

GIFTED TO SERVE

“As each has received a gift,
use it to serve one another...”

(1 Peter 4:10)

GIFTED TO SERVE, Part 7 “One Glorious Objective”

By Rev. Will Nelken

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We are exploring the gifts with which God equips His people—what they are, how they come to us, what they’re used for, what you can do to develop them, and how to use them most effectively.

Because His gifts are God’s deposits of grace and ability in our lives that equip us for the purpose for which He made each one of us.

“There are different spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, and yet the same Lord is served. There are different types of work to do, but the same God produces every gift in every person.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

In previous talks, we briefly examined three lists of God’s gifts in the New Testament, which I categorize as:

- *Motivational Gifts*

These gifts of God form and empower your personality for spiritual impact.

- *Leadership Gifts*

Through these gifts Jesus identifies the leaders of His Church and motivates their vision.

- *Demonstration Gifts*

By the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to meet the needs of those around us, revealing the lordship of Christ.

The aim of God’s wealth of gifts is to build up His Church through two primary activities: serving “insiders” (fellow believers) and serving “outsiders” (the unchurched). The act of serving builds you up spiritually, and also builds up those you serve.

We need compassionate deeds *and* passionate proclamation. Good deeds validate the Good News we bring. And the Good News clarifies the motivation behind our good deeds.

For God’s words must be heard in order to impart their power. It is the message about Jesus Christ that has the power to save.

As Paul wrote: *“I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes.”* (Romans 1:16)

If we boil the message down to its essence, it might look like these five points:

- **God loves you intensely**
and wants to share good things and eternal life with you;
- **But there’s a problem:**
we don’t want God to rule over us—this is called sin, and it separates us (from God and others);
- **So God provided the Answer**
by coming into our world Himself in human form, as Jesus of Nazareth—a man who never sinned;
- **And as a man, He offered Himself in our place**
to be our substitute and pay the penalty for our sins, to restore our relationship with God as our Father;
- **This saving grace is offered to us as a free gift**
which must be received by faith, in order to be effective.

A brief outline such as this, is easy to commit to memory, so you will leave nothing out that needs to be said, and can easily resume if you are interrupted.

So, for our part, with the Scriptures as our basis, and the Spirit as our Coach, how should we say it?

I have offered four words:

- **Organically**
Unforced, building on established relationships
- **Con conversationally**
Not teaching, challenging, prosecuting, or judging
- **Personally**
Be authentically vulnerable, humble, relatable
- **Invitationally**
Aim to offer them Christ (low pressure, but earnest)

In the words of Peter: *“Always be ready to explain [your hope in Christ]. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.”* (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Pragmatic Tools

In any application of the gifts of God, whether among Christians or unchurched people, let your purpose be to build up Christ’s Church, and your manner be gracious and authentic.

Recognize this: the gifts of God are not imaginary, but pragmatic tools, empowering us to serve the Lord and His people in *this* life. Some of His gifts will not persist *beyond* this life.

Paul wrote: *“There is the gift of speaking what God has revealed, but it will **no longer** be used. There is the gift of speaking in other languages, but it will stop by itself. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will **no longer** be used. Our knowledge is incomplete and our ability to speak what God has revealed is incomplete. But when what is complete comes, then what is incomplete will **no longer** be used.”* (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)

Clearly, supernatural gifts are not the Main Thing (as some may suggest); they are the means to an end. *What IS the main thing?*

Paul made it plain: *“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”* (1 Corinthians 13:13)

As he said earlier: *“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, **but didn’t love others**, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, **but didn’t love others**, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; **but if I didn’t love others**, I would have gained nothing.”* (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

One Glorious Objective

If your study of the Bible does not generate greater love for Jesus Christ, then you are not reading in the way you should.

If your times of worship and prayer do not foster a deeper love for the Holy Spirit, then you are just talking to hear yourself speak.

If your witness to others of the truth and grace of Jesus Christ does not nurture in you a compelling love for the unchurched, then your pride is getting in your way.

And if you’re doing none of these things, then what need have you of supernatural gifts? The gifts of God are not for the idle or the indifferent.

And if you are captivated by the effects of the gifts, instead of the Giver Himself, then you are caught in a web of idolatry.

One Glorious Objective!

*To build up the Church
through loving unity
and compassionate evangelism
in order to reveal
the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!*

For the gifts of God have one overarching, glorious objective: to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul said it like this: *“God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display His wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was His eternal*

plan, which He carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:10-11)

The Spirit gives and manifests the gifts in order that people may *know Jesus*, for they all point to Him—to His character, to His mission, to His everlasting Kingdom.

Words of knowledge. Words of wisdom. Prophecies. Teachings. Exhortations. Acts of mercy. Working of miracles. Acts of healing. Preaching the Good News. All these are expressive gifts from God, revealing the glory of His Son.

Jesus told His friend, Martha, *“Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?”* (John 11:40)

According to the author of The Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus, God’s Son, is *“the sole expression of the radiant glory of God, and He is the perfect imprint and very image of God’s nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power”* (Hebrews 1:3)—but that cannot be seen with the natural eye, nor understood with the natural mind alone. Supernatural revelation is required!

God’s gifts are never an end in themselves. This is why Jesus never performed miracles on demand. This is why you cannot perform them at will.

To Know Him Is to Trust Him

The objective of God’s gifts is to help you (and others) know Jesus.

To know His sovereign power.

To know His generous mercy.

To know His insurmountable wisdom.

To know His loyal love.

To know His royal reign.

To know His compassionate suffering.

To know His resurrection life.

Paul said that his aim, as a follower of Jesus, was *“to know Him, to experience the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings, and to be like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* (Philippians 3:10-11)

And, through knowing Him in such ways, to trust Him.
To trust Him when He invites you into supernatural ministry.
To trust Him when He calls you for sacrificial service.
To trust Him when the outcome is less than you expected.
To trust Him when others turn away from you.
To trust Him when darkness grows deep.
To trust Him when the journey grows long.
To trust Him through gains and losses.
To trust Him with sorrows and joys.
To trust Him with what you give away.
To trust Him for what you cannot see.

It was Paul’s constant prayer: *“I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to those He called—His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance.*

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe Him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is His body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with Himself.” (Ephesians 1:16-23)

This was not a prayer for an individual, for the word “you,” in every case, is in the plural form. It is a prayer for the people of God, for the fellowship of believers, for the local church and the global church.

Together Forever

We are to get to know Him *together*. We are to trust Him *together*. We are to learn to love one another as He has loved us. We are to grow in unity. *Together*.

Jesus prayed for this: *“I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in Me through their testimony, that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in Me and I am in You. I pray that they will be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me. The glory You gave to Me I have given to them, that they may be one just as We are one—I in*

them and You in Me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that You sent Me, and You have loved them just as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23)

I am talking to you today about *authentic Christianity*.

In one sense, “Christianity” refers to a religious genre (not Hindu, not Muslim, not secular). In another sense, “Christian” is just a cultural label for social moral values based somewhat on the Bible.

But I am referring to Christianity that is authentic—
not just sincere, but Biblical (rooted in Biblical values, guided by Jesus’ commands, dependent on the Holy Spirit, united by Christ’s love, and demonstrating the life and power of our Risen Savior).

Knowing Jesus.

Trusting Jesus.

Together.

As one.

This is gifted Christianity. Is it yours?

This is amazing grace. Do you live by it?

This is God’s glorious Kingdom? Are you part of it?

If so, does anyone else know? Is it apparent?

It doesn’t have to be offensive to be obvious, but
it cannot be obvious if it is not distinctive.

And the distinctive marks are the fruit and gifts of the Spirit in our lives.

Bells and Pomegranates

When the High Priest of Israel performed his solo ministry in the Holy of Holies (the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle in the wilderness or the Temple in Jerusalem), he wore a linen robe which was adorned around its bottom hem with bells of gold, alternating with embroidered pomegranates—a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, and so on.

Also, a long rope was tied around one of his ankles.

As long as he continued his ministry, the sound of the bells let the people know that he was received with favor by the Lord (for the raw presence of God would kill him if he wasn’t properly prepared, and then the Levites would need to use the rope to drag his corpse out of the Most Holy Place).

As long as the bells were ringing, all was well between God and His priests.

The Church of Christ, today, stands as the new priesthood of God on earth, as it says in The Revelation: “[Christ] has made us a Kingdom of priests for God His Father. All glory and power to Him forever and ever!” (Revelation 1:6)

We, too, are to wear a robe (in the Spirit) adorned with bells and fruit, in proper balance, all around. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are the pomegranates, and the gifts of God are the golden bells.

As long as the bells are ringing (that is, as long as the gifts are operative) effective ministry is taking place.

We need believers today who recognize their place as priests to God—who don’t just play at church, but who will stand in the gap, between earth and Heaven, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and using the gifts God has put in their lives—to *build up the Church through loving unity and compassionate evangelism, in order to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!*

Will that be you?

Have you enlisted for service? (Or are you still living your life primarily for yourself?)

Will that be you?

Are you ready today to re-enlist? (Begin again to live by the Spirit’s lead and for the pleasure of Christ.)

Will that be you?

Do you need a fresh anointing for service? (As priests in the Bible were anointed before serving.)

If that is to be you, offer yourself to Christ right now in prayer. You don’t need special words, and you don’t need to bring an offering, other than yourself—your whole heart (as you know it right now), open to receive, and sincere.

“Lord Jesus, here I am. I hear Your call, and I’m responding. I enlist; take me in, Lord. I want to re-enlist; take me back. Anoint me with fresh oil. Fill me with the Holy Spirit—all His fruit and all His gifts, as you see fit. Let me work with You, as You do great things, for the glory of Your name.”