

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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A Summary Listing of NT Spiritual Giftings

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“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” 1 Peter 4:10

An **apostle** (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) is someone who has been personally called, selected and sent out by Christ to be a representative for Him. It helps to understand the distinction between a *messenger*, who only delivers a message, and an *apostle*. An apostle is a representative operating in place of the one who sent him or her. The word “apostle” means a “sent one”. In the NT, apostles traveled about proclaiming the gospel, but *they were especially effective at starting new communities of believers*. Their ministries were often accompanied by miraculous signs (2 Cor. 12:12). They would stay for a while, but then they would leave others in oversight, and they would move on. They often would return to check on the health of the group, and address problems or commend successes. *An apostle would initiate and oversee healthy Body life*. He or she would establish a healthy pattern of meeting together for the people.

A **prophet** or **prophecy** is speaking forth a message from God for another person, or group. There are two parts to this: receiving a revelation from God, and then communicating it. This is the only gift referred to in all the other biblical lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Pet. 4:11), and Paul also presents this gift as something to be desired and sought after (14:1). There seems to be a gift of prophecy that some receive as their main spiritual gift, and there seems to also be occasional or situational revelations that the Spirit may give when believers are gathered to address a specific need. This message may come to them in a variety of ways, ...through dreams, visions, or a revelation or word from the Lord. Their responsibility is to accurately describe and convey what it was that they saw, heard or received from God. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, *a prophet speaks to people for their edification, encouragement and consolation*. Often, a prophet will be shown the secrets of peoples' heart, and their messages will be especially personal and convicting, if they are being called to account by the prophet. Prophets have also been used to call others out for special tasks, or to give personal direction.

An **evangelist** (Eph. 4:11; cf. Act 21:8) is one who goes about proclaiming the good news, and who has an unusual ability to lead others to follow Christ. More than that, however, their passion and example can equip and motivate others to share their faith. Oftentimes, their frequent stories of their experiences will reduce the fear in the minds of others, and will encourage them in stepping out to share Jesus with others. On a practical level, an evangelist will always be adding new people to the group, or expanding the outreach, and will add excitement and vibrance to the meetings.

Because of the structure of the Greek in Ephesians 4:11, a **shepherd-teacher** is meant to be a combination of two giftings or functions. We need to get away from thinking in terms of “pastor”, because a pastor has so many religious and hierarchical-leadership connotations that would have been foreign to the people of the first century. A shepherd (the meaning of ‘pastor’) was a role that most people were familiar with. They were people who watched over and cared for their flock of sheep. They were not demanding, bullying, or harsh, ...or the sheep would run from them. They were there to *serve* their sheep, and keep them safe, nourished and secure. All NT elders were to “shepherd the flock” (1 Pet. 5:1,2; Acts 20:17,20) and were to be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 3:7-9). These were functional duties, not necessarily spiritual giftings. One of the key responsibilities of a shepherd was to provide healthy grazing for the sheep. In the application of this metaphor to believers, it was understood that “healthy spiritual food” was equivalent to “sound and healthy teaching” (e.g., Acts 6:2,4). Some people are gifted by God as a **teacher**. Someone with the gift of teaching has an unusual, Spirit-enabled ability to research and communicate truth to others to educate and equip them. There are **shepherds** who are gifted to care for a group of people, but are lacking in the teaching area. There are gifted teachers (Rom 12:7), who lack the ability to care for and lead a group effectively through everyday life. A shepherd-teacher has *both* the Spirit-enabled qualities of being able to provide oversight and care, along with being able to provide healthy teaching.

The gift of **service** (Rom. 12:7) is the word, *diakonia*, which refers to hands-on, practical service. A person with this gift is “at the ready to serve”. The Spirit will often prompt them to offer, plan or initiate service without being asked.

Coming-alongside. “...whether the-one-calling-alongside, in the calling-alongside...” (Rom. 12:8). Here is an example of a word with a wide range of latitude. The idea is someone who invites another into interaction to help them. It could be someone who comes alongside to encourage, or console, or comfort, or to help in some way, or even to exhort. They have a knack for inviting someone aside to offer counsel, or to have a meaningful talk that is helpful to the other person. They usually take the initiative to invite the person aside.

Giving. “...the one giving, in single-heartedness...” (Rom. 12:8). This person has an unusual, Spirit-enabled generosity, and often give above and beyond what others would, ...because they have a special grace-empowering from God to do so. They are to do this with a whole heart, a heart that is not shaded with double-mindedness.

The next one is literally, “**the one standing-before**” (Rom. 12:8). This term either meant a leader (as one who stands in front of a group), or one who is standing before someone to serve them. They are to do this with earnestness.

Mercy. “the one expressing-mercy with cheerfulness” (Rom. 12:8). This is not someone who just *feels* compassion for people in need. They have a compassion-that-acts. They are to express this action with joy.

Home meetings, or small informal gatherings, were the norm for the first 300 years of church history, which was also the time of the most rapid, Spirit-empowered growth. The gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were not at all uncommon. Where the people were free to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit together for each other, He would give these giftings, these manifestations of the Spirit, for the benefit of those they were praying for. Let’s take a look at these giftings. Again, as they were praying for one another or were gathered together, God would give “**a word of wisdom**”. Note this is *not* the “gift of wisdom”, as some would present this. This is a momentary *revelation*, “a word, message, or thought of wisdom”. Wisdom is about knowing what to do in a situation. It is God’s revealed counsel as to how to resolve a problem. This is *not* someone else’s own wisdom, from living longer or being more experienced. This is a “message of wisdom” from God to that person or that situation.

The next gifting is “**a word of knowledge**”. Again, the group is gathered and God reveals a glimpse at some unknown bit of information, ...He communicates some knowledge that otherwise would be impossible to know. This revelation will be helpful information to get at some issue, or to clearly reveal that God is in this situation.

The gift of “**faith**” is a supernatural prompting and empowering of God to trust Him to do some particular thing. It defies logic, or any natural expectation, but it ends up being vindicated by the fulfillment of whatever is being trusted for. Someone with this kind of faith can act boldly, or declare things confidently, or believe God for a much larger thing than others can. Often their confidence can inspire others to believe, as well.

Next, is “**gifts of healings**” (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). The Spirit enables someone to heal the sick or infirm. Notice that there are multiple gift expressions here, as well as different kinds of healings. This is not just “a healer”, there are multiple people who have healing gifts of various kinds, ...and, again, it could be a distribution of healing gifts being made available at *that* gathering, to deal with a particular situation. Healing sick people was one of the key indicators of the presence and power of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus, his apostles, and the ongoing ministry of the church in those first centuries. Throughout the centuries, this has surfaced again and again as a sign of God at work.

The next gift is an “**inworkings of miracles**” (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). It is interesting that our translations have rendered it as “effecting miracles”, but the focus of the Greek is the “inworking power” of God given by the Spirit. The action of the Holy Spirit begins *inside*, but the effect is seen in the *outward results* (Lk. 5:17; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11).

The next gift mentioned is “**discernings of spirits**”. Note again there are varieties of discernings. The word is plural. I have heard of a wide array of experiences in this area, regarding how a person can tell when something is amiss. People also report a differentiation between discerning of demonic spirits, and even discerning the “spirit” of a person, i.e., whether they are honest and good, or whether they are deceitful. Again, this is a revelatory work of the Holy Spirit within an individual.

“**kinds of tongues...**” (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). Paul tells us that there are tongues of men and of angels (13:1). I am confident that this is not to be understood as nonsense. These are utterances in unknown languages prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. They can be a sign of God’s presence, and can serve as a self-edifying “prayer language”, but for the benefit of the body they are to be interpreted, so that others can understand what is being said (14:2-5).

“**interpretation of tongues...**” This is the Spirit-enabled ability to understand what someone who speaks in a tongue is saying, and explain it. It is not necessarily a word-for-word translation, but an explanation of the content of the message. Tongues that are interpreted are like prophecy (14:5).

“**Helps**” (1 Cor 12:28) is a word meaning literally to “take up over against”, implying taking up a task *with someone else*. Someone with this gift is prompted and empowered by the Spirit to assist others in what they are doing.

“**Administrations**” (1 Cor 12:28) is an interesting word. It was commonly used for the navigator or pilot of a ship. Interestingly, he did not sit up front. He sat at the rear of the boat, so he could more clearly see the direction of the boat. He calculated the course and gave instruction and guidance to the crew members, so they could work together as a team to get the boat where it needed to go. It is important to remember that the *ekklēsia* was a small group of people meeting together to build each other up, and maybe a network of home gatherings in a city. This gift has to do with Spirit-inspired perspective, wise counsel and guidance, and being able to get others to follow.

Peter breaks the gifts down into two categories: Speaking and Serving (1 Pet. 4:11). When you think about it, this makes sense. It may be helpful to think in terms of these two very general categories regarding your own giftings. What is *your* motivation or prompting, ...to *communicate information*, or to *help with practical concerns*?

All of us are encouraged to act in accordance with the grace-gifting and prompting of God within us. Can you see your experience in any of these descriptions? Begin to ask God to show you your function in the Body of Christ, and act on the promptings of God’s grace inworking inside of you! Often, we discover our gifts through our serving.