_\_\_ 3. I like to see assigned tasks completed as soon as possible.
- \_\_\_ 4. I have a greater concern for emotional needs than physical needs in others.
- \_\_\_ 5. I feel inward pain and personally identify with the sins of those I talk with.
- \_\_\_ 6. I believe there should be a strong emphasis on the accuracy of words when projecting a message to others.
- \_\_\_ 7. I delight in personal conferences that result in new insight to Scriptures.

**CATEGORY #2**

- \_\_\_ 1. When I see a person in need I desire to meet that need as soon as possible.
- \_\_\_ 2. I sometimes use my giving as a means of motivating others to give.
- \_\_\_ 3. I love to see the pieces of a program coming together and others enjoying the finished product.
- \_\_\_ 4. I desire to remove hurts and bring healing to others.
- \_\_\_ 5. I desire outward evidences to demonstrate inward change.
- \_\_\_ 6. I experience a much greater joy in studying for a lesson than in presenting it.
- \_\_\_ 7. I tend to avoid studying material that has no apparent practical value.

**CATEGORY #3**

- \_\_\_ 1. Since I am motivated to meet the physical needs of people, others sometimes think that I am disinterested in spiritual matters.
- \_\_\_ 2. I deplore waste! I delight in exercising frugality on the buying market. (I'll walk a mile to save small amounts of money).
- \_\_\_ 3. I am willing to endure reaction from workers in order to accomplish the ultimate task. Sometimes my willingness to endure reaction is taken as callousness.
- \_\_\_ 4. I find an enjoyment and unity with those who are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
- \_\_\_ 5. I believe I have a capacity to identify, define, and hate evil.
- \_\_\_ 6. I desire to be objective in research even though it might appear that I lack warmth and feeling when speaking to others.
- \_\_\_ 7. I grieve when teaching is not accompanied by practical steps of action.

**CATEGORY #4**

- 1. When asked to do a job I enjoy giving evidence of unexpected extra service. (If asked to mow the lawn I will also trim the hedge; if asked to sweep the floors, I will also wash the windows; if asked to baby sit, I will also wash the dishes, etc.).
- 2. I like to be on the alert for valid needs that I fear others might overlook. I delight in meeting those needs without anyone else knowing.
- 3. I feel a particular motivation to organize that for which I am responsible.
- 4. I am attracted to and understand people who are in distress.
- 5. I am willing for others to point out problems in my life that I am not aware of. In this way I can teach others of the same problem and bring them to repentance.
- 6. I like to present the truth in a systematic sequence.
- 7. I find great joy in associating with those who are eager to follow suggested steps of action to solve life's problems.

**CATEGORY #5**

- 1. I have a tendency to react to those who do not detect and meet obvious needs.
- 2. I have the ability to make wise purchases and investments.
- 3. I tend to assume responsibilities (take charge of things that need to be done) if there is no structured leadership.
- 4. I tend to avoid being "firm" unless I can see how it will bring benefit. This sometimes appears to be weakness and indecisiveness in the eyes of others.
- 5. My quickness in denouncing wrong is sometimes judged as harshness by those who do not know me well.
- 6. I find particular delight in testing the knowledge of those who are teaching me.
- 7. I like to visualize specific spiritual achievements for grounds or individuals and then work out and prescribe precise steps of action to reach these practical goals.

**CATEGORY #6**

- 1. I find particular enjoyment in doing manual projects (dewing, carpenter work, mechanic work, baby sitting, etc.) and I am alert to meet practical needs of people.
- 2. I enjoy giving money discreetly to effective projects or worthwhile individuals.
- 3. When given the responsibility to organize an activity I find great joy in delegating responsibility.
- 4. I have the ability to feel an atmosphere of joy or distress in an individual or group.
- 5. I much prefer speaing to a group than to one person.
- 6. I find particular delight in doing research in order to validate truth.
- 7. I strongly believe that non-Christians can be won by living examples. Because of this some probably think I have a lack of interest in soul winning.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TEST**

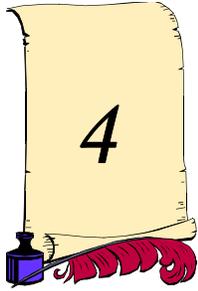
1. Read all 7 statements and pick out the two that best describes you or that you have interest in. Be sure to place a 1 or a 2 by the best and next best in describing you.
2. The key to the test is that the same number in each category is indicating the same thing.

Notice below:

- #1—Service
- #2—Giving
- #3—Ruling, administration, leadership
- #4—Mercy
- #5—Prophecy (preaching)
- #6—Teaching
- #7—Exhortation

**QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

1. **What was the basis for giving the various amounts of money to each person? (Matthew 25:15).**
2. **What did the first two men understand about being given a large sum of money? (Matthew 25:16-23)**
3. **Why didn't the "one talent" man put his money to work to gain more money? (Matthew 25:24-25)**
4. **What rebuke was given to the "one talent" man? (Matthew 25:26-27)**
5. **What "terms" were used to describe the actions of the "one talent" man? (Matthew 25:26, 30)**
6. **Why was the "one talent" man condemned into outer darkness? (Matthew 25:30)**
7. **Why has God given gifts to His people and what does He have a right to expect?**
8. **What can I do to discover my gift(s)?**



## ***"The Gift of Prophecy (Preaching)"***

(1 Corinthians 14:2-3, 24-25)

*We must remember that one of the main factors about the early church was their absence of a written New Testament!*

They had the inspired Apostles to speak to them and also had other inspired men that could speak to them to stabilize them in the faith and to bring about edification and maturity. Without the miraculous gifts the church would have had a hard time surviving in the early days—especially when persecuted and scattered. One of the inspired groups of people was "prophets." But the word itself can be used to have reference to a person who speaks for God. Whether the message was inspired or whether they had learned the truth and were passing it on—in either case, he was a spokesman for God. Inspiration made his message infallible, while one speaking from his study may be fallible in his preaching. In this context of gifts in Romans 12:3-8, we believe the word "prophet" could be used to refer to one who speaks for God from his own study. The terms "preacher," "minister," or "evangelist" were used later to refer to such uninspired speakers for God.

If our approach is reasonable, then we should be looking for admonitions and instructions that deal with preaching or proclaiming the Word of God to others by uninspired men. Possibly, the best source to go to would be 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus for such. The following references can help to illustrate some of the characteristics expected of speakers for God and of their responsibilities:

### **1 Timothy:**

- 1:3—"Charge some to teach no other doctrine, etc.**
- 1:18—"War a good warfare"**
- 1:19—"Holding faith and a good conscience"**
- 4:6—"Put brethren in mind of dangers"**
- 4:11—"Command and teach message"**
- 4:12—"Be an example"**
- 4:13—"Give attention to Reading, Exhortation, Doctrine"**
- 4:15—"Meditate on things"**
- 4:16—"Take heed to self and to doctrine"**
- 5:20—"Those who sin rebuke before all"**
- 5:21—"Don't be partial"**
- 6:1—"Uphold the name of God"**
- 6:17—"Give charge to the rich"**
- 6:20—"Keep what is committed to thee"**

### **2 Timothy:**

- 1:8—"Don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord"**
- 1:13—"Hold fast form of sound words"**
- 2:2—"Commit Gospel to faithful men"**
- 2:3—"Endure hardship"**

- 2:14—"Charge members not to strive about words to no profit"
- 2:15—"Study to be approved of God"
- 2:23—"Foolish and unlearned questions avoid"
- 2:24—"Don't strive—be gentle to all men"
- 2:25—"Instruct in meekness"
- 4:2—"Preach word in all seasons, reprove, rebuke, exhort"
- 4:5—"Be watchful in all things"

**TITUS:**

- 1:5—"Set in order things lacking"
- 1:13—"Rebuke Christians who sin, sharply"
- 1:14—"Beware of fables, commandments of men"
- 2:1—"Speak what befits sound doctrine"
- 2:7—"Show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity in your speaking and life"
- 2:8—"Sound speech which cannot be condemned"
- 2:9—"Exhort servants & others"
- 2:15—"Speak, exhort, rebuke with all authority"
- 3:1-2—"Remind members of obligations to government and others"
- 3:8—"Constantly affirm need for Christians to maintain good works"
- 3:9—"Avoid foolish questions, etc."
- 3:10—"Reject a heretic after 2nd admonition"

We do have Scriptures that are addressed to Prophets specifically, but in all of these cases they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak God's message.

1. **Luke 1:67-79**—Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.
2. **Luke 2:36-38**—It does not specifically state that Anna was inspired of the Holy Spirit, but it is generally assumed that she was.
3. **Acts 11:27-30**—These men mentioned here are said to have been showed by the Spirit what was going to happen.
4. **Acts 21:10-14**—Agabus was inspired to speak the message of the Holy Spirit.
5. **Acts 15:32**—Judas and Silas were said to be prophets.
6. **1 Cor. 12:28**—God appointed prophets to be in the church (in this grouping it would be ones that had the miraculous gift of prophecy).
7. **Eph. 2:20**—The church is built on the foundation of the Apostles & Prophets (inspired men).

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

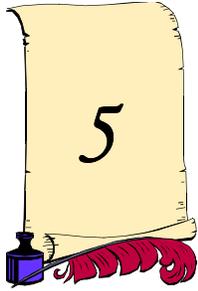
Possibly some observations might be in order here—some commonsense ideas to help guide those who speak for God.

1. Try not to speak anything contrary to the revealed will of God.
2. Let God do the condemning by His Word—not the speaker.
3. Not to think of self as being different from the people he is speaking to.
4. Demonstrate your love for people who need to be rebuked.
5. Realize the gravity of the responsibility of speaking before people.

6. Realize the grave dangers of misleading people.
7. Watch out for harshness—be frank, but not harsh.
8. Making clear distinction of right and wrong—leave no one doubting what God says!
9. Not to show their pride of their speaking abilities and understanding of truth.
10. Not to confuse hate for the sin with hate for the sinner.
11. Trying to force too strict standards upon others.
12. Help individuals and the church as a whole to examine their actions.
13. Make God's message clear and plain to the church's understanding.
14. By all means.... "***Let love be genuine.***" (Rom. 12:9).

### **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- 1. What is the function of a prophet? (1 Cor. 14:3-4; 24-25).**
  
- 2. What part did the first prophets play in the church? (Eph. 2:19-20)**
  
- 3. What attitude should not be taken regarding prophesying? (1 Thess. 5:20)**
  
- 4. What are three strong qualities that a prophet should have?**
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  
- 5. What are some problems that should be avoided by a prophet?**



## "The Gift of Teaching"

(1 Timothy 1:3-11)

*It would seem to be obvious that the word "teacher" was used in both a miraculous and non-miraculous way in the church of the first century.*

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul is talking about those teachers who were misleading God's people—who obviously were not inspired by the Holy Spirit. In Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy (2:2), he admonishes Timothy to commit what he had heard from him to faithful men who would be able to teach others. But on the other hand the Apostle Paul gives a listing of those who have been placed in the church that would seem to involve inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help them carry out their mission—Ephesians 4:11—"**And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors (shepherds) and teachers**" These men would be the likely ones that would have the Divine guidance of the Spirit to equip God's people for the great work they had before them. Not only was there a need to evangelize the nations, but at the same time to teach those who believed and were baptized to observe all things that Jesus had taught (Matt. 28:18-20). He was the church to be a unified and functioning body so that it could become a mighty force for good in society. For these, at first, to have miraculous gifts of the Spirit would seem to be a necessity—if done right!

### PREACHING—TEACHING

We usually think of preaching as being up before a large audience of people; but, if there is a distinction from teaching, it would be that teaching is more closely tied with a one on one situation or a small group situation. Both are learning, but possibly a little different method that would be involved in the learning process. A person may not want to preach (in the above sense) but still have a strong desire to teach the will of God to others. He prefers the small teaching situation. However, it is one thing to be motivated to preach and teach the Word of God, but quite another to have or to develop the ability (talent) to do so effectively. A person may feel that he is called to preach, but be very ineffective in his efforts to do so. But if one is motivated to preach and prepares himself as well as possible—his effectiveness should be better. But in some instances, those with natural abilities in this area of work will probably be more effective in their efforts. The same, I believe, could be said about teaching. Any one can teach, but there will be some variations in their effectiveness with others—as suggested above.

### AN IDEAL TEACHER

Basically, a teacher is one who imparts knowledge and understanding to others. It is to instruct, to instill concepts in the mind of another, to explain or to expound on things. However, it is strongly felt that this imparting of knowledge must lead to putting into practice what is learned or such efforts are useless. Two words can be used to help imbed this concept in our minds:

- 1) **Communication.** Ideas must be relayed by words. Accurate wording must be used that others can comprehend. There is more to the learning process than memorization

and repeating it back without understanding. Clear communication is when the teacher gets through to the person's mind and heart.

- 2) **Application.** Unless a person is able to absorb what he has heard into his own life and use it...of what value is it? Teaching facts alone is almost worthless. The pupil needs to be asking such questions as: "*How does this effect me? Of what value is this to me?*".....etc. True teaching is to lead students into an understanding and practice of Bible truths.

Several Scriptures can be studied that helps to give some insights to the qualities or abilities that a person should possess to be a very good teacher:

1. **Rom. 2:20-21**—An effective teacher is one who first teaches themselves—or, to put it more strongly—one who practices what he teaches! How can a teacher get students to put their knowledge into practice when the teacher hasn't done so?
2. **2 Tim. 2:15**—The teacher needs to not only be very careful how he handles the Word of God, but to be the kind of teacher that is not ashamed of their efforts—knowing they are approved of God.
3. **1 Tim. 1:7**—A teacher must understand what he is talking about—to know how to answer questions that will be and need to be raised by the student(s).
4. **Matt. 21:23**—A teacher must show respect for God's authority—not only to submit to God's authority; but as well, to be sure that he is only teaching what God has given. Many warnings are given to those who would be teachers—**teach only what God says, not our own ideas!**
5. **2 Tim. 4:3**—A teacher should not be a "people pleaser!" He must not fail to teach or mis-teach what the Word of God has to say. A teacher should strongly examine their motive for wanting to teach.
6. **Col. 1:18**—The ideal teacher is one who desires to bring Christians to full maturity in Christ.

### DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS

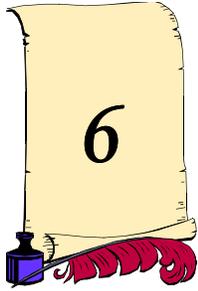
1. **One who loves to study the Word of God (Ps. 1:1-2).**
2. **One who desires to validate what has been taught (Acts 17:11).**
3. **One who loves people and desires to help them (Col. 1:28).**
4. **Able to present truths in an organized and logical way, but simple (2 Cor. 11:3).**
5. **One with a lot of patience and able to be long-suffering with people as they learn (2 Tim. 2:24-26).**

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To want to teach and help others to mature in Christ and go to heaven some day is very noteworthy. All of us should want to do this to the extent of our ability. However, those who are more prepared and more talented should be in the forefront of such efforts to teach others the will of God. Do what you can, use what abilities you have in furthering the salvation of souls!

**QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

- 1. How would you define the word "teach?"**
  
- 2. Explain why the following two words are so important in teaching:**
  - a) Communication**
  
  - b) Application**
  
- 3. What are some qualities of an ideal teacher?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. Name some ways that a person can use his gift of teaching to further the growth of the church?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Should people teach who do not have the "gift" of teaching?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6. What are some ways that we can equip ourselves to teach more effectively?**



## "The Gift of Exhortation"

(Acts 4:36-37)

*"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.'" (Acts 2:40).*

We have three terms that are very closely tied to one another: Preaching, Teaching, and Exhortation! In the passage above, two words are used to help show that there must be a distinction between these words (testify, exhort). When one preaches, he both "testifies" of the truthfulness or factualness of his message and "exhorts" people to also believe and submit their lives to that message. 3,000 did so on the day of Pentecost! In Acts 4:36-37, we have an example of a person who was renamed by the Apostles because of his unique ability to exhort people. His name was Joses, but they changed it to Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement."). His ability to help the newly appointed Apostle Paul to be accepted by the Jerusalem church illustrates not only his unique ability, but his persuasiveness (Acts 9:26-28).

### EXHORTATION DEFINED

An exhorter can be generally defined as one who invites, invokes, beseeches, calls for, comforts, entreats, (etc.). There are many good synonyms that help to express the concept of this word. An exhorter can:

1. **Strengthen the weak;**
2. **Reassure the unstable;**
3. **Console the troubled**
4. **Encourage those getting lax;**
5. **Stand by the person who needs help.**

When men stand before the congregation to speak, some have more ability than others at exhorting the church. One of the great benefits that can come from the one who makes the announcements in the worship assembly is to be a good exhorter! Or, it could be the impressiveness of one or more of the elders to stand before the church to plead with God's people to be involved and faithful to Christ.

The Greek word is made up of two words: **παρα-καλεο** (para-kaleo). This word is used in 1 John 2:1 and is translated in the following ways:

- KJV (advocate)
- TCNT (one who pleads for)
- GSPD (will intercede for)
- BER (have a Counsel for defense)

This same word is used in John 14:16 in reference to the Holy Spirit that was to be sent to the Apostles in the absence of Jesus and is translated in the following ways:

- KJV (comforter)
- MOF (helper)
- ABUV (advocate)
- RSV (counselor)

KNOX (another to befriend you)

PHI (someone else to stand by you)

Barclay (a well-known Bible scholar) believes that the idea is that someone is called in to help and render some service—but in doing so, he renders the kind of comfort and consolation in distress which keeps a man on his feet. It is like being an advocate or counselor for the defense of a prisoner. Like Barnabas, he is one who bears witness to his friend's character when he most needs it...and when others wish to condemn him. But this last thought, I especially like—"One who encourages people for noble deeds and high thoughts, and who instills courage before a battle."

Thayer in his Greek-English lexicon uses several terms or phrases to depict the meaning of this word: "To address, speak to, to admonish, exhort, to beg, entreat, beseech, to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort, to instruct, to teach." There are two different endings of this basic word that Thayer deals with...as follows:

1. **Παρα-κλεις** (para-klesis)—"A calling near, summons for help; imploration, supplication, entreaty; exhortation, admonition, encouragement; consolation, comfort, solace; persuasive discourse, stirring address, instructive, admonitory, consolatory, powerful hortatory discourse."
2. **Παρα-κλετος** (para-kletos)—"One who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant; an advocate, an intercessor, a helper, succorer, aider, assistant."

From the above efforts to define the use of this word, it should be obvious that an exhorter is definitely needed among God's people. Such a person can be of great help and encouragement. A great deal of exhorting is done in the letters to the early Christians at various locations.

### WHO SHOULD EXHORT?

It is usually expected of elders, preachers, teachers, and the men who stand before the congregation (to serve in some way)—to do some exhorting. But, in reality, all of us are exhorted to exhort one another—"***But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.***" (Heb. 3:13). But just as Barnabas is used in the Scriptures to illustrate the value of such activity and how effective he was, it should be apparent to all of us that some among us will be more effective in doing this exhorting! The following passages can give insight as to this need of exhortation: Acts 11:23; 14:22; 15:32; 1 Thess. 4:1; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:1; 6:2; Tit. 1:9; 2:6; 1 Pet. 5:1; Jude 3.

Exhorting God's people is not limited to just our public assembly times! We can exhort one another in personal contact (Heb. 3:13); in training others (2 Tim. 2:2); in letters (Jude 3); and by our examples before others (Acts 4:36-37). Look for ways to be an encouragement...and especially if you are gifted in this area. Seek for opportunities to be a helper to others.

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Exhortation is not only to try to help people to be faithful to the Lord, but it is also to motivate and urge people on to their full spiritual maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28-29). Exhortation can stimulate faithfulness in others. It can often pinpoint the cause of our problems and offer ways to overcome our problems.

## **QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

- 1. How would you define the word "exhorter?"**
  
- 2. How is this word in the Greek used in these two passages?**
  - a) 1 John 2:1—
  
  - b) John 14:16—
  
- 3. To what ends is the gift of exhortation to be used?**
  - a) Acts 2:40—
  
  - b) Acts 11:23—
  
  - c) Acts 14:22—
  
  - d) 1 Thess. 5:14—
  
  - e) 2 Thess. 3:12—
  
  - f) 1 Tim. 2:1—
  
  - g) 1 Tim. 6:2—
  
  - h) Tit. 1:9—
  
  - i) Tit. 2:6—
  
  - j) Jude 3—
  
- 4. How could this gift be used more effectively here in this congregation?**



## "The Gift of Ministering (Serving)"

(Matthew 20:25-28)

*"...Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28).*

The body of Christ has many members, but it is "one body." God has designed it and empowered it to work together for the good of the spiritual body of Christ. In the early church, there was a need for miraculous gifts to help the new Christians to become stabilized in the faith. But God also gave "natural" gifts that need to be used also to the building up of the body of Christ. The gifts that we have looked at thus far (Preaching, Teaching, and Exhortation) can easily be seen as helping to fulfill this task....and do it effectively! These three gifts could be called "speaking gifts." We now turn to the other four gifts which could be referred to as "action gifts." And, as we notice in the above passage, Jesus becomes our great example of the one who came to "serve!"

The background to the above passage can help us to understand the importance of this outlook on the part of God's people. The mother of James and John made a request of Jesus: *"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."* We say that it is natural for a mother to want their sons and daughters to succeed well in life and be in places of importance before others. Yes, it is pride at work, but it is still there. The Apostles themselves squabbled over this question of who would be the greatest among them in the kingdom (Mark 9:34). Even after this occasion, on the night of Jesus' betrayal, the Apostles were still in need of some strong teaching on this issue of who is the greatest (Luke 22:24-27). Jesus washed their feet to serve as an example of who is the greatest—**the one who serves!** (John 13:1-16). So, Jesus is making it very clear in each of these situations where this question was raised—*"True greatness does not lie in how many are serving you, but in how many you are serving!"* We must constantly guard against how the world defines greatness, and guard against the idea that we are too good or too high to stoop to such tasks.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVANT

1. **Acts 6:1-4**—Those who help others so that those who preach will not be hindered from doing so.
2. **Matt. 25:31-40**—Those who see their brethren in need and respond to help.
  - a) Help to feed the hungry and satisfy the thirsty and clothe the naked;
  - b) Visit those in prison;
  - c) Take the stranger in;
  - d) Visit the sick;
  - e) care for the widows and orphans (James 1:27).
3. **Romans 16:1-2**—One who serves, a helper of those who evangelize and preach.
4. **1 Cor. 16:15-18**—Those who serve the saints—and who provide what others did not do.
5. **Acts 13:5**—To minister to others' needs.
6. **Luke 10:38-42**—Jesus did not rebuke her for serving, but for her attitude towards others.

7. **Phil. 2:20**—Ability to see the need and set about to meet them.
8. **1 Tim. 5:23**—A tendency to disregard personal health and comfort to serve others.

### **ATTITUDES INVOLVED IN SERVING**

1. **Compassion (Mark 1:41).**
2. **Comforting, upholding, patient (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Cor. 1:3-4).**
3. **Love is the fulfilling of the law towards brethren (Rom. 13:10).**
4. **Wrong attitude towards the poor and needy (James 5:1-6).**
5. **A feeling of resentment when others are not willing to serve (Luke 10:40-42).**
6. **Becoming bitter when deeds are not recognized or appreciated (Eph. 4:31-21).**
7. **Negligent—say and do not do (James 1:22; 2:15-17).**

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

There are two passages that are very important in connection with serving that needs to be looked at carefully:

**1. Galatians 6:9-10**—It is easy to grow weary in doing good works—and thus, the admonition—**DON'T!** The outcome may take longer sometimes to see the good accomplished, so give it the time needed. We are to be willing to do good to all men, but we should especially be concerned about helping those who are members of the body of Christ.

**2. Romans 12:10**—We are to have a kind, affectionate, and loving attitude toward others and show it by giving preference to others before ourselves. This same attitude basically is emphasized also in Phil. 2:3-4.

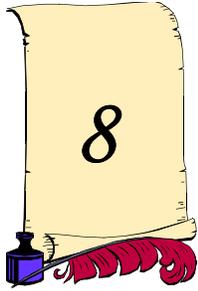
### **QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

1. **What was the Gentiles' idea about serving? (Matt. 20:25-28).**
2. **True Greatness is measured by what, according to Jesus? (Matt. 20:26-28; Luke 22:24-27)**
3. **What are some desired & undesired characteristics of one who serves?**

**4. List some serving activities that need to be done that will promote the well-being of the church as well as individual Christians.**

**5. How can we cultivate an attitude of serving in the church?**

**6. What will help to project the image of true Christianity to our community?**



## "The Gift of Giving"

(Acts 2:44-45)

*It is fascinating to realize how many factors are involved in the advancement of the kingdom of God! One of the foremost is obviously the preaching and teaching of the Gospel to others.*

The Gospel must be preached because it is the power to save those who will believe it (Rom. 1:16). But, as we have already noticed, there are other important factors (or gifts) that must be involved if the church is to survive, grow, and influence the world in which we live. We know that God's people need continual encouragement. It has already been emphasized that we need a church full of compassionate, loving, kind, merciful, and concerned people for others about them. In one way or another, we can all be involved in the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Another way that we all can help is by our giving of our possessions, our time, our abilities, and ourselves. The first church of Christ grew rapidly from the Day of Pentecost on—3,000 on the first day, then 5,000 plus, and then it was multiplying. But such growth brought on its challenges! And one of those challenges was what to do about so many people who were away from home because they had come to Jerusalem to worship—they were converted, and stayed on longer than they had planned for. The need began to be obvious.....so, these first Christians began to pool their money, even selling some possessions, in order to help take care of these people away from home. Then, later, it became obvious that the Grecian Widows were not being taken care of like they should, so that problem had to be taken care of. In all of this the church had favor with the people, in general, and **"the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."** (Acts 6:7). So, giving played a big role early in the life of the young church.

### GIVING WITH SIMPLICITY

The old King James Version wording was: **"...he who gives, with simplicity..."** The new King James Version has helped us a bit: **"...he who gives, with liberality..."** The Greek word here generally means: singleness, simplicity, sincerity, liberal, or bountifulness (2 Cor. 1:12; Col. 3:22). The different translations help to show this:

ASV—liberality  
 TCNT—generous heart  
 MON—singleness of mind  
 LAM—with sincerity  
 TAY—be generous

Thayer, in his lexicon, says that the word carries with it the following ideas—depending on the context:

- 1) Mental honesty or truthfulness.
- 2) Virtue of one who is free from pretence and dissimulation.
- 3) Sincerity of mind towards Christ, single-hearted faith in Christ, as opposed to false wisdom.
- 4) Without self-seeking.
- 5) Openness of heart manifesting itself by benefactions and liberality.

The giving is done without expecting to gain something in return. The person does not give to save his conscience. He does not give to be seen of men. He wants to give so the Lord's work can be carried on. He gives freely and with delight.

How is giving to be looked upon as a gift? Obviously, everyone can give and usually do some giving. So, how can it be classified as a gift if we all give? It is suggested that the gift of giving is two-fold: (1) The ability to make or earn a lot of money; and (2) The ability to turn loose of it—not to love it—not to hoard it—not to worship it, but to be able to give it with the right heart, spirit, and purpose. It is the ability to do so with such care and cheer that the recipients are encouraged by it....rather than feeling "put down!"

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR GIVING**

- 1. To supply the immediate physical needs of brethren (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34).**
- 2. To send relief to help brethren elsewhere (Acts 11:27-30).**
- 3. Realizing that it is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).**
- 4. It is commanded of our Lord and Master (1 Cor. 16:1; John 14:15).**
- 5. To help needy saints (Rom. 12:13).**
- 6. To help spread the Gospel (Phil. 4:15-18).**
- 7. To prove the sincerity of our Lord for the Lord (2 Cor. 8:8).**
- 8. To bring glory to God (2 Cor. 9:12-13).**

There are several examples of giving that the Lord had recorded that amazes us, as well as challenges us!

- 1) The Widow that gave all her living (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus said that she put in more than those who were rich.
- 2) The willing giving of Zacchaeus when Jesus came into his house. He gave half of what he had to the poor and promised to restore 4-fold to anyone he had overcharged.
- 3) The willing giving of the early church (Acts 2:44-45).
- 4) The giving of the Macedonians out of their deep poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
- 5) The failure of the rich young ruler to give up all to follow Christ (Luke 18:18-24).
- 6) The requirement of Jesus (Luke 14:33).

Nothing escapes the eyes of the Lord—He sees all and knows all! We cannot fool Him, deceive Him, trick Him, or con Him. He knows our hearts and knows why we give, what motivates our giving, and the "reasons" why we do not give as we should. We need to remember these great truths! Just like faith without works is dead (James 2:17), so it is that "love" without giving is also dead (James 2:14-17). True love is a fulfilling of the Law of God (Rom. 13:10). Acceptable giving is not determined by just one thing, but several. As Jesus observed the giving of the people at the Temple (Mark 12:41-44), he pointed out that the giving of the rich of their abundance was not as much as the two "mites" of the poor widow.

### **PRINCIPLES TO GO BY**

- 1. We are not to give to be praised by men (Matt. 6:1).**
- 2. We give expecting to be blessed by God (Luke 6:38).**
- 3. We give as if we give it directly to God (Acts 5:1; Phil. 4:18).**

4. We give with sincere intentions (Rom. 12:8).
5. We give according to our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:2).
6. We give from a willing mind (2 Cor. 8:12).
7. We give as we purpose in our heart—not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).
8. We give bountifully so we can be blessed bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6).

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Now, back to our main issue! What makes a person gifted in giving? What about the poor widow, would she measure up to that type of person? What about Zacchaeus, was he a gifted giver? Is a gifted giver not only a person that may be able to make money, but one that gives out of pure motives? One thing for sure, we need those gifted givers!

### **QUESTIONS IN REVIEW**

1. What does the word "simplicity" mean, and how does it affect one's giving?
2. How would you characterize one who has the gift of giving?
3. What impresses you about the examples of giving in the New Testament?
4. How can this gift be used to advance the kingdom of God?
5. Does God expect more giving from one who has the gift of giving than he does of the rest of us?



## "The Gift of Ruling"

(1 Peter 5:1-3)

*"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock...."*  
(1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Words have immediate meanings and sometimes varied connotations! The word "ruler" seems to be one of those words as found in the King James Version in Romans 12:8. What we have to determine—if we are to communicate our ideas correctly—is just what does the word mean, how is it used in our society, and is it the same idea as used in the Bible? Jesus drew a sharp line between these two usages in Matthew 20:25-28. Jesus pointed out that the Gentile world around them had one idea of what is meant by ruling, while he advocated a quite different concept to be observed in His new kingdom. Inspiration states that God has given the gift of ruling to some in the church. We need to understand not only what the concept means, but how it is to be carried out in the church.

### RULERSHIP

To rule is basically to govern over people. In order to govern, there has to be some degree of authority in order to make laws and to enforce them. Jesus is called "Lord!" He said to the Jewish people: *"Why call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things that I say?"* (Luke 6:46). It would seem to be quite obvious that Jesus recognized that He had authority to command and to bless or punish those who submitted or failed to submit. The very term "kingdom" comes from the idea of a man being a king over a domain. If he had no authority as a king, of what value would it be for him to be a king? God makes it very clear that He has appointed for there to be rulers or governing authorities over people or nations....and we are to submit to their rule (Romans 13:1-7). In the church, we have men that are appointed to be elders who are called rulers, shepherds, overseers, or elders (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:28-32; etc.). While their authority is greatly limited—they do have authority to carry out what they have been appointed to do.

The Greek word, **Προισταμενος** (proi-stamenos) is generally defined as: "to rule, direct, maintain, to lead, to place before, to stand before." Another Greek word that carries more of a stress on position and authority over people is **Αρχων** (Archon). While some may feel that the English word "lead" would be a better word than "ruler," I am not sure that it makes any difference which word is used. A person can be a good leader or a bad leader—or a good ruler or a bad ruler. The whole point of this discussion over ruling is not so much of an authority issue as it is trying to see with what kind of spirit and attitude does he rule or lead! Jesus showed that the Gentiles were more concerned about exercising their authority over people (lording it over them) rather than having a compassionate and understanding spirit with which to rule. The emphasis is upon the attitude, not the position—have a serving spirit, not a lording spirit! There are several

passages that deals with the proper spirit of ruling over people rather than a poor spirit, such as: Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:1-1-17; Acts 20:28-32; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

## A GOOD RULER

If we were asked to define a good ruler (leader) in the church, what would we use to describe or illustrate such a people? If we looked at the above passages and picked out the terms or phrases that help to show this, we should have a good definition of such.

1. **Not desiring to lord it over people—not stressing his authority (Matt. 20:25)**
2. **To desire to be a servant of people (Matt. 20:26)**
3. **Willing to give ourselves for others' good or benefit (Matt. 20:28)**
4. **Willingness to examine one's own self first before others (Acts 20:28)**
5. **A blameless man that sets a good example before others (1 Tim. 3:1-7)**
6. **A humble person (1 Pet. 5:5)**

In general, a good ruler would possess the natural ability to coordinate activities of others for the achievement of meaningful or desired goals. He would have the ability to preside, govern, plan organize, and administer with wisdom and fairness; also, to serve as an example of humility, serving, confidence and ease. A man with a vision or purpose and is able to motivate others to catch on to that vision and purpose with him. He should be a person who lives an exemplary life, has an exemplary marriage, has an exemplary household (well-controlled family), and his life is beyond reproach. He is soberminded (controls his temper), self-disciplined, not covetous, not quarrelsome, just, honest, and not a lover of money. The following words of G. C. Brewer can certainly add meaning to our study:

*"The elder's ideas, whims, and preferences are secondary, and he first seeks to know what the Lord wishes instead of trying to force the Lord to say what he wishes. The elders are to be over the church, have the oversight; but they are not to act as feudal lords and treat their brethren as servile servants. They are not to be arbitrary, tyrannical, or unduly dictatorial. All of their work is to be done not for their own glory or gratification, but the good of those allotted to them."*

In contrast to the above, the scriptures give us a brief picture of the wrong kind of a leader or ruler in the church in 3 John 9-10. He coveted a pre-eminent position among God's people; he would not receive the Apostle John—rebellious against God's authority; and he wanted to throw people out of the church that disagreed with him. Another passage that would be worthwhile to study out is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. This person is described as exalting himself even above God, desiring to be worshipped as a god, and willing to do whatever it takes to maintain his position—"hook or crook!" He is a deceiver, unrighteous, and does not love the truth.

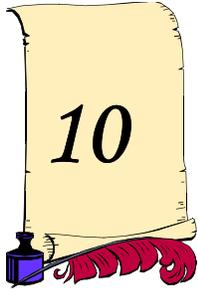
## THE GIFT OF RULING

It would seem obvious that some people are better able to rule or lead over other people. The Apostle would then be saying that such is a gift from God and such should be used to his glory and to serve His people. We can have good men, but they may not necessarily be gifted as leading or ruling over others. Good rulers certainly need to be able to make good decisions most of the time and be organized sufficiently themselves so that they can help to plan programs or

activities and get people involved in the work of God. Their positive attitudes can motivate people to follow their lead.

### **QUESTIONS TO REVIEW**

- 1. How would you define the word "rule?"**
- 2. How would you distinguish between a ruler who serves and a ruler who desires to "lord it over" people?**
- 3. Give some guidelines of rulers from the New Testament?**
- 4. Why is Jesus' Lordship over you so appealing?**
- 5. What lessons can we learn from Diotrephes on how not to rule?**



## "The Gift of Showing Mercy"

(Matthew 5:7)

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7).*

It should be the desire of every Christian to learn to show mercy. **Justice** is what one may **deserve** (Hebrews 10:28), but mercy is what we all want and desperately need! Thus, mercy is going beyond what one deserves and extending what he really needs. The following expression is often used as a "reason" for not doing something to help a person: *"If he had done what he ought to, he would not be in this mess!"* Yes, that is probably correct and you are **just** in your thinking, but you are not merciful in your thinking! **"Blessed are the merciful!"** We can be so exacting according to the rules and regulations, etc., that we fail to show mercy or have a merciful spirit. God is a **merciful God**, but not in the wrong way (Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Heb. 4:16; Luke 1:50; Eph. 2:4). It needs to be pointed out up front in this study that a **merciful attitude** is not necessarily an **indulgent attitude!**

### DEFINING A MERCIFUL SPIRIT

A merciful attitude is defined generally as "a kind, loving, forgiving spirit that offers help to those in need; or, to have compassion or pity on another." There are three (possibly four) Greek words used in the New Testament that identify with a merciful spirit. These are shown as follows:

1. **Ελεος** (Heleos)—An outward manifestation of pity for those who are in distress or alienation from God or man.
2. **Οικτιρμος** (Oiktirmos)—Pity or compassion shown for the ills of others. Christians are to feel and exhibit a compassionate spirit towards one another.
3. **Σπλαγχνηνον** (Splanchnon)—Has reference to the affections of the heart—feelings of kindness, goodwill, pity, or tender mercies.
4. **Ιλασκομαι** (Hilaskomai)—To conciliate, appease, propitiate. It is to show mercy, to expiate, or to make propitiation for.

The idea seems to be more than just a feeling of pity, but action is required! It is not just caring, but sharing. If God had not felt nor shown mercy to his creatures, we would have perished in the Garden of Eden. We didn't deserve His mercy then, and we still don't today. But we desperately need his mercy and we need to show mercy to our fellow human beings. The following passages can show how the word is used with reference to God:

1. **Psa. 25:6**—David is calling on God to remember his mercy that has been extended from old times.
2. **Psa. 40:11**—David asked that God not withhold his mercy from him.
3. **Psa. 79:8**—David asked that God would not remember his former sins, but to extend His tender mercies speedily.
4. **Psa. 103:4**—God redeems our life from destruction by crown us with His tender mercies.
5. **Psa. 119:156**—David exalts God for His tender mercies.
6. **Psa. 145:9**—God is good and His tender mercies are over all His works.

7. **Isa. 54:7**—For a moment God forsook His people, but with great compassion He will gather them to Himself.

8. **Luke 18:13**—The Publican's prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

The overwhelming number of Scriptures—both in the Old Testament and New are of God showing mercy to His creatures. But not only does God show a merciful spirit, but His people are also to do so. See the following Scriptures:

1. **Matt. 23:23**—Jesus said that showing mercy is one of the weightier matters of the Law.

2. **James 2:13**—God's judgment is without mercy to those who show no mercy.

3. **James 3:17**—Wisdom from above is full of mercy.

4. **Col. 3:12**—God's people are to put on tender mercies in their lives.

God's people are to show mercy, but they are to show it with **cheerfulness!** That is: "readiness of mind, joyous, prompt to do anything." It is a desire to demonstrate practical, compassionate, cheerful love towards those suffering around us. We are to especially show mercy to members of the body of Christ (Gal. 6:10; James 2:13). We are to show mercy to those in poor circumstances, but radiate sunshine in doing it.

### **MERCY ILLUSTRATED BY JESUS**

When Jesus was approached with the question by a lawyer "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" The question was put back to him..."*What do you understand the law to teach?*" His answer was a good one—To love God and to love one's neighbor. Jesus replied, "*You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.*" But the discussion didn't end there. The Lawyer wanted to go further and asked Jesus "*Who is my neighbor?*" It is here that Jesus gave the story of the "Good Samaritan." (Luke 10:25-37). Notice some obvious lessons to be learned:

1. **The Samaritan helped someone who would ordinarily have nothing to do with him.**
2. **He took time and used his money to help the injured man.**
3. **He showed concern for the well-being of the man.**
4. **He was willing to do more, if needed, when he left him in good hands.**
5. **He was not concerned with getting the credit.**

The Apostle Paul tells us about Onesiphorus and his concern for Paul. Paul was awaiting trial and almost sure death. He said that he asked the Lord to be merciful to Onesiphorus because of the mercy that was extending to him (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

Luke also tells about a woman who showed compassion and kindness to widows. They not only mourned her, but praised her for her good works and kind deeds. (Acts 9:36-42). Peter was asked to come and probably wanted him to raise her from the dead—which he did!

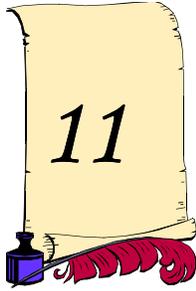
The emphasis is upon showing mercy to the distressed, the outcast, the poor, the ill, the deprived, the handicapped, the underprivileged, the down-trodden, the discouraged, the faint-hearted, the weak, the weary, the sorrowful, and the tried.

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHOWING MERCY AND SERVING?**

Anyone can offer service to others! We can even be paid for serving others. In fact, most of what we do as "work" to earn a living is a form of service. We generally think of "serving" others as something we do voluntarily without expecting any financial reward for doing such. But it is obvious that a person may be willing to serve others, but have ulterior motives for doing so. However, the term "mercy" seems to put the emphasis upon the intent of the person, the frame of mind with which they reach out to others. And even more so....mercy seems to have the idea of helping those who do not deserve it, or those whom we normally do not associate with. It is the motives behind and the mentality with which we reach out to others that makes a big difference. Paul's statement in Romans 12:8 seems to be stressing this point...when you show mercy, do it with cheerfulness!

### **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- 1. How would you define "to show mercy?" (Heb. 10:28; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Heb. 4:16; Luke 1:50; Eph. 2:4; Ps. 25:6; 40:11; 79:8; 103:4; 119:156; 145:9; Isa. 54:7; Hos. 2:19; Acts 13:34; Lk. 18:13).**
- 2. With what spirit are we to show mercy? (Rom. 12:8; James 2:13)**
- 3. Give some Bible examples of showing mercy?**
- 4. How would you differentiate between showing mercy and serving?**
- 5. What are some practical ways of showing mercy?**



## "Putting Our Gifts to Work"

(Romans 12:6)

*"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them..."*

Why have gifts if they are not used? The general problem however is not the lack of use of our gifts, but the failure to use them to the glory of God! Selfishly, we tend to use our gifts for our own ends and purposes and leave God out. It is obvious that these gifts can help us to survive on this earth and as well—to succeed in whatever endeavor that we attempt! But to use them only for ourselves is selfishness—we need to reach out to others as well. This is the reason why God has warned us to properly evaluate ourselves:

1. To think soberly, sensibly about our relationship with Him and our fellowman;
2. To think not of ourselves only, but others;
3. Not to think we are wise above what is written;
4. Not to feel so important about ourselves that we are domineering or repulsive;
5. And at the same time, not to feel so insignificant that we fail to do what God commands us.

We need to learn how to be humble and modest about ourselves, not proud and conceited. He also does not want us to be envious and discontent. We need to recognize our own talents and abilities as they really are—not so much as what we wish they were or pretend they are. We need to truthfully say to God: *"Lord, what will you have me to do?"* And then, to earnestly and sincerely put into practice our gift or gifts from God.

### THE SEVEN GIFTS OF ROMANS 12:3-8

1. **Prophecy (Preaching)** is to be exercised to the extent of our faith!
2. **Teaching** is to be used to instill the true way of God to men—showing them how to live!
3. **Exhortation** is to be used to motivate, encourage, and strengthen the body to full action!
4. **Ministering (Serving)** is to be exercised to the full extent of our opportunity to help!
5. **Giving** is to be done with free and sincere heart and purpose!
6. **Ruling (Leading)** is to be done showing a real concern for God's Will and God's people in order to lead them towards heaven!
7. **Showing Mercy** is to be done with a cheerful spirit of concern!

To some degree these gifts should be found in most congregations of any size—obviously, the more people, the more possibilities of these gifts abounding within their number. Paul's discussion of "gifts" in Ephesians 4:11-16 (in principle) would apply to both the miraculous gifts as well as the "natural" gifts. He listed several reasons that would still be necessary today:

1. **To prepare them for work of ministering.**
2. **To edify and build-up the church.**
3. **To bring about a unity and oneness (or maintain it).**
4. **To bring about a mature person in Christ.**

5. **That we be protected from cunning, crafty men who try to deceive us.**
6. **That we may be able to speak the truth in love.**
7. **That we may help cause the body to increase.**

When all of our gifts are used properly, with the proper spirit, the church will benefit and prosper. When we fail in such—the church will not be what God desires for it to be! Such will certainly indicate that there are people in the church with the wrong spirit (Rom. 12:3); with a lack of concern for their brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Cor. 12:25); and that they in reality do not feel a part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:26-27). A congregation that is using its gifts will be like a well-tuned and oiled motor—smooth and effective! It will not only be effective in building itself up, but effective in outreach, and effectively bringing glory to God.

### **PERSONAL BENEFITS**

When something is practical, you can see the benefits of such! Can you illustrate the value of gifts being used in the church to help build you and others up, to train you, and to mature you? May I deviate from my normal practice and make this question personal for me. Following are some thoughts to help show the value of such in my life.

1. **Publicly preaching** has had a great impact upon my life, my understanding of the Will of God, and as well, my desire to want to preach and continue preaching as much as I can.
2. **Teaching** has greatly indebted me to so many over the years that have given me better understanding not only of the Truth of God, but how to apply it to my life by their teaching-example!
3. **Exhortation** has time and again been effective in serving as an encouragement to me to continue to live right.
4. **Serving** my needs by others has helped me not only to continue as a preacher, but to want to continue serve the lost as well as the saved.
5. **Giving** that has sincerely and voluntarily been done to me has motivated me to want to give more myself.
6. **Ruling or Leading** has shown me that we all need spiritual leaders to help us live wisely and godly and to be motivated by their godly examples. May leaders have been a great encouragement to me to keep doing what I had set my mind to years ago.
7. **Showing Mercy** has made its impact on me when I have received mercy. This is especially true when it has been received in spite of my short-comings, failures, foibles, and wrong attitudes. They have held me in high regard even when I did not deserve it. They have continued to have faith in me and my efforts to serve the Lord. There were times when it would have been easier to quit than keep trying—but I am still trying to do what I can!

What a privilege to be part of such a body of people who listen to God and use what God has blessed them with to be a help to others about them.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

1. **Why is it important that every member of the body be active? (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:25; Rom. 12:3)**

**2. Will all of these gifts be in every congregation?**

**3. What are some purposes of these gifts in the church? (Eph. 4:11-16)**

**4. If these gifts are not being exercised in a congregation, what would this indicate about the church or some of its members? (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:25, 26-27).**

**5. Can you illustrate in your life the value of these gifts being used in the church?**



## ***"Using Gifts to Promote Evangelism"***

(Matthew 28:18-20)

*"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*  
(Luke 19:10).

Without His coming all mankind would be lost! He is mankind's only hope of redemption from the penalty of our sin and rebellion against God. Of course, we recognize that His coming to save us was not the only reason He came—for He accomplished other things as well. But we usually say that this was His main reason or purpose for coming to earth. If God's people would have a main mission, it would certainly be that which was Jesus' mission. He came to seek and save the lost. However, you can look back on the previous eleven lessons and realize that we have primarily (but not exclusively) been talking about building up the church. But why do we want to build up the church?

1. Just to keep house?
2. Just to selfishly enjoy one another's company?
3. Just to have a nice, congenial club to attend?
4. OR.....to prepare the church for the greatest work on earth?
5. To prepare it to be a marching army to go out against our great enemy?
6. To go out to conquer—to release the captives from Satan?
7. To go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation?

It should be quite obvious that all of this effort to build up the church is not to end in hiding our light under a bushel—but, rather, to make us more effective in carrying out the greatest work of all—reaching the lost! God's "miraculous" gifts, as well as the "natural" gifts, have been given to help us to be faithful to the end so that we can be saved—but, at the same time, to help us to be more effective "soul savers!" And believe it or not, everything we do ultimately as a Christian is designed to help reach the lost about us.

1. We meet to express our worship praise and adoration to God. It is our way of letting the world around us know that God deserves our worship and adoration and that they need to be a part of such activity.
2. We are hopefully built up and motivated by our assemblies to live godly lives before those who are outside of Christ—so we can influence them.
3. We are hopefully being equipped to more effectively reach out with the Gospel to those about us that are lost.
4. We want to become stronger, more mature, and better trained and prepared to be a "light in the world!"

### **GIFTS AND EVANGELISM**

One of the great values of studying about gifts is to help us see that not all can do the same thing well, but some will be more effective at some things than others would be. This is illustrated in Acts 6 when the Apostles asked the church to choose out seven men that could take care of the Grecian widows so that they could continually give themselves to the preaching of the Word (Acts 6:3-4). The Apostles would be far more effective in the public proclamation of the

Gospel at that time because they were the only ones who had the "miraculous" gifts with which to do the preaching of the truth. Others, who were given miraculous gifts, also became effective in the preaching of the Gospel to the lost like Stephen and Philip—who had previously been used to help minister to the Grecian widows (Acts 7-8). The Apostle Paul's use of the physical body to illustrate this is very effective (1 Cor. 12:12-28)! Then, at the end of that chapter he asked the question: ***"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"*** (1 Cor. 12:29-30). And...the answer is obvious! The various "miraculous" gifts as well as the "natural" gifts are manifold because each plays their part in accomplishing God's purposes.

What do the above thoughts have to do with evangelism? Well, if Jesus' mission becomes our mission; then, it becomes obvious that all of us should be reaching out to the lost. But the question comes...*"Am I suppose to preach or teach someone personally?"* And the answer is "YES" if we have the ability and opportunity. In fact, in Acts 8:4, it talks about the church being scattered by persecution and "they" went everywhere preaching the word. The "they" in this case were the members of the church who were scattered—not the Apostles (Acts 8:14). As the members were being scattered and going to other places, they were concerned about letting people know of the salvation to be found in Christ Jesus. The question that is pertinent here is: *"How did they preach Christ?"* Was it done by only those who had been given "miraculous" gifts? Or, was it done by everyone (in some way or another) by whatever means that they had at their disposal to help reach people with the Good News about Jesus? Jesus certainly seems to be making it clear that every child of God should be like "salt" and like "light" and to impact the society in which we live (Matt. 5:13-16). But it is done by all of us doing what we can to help promote the preaching of the Gospel by whatever talents and abilities that we possess. Every house in which Christians live and every building in which we meet to worship should be a radiating center of the Gospel of Christ.

### **EVANGELIZING WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**

Can Christians be a hindrance to reaching lost people? We should not be, and Jesus dealt with this question forcefully during his public ministry by rebuking the religious leaders for their hindrance to people wanting to come into the new kingdom of God (Matt. 23:25-28; 23:13). If our attitudes, actions, and knowledge is lacking, we need to change so that we will not be a hindrance to those who want to be saved.

1. We should want to bear fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).
2. Jesus showed his concern for the lost by dying for them—the least we can do is use what abilities and opportunities we have to show our concern (Heb. 2:9).
3. Paul could wish himself lost if it would save his kinsmen—what about us? (Rom. 9:1-3).
4. Paul suffered many trials and tribulations in his effort to help bring sinners to Christ—what about us? (2 Cor. 11:24-28).
5. We need to realize with whom we are working—we are working together with God in the greatest work on earth (1 Cor. 3:8-9).

## THE LOST MUST BE TAUGHT!

This is something that we all realize! Then, can all effectively teach the lost personally? I believe that we all can see why the emphasis upon various gifts—not just one! Paul's discussion about the fact that God made the body (not one member, but many members) carrying out its work effectively. We may not ALL be able to teach the lost effectively, but we can all work together towards the end of reaching the lost with what we can do. It takes all kinds of people to reach out to others. So, be aware of your gift and use it to reach out to the lost. If you cannot teach them yourself; then, bring them to someone who can teach them. I preached in a meeting in Grandview, Mo., in 1956. Three people were studied with and baptized. Someone had already opened the door so that I could teach. Shortly afterwards, I moved to Grandview, Mo, to do full-time work with the church. Within two weeks I was able to teach and baptized a couple into Christ. Why? Because one lady in the church had made their acquaintance, opened the door for me to go and teach them about salvation in Christ. While I worked with the church in Pittsburgh, PA, I worked up some statistics about reaching the lost. Later, I compared it with other places that I had worked and found the figures to be about the same in percentage.

1. 26% were children of members who were baptized. (Many people were involved).
2. 18% were reached through campaign contacts (Young people going door to door).
3. 12% just came to the building on their own (Yet, how did that building get there?).
4. 44% were reached through members of the church getting acquainted and working with them.

One of the hardest jobs that we have in reaching people is to find those who are open to be studied with!!! If you can do that, we can find someone to study with them easily!

## USE OF GIFTS ILLUSTRATED

1. **Teacher**—One who is willing to sit down and studied with another.
2. **Leader**—An organizer—get place, be a host family, get core group of people, find people will serve in any way possible, etc.
3. **Exhorter**—Someone who will motivate people to come to a study.
4. **Service**—Willingness to use their home for the study...prepare food for fellowship.
5. **Giving**—Be sure that the burden is not too great on one person.
6. **Mercy**—Show a kind, loving spirit to those who come. Be understanding and patient and feel for them.
7. **Prophecy (Preaching)**—Preach the Gospel to those who will visit our assemblies from the home studies.

On and on the list could go of things that can be done by one and all to help promote the evangelism of the lost. Am I developing and using my gift(s) to the glory of God and the saving of souls? Remember the unprofitable servant (Matt. 25:30). We need to be fruit bearers! God wants His people to *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."* (Col. 4:6). The inspired Apostle Peter wrote: *"Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"* (1 Pet. 3:15). Are we ready??

**QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- 1. What was Jesus' mission for coming to earth? (Lk. 19:10; Rom. 5:8; Matt. 1:21)**
  
- 2. What should be our mission as the body of Christ? (Mark 16:15; 5:13-16; 1 Cor. 10:31)**
  
- 3. Is every member to be involved in using their gift(s) to evangelize? (Acts 8:4; 1 Pet. 3:15; Col. 4:6).**
  
- 4. Can we be a hindrance to reaching people? (Matt. 23:13; 1 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:16)**
  
- 5. What kind of spirit do we need to have about reaching the lost? (Rom. 7:4; Heb. 2:9; Rom. 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:24-28; 1 Cor. 3:8-9).**
  
- 6. Can every Christian effectively teach the lost personally? (1 Cor. 12:28-31; 12:19)**
  
- 7. Illustrate how each gift can be used to evangelize.**



