

## **Gifts Given to Be Given to God's Glory**

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When we give people a gift, it is not usually for them to give it away. We specifically picked it out and bought it for them and their enjoyment. Imagine how different Christmas would be if you tried to sale that concept to your excited children before they tore into their haul. It may be more blessed to give than to receive, but we still love to get.

The Bible speaks of gifts that God has given to His children at salvation that are to be given away or at least used to serve others to His glory. God gives spiritual gifts to His people so they can bless others.

Spiritual gifts (charisma in Greek) can be defined as a special empowerment or ability given by God's Spirit to each believer to do some ministry (service) that builds up Christ's body (the church) to His glory.

Peter, Jesus' friend and apostle, wrote two letters to believers in exile, suffering persecution. In 1 Peter 4:7-11, he reminds them to love and serve each other, something one may forget when running for one's life. Roughly speaking, Peter writes "Things may be tough, but you have an on going duty to pray, love and serve one another, using your God given giftedness"

Paraphrasing Peter in this text about spiritual gifts, he writes: "Since we know that Christ may come at any moment, use your spiritual gifts in service to others for God's glory. If your gifts lay in the realm of speaking, do so as if you were speaking God's very words. If you are gifted in serving others, do this with the strength with which God supplies. Whatever you do, do it for God's glory."

If I may, here are three simple, basic observations for Jesus' disciples from 1 Peter 4 about spiritual gifts.

The first truth about spiritual gifts is: You've Got One! Each believer has received a spiritual gift. If you have called out to the risen Lord Jesus for salvation, He not only gave you eternal life, He gifted you to serve others (see also 1 Corin. 12:7 and Eph. 2:8-10).

One can hardly use a gift they do not know they possess. If you are His, you are graced with an ability to build up Christ's body. You are a person of true charisma (see the definition again).

The second application from Peter's letter is also simple. Since you have a gift from God to serve others, "Go For It", use it.

Believers are to use their spiritual gifts as God's servants of grace to others. One of the ways God exhibits His grace is through His children. When you use your gifts to serve others, they receive God's grace (see Jesus' example in Mark 10:45 and John 13:1-10).

Using your God-given abilities to minister to others is also good stewardship. The old phrase is true; we are to be good stewards or managers of our "time, treasures and talents." Read carefully Matt. 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27.

The final truth about spiritual gifts is that they are for God's glory! Just as everything else in life is to be to the glory of God, no matter how mundane or miraculous, so too the use of our gifts (see 1 Corin. 10:31 and Col. 1:15-18). It is not about us!

Are you gifted in speaking God's truth? Do so with the sobering knowledge that you are to behave as if you were speaking God's own words (see James 3:1; 2 Corin. 5:20 and Acts 7:38).

Did God gift you to serve others? Make sure that all that you do is by God's strength (see Col. 1:28, 29; 3:22-25; 17, 18; Matt. 20:28 and John 15:1-7.) Certainly do your part, but make sure you let God do His as well.

As a bonus, allow me to add a few final thoughts and promptings for further study and edification.

Let's remember that spiritual gifts are not trophies to be polished & looked at, but tools to sharpen & use! This is not about "look at me, what I can do." We are pointing beyond ourselves.

For further biblical input about the gifts, study these lists and examples of different spiritual gifts: Rom. 12:1-8; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Corin. 12-14. Remember as you read them that none of the "gift lists" are presented as an exhaustive list.

Why not memorize 1 Corin. 12:7 & 1 Peter 4:10, 11?

Last, but certainly not least, remember that the "Love Chapter", 1 Corinthians 13, is sandwiched between two chapters on the gifts. To use your gifts, not matter how spectacular or sacrificial, without love is a waste at best.

While not all believers will have the same gifts, and some gifts are less flashy or visible, all of us are to be people who love, the greatest gift of all (see John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).