

Spiritual Gifts



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The Gift and the Giver

There's more to giving and receiving than just gifts.

by Janine Petry

I love gifts. I love *giving* gifts, and I love *receiving* gifts. But I don't really think it's about *gifts* at all. There's so much more to giving and receiving.

When it comes to giving gifts, I love the anticipation of blessing someone with a tangible expression of my love and care. I love watching the recipient experience the joy of being “known”—for who they are, for what they do, or for what they're going through. I look forward to watching them receive their gift, and experience the warmth of being given to.

Likewise, what I love most about getting a gift is receiving the knowledge that someone knows me, and loves or cares for me. I still have memories of gifts I received because the giver knew me so well. I've even been surprised to receive things I didn't even know I liked or wanted or needed, and yet someone was caring, noticing, and helping me to know myself better.

It's no different when it comes to our spiritual gifts from God. In 1 Corinthians 12 we learn that “to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good....and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (vv. 7, 11). We have a Giver! And he's

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blessed each of us with a very real spiritual gift. Not only do we gain the blessing of the gift itself, but with it we receive the blessing of his immeasurable love and a priceless awareness that he knows us intimately.

As you seek to “open” and enjoy your spiritual gifts—and lead others to do the same—this resource will help guide you. You’ll learn more about the spiritual gifts, how to grow in them, and how to guard against their misuse. You’ll also find plenty of other resources packed inside for you to go even farther in understanding and experiencing your gifts from God. Happy unwrapping!

Blessings,

Janine Petry

Contributing Editor, Gifted For Leadership
Christianity Today International

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THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

How Do I Uncover My Spiritual Gifts?

3 ways to discern how God wired you.

by Nancy Ortberg

Discovering and utilizing your spiritual gifts is one of the most exciting adventures a person can have with God. The Bible says spiritual gifts are abilities God bestows on every believer for the common good of the body of Christ. They're a large part of the answer to the question, "What should I do with the life God gave me?"

Passages like 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and 1 Peter 4 go into specific detail about what these gifts are and how they should be used. It's clear every spiritual gift is a reflection of God's nature that you carry within you. And because your spiritual gift reflects God's design and direction for your life, you'll find great passion, joy, and satisfaction in expressing it. Your spiritual gift also will be a place of deep spiritual formation in your life, as God uses it both to powerfully connect you to him and to expose areas of your soul that need his forgiveness and redemption.

So here's a process to start:

Pay attention. Notice the things that energize you and seem to come naturally. Remember the quote from the movie *Chariots of Fire* when Eric Liddell explained to his sister why he was postponing his return to the mission field in order to race in the Olympics? "Because when I run, I feel the pleasure of God."

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Every spiritual gift gives off clues. Your spiritual gift will cause you to react a certain way in a given situation. If there's a problem, people with the spiritual gift of shepherding will be immediately concerned that people are cared for and growing in Christlikeness as a result of the issue. Those with the gift of intercession (prayer) will immediately say, "We need to pray about this," while those with a leadership gift will begin looking at solutions for the problem.

Try. Once you've gathered enough information to create a list of some possible gifts (perhaps gifts of mercy, evangelism, encouragement, or hospitality), exercise your options. A great place to start would be a volunteer position at your church. While you're trying it out, you'll start to discern whether you're good at it or not. Also, others will tell you!

When my kids were young, our church needed help in the nursery during the worship services. I volunteered for a three-month opening. I *didn't* feel the pleasure of God; the children *didn't* feel the pleasure of God. It was *so not* my spiritual gift. Part of learning what you're good at is having to go through the pain of learning what you're *not* good at.

As you try different things, you'll eventually find yourself engaged in something during which time flies and you find a deep sense of connection to God. Pick that road to continue your adventure.

Develop. In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul encourages Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God." We're responsible to develop our gifts. Perhaps one of the best ways to do that is to mentor someone who's just starting on this discovery process. People with the spiritual gift of wisdom are probably the best people to develop someone else with the spiritual gift of wisdom, and so on for each of the gifts.

It's remarkable how you can deepen your relationship with God as you uncover and live out the spiritual gifts he's bestowed on you. What could the church and our world look like if each of us used the gift God's given us?

Nancy Ortberg is a church leadership consultant and popular speaker who lives in California with her husband, John, and their three children. This article first appeared in the January/February 2007 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

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Thought Provokers

- *Read through 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and 1 Peter 4. What do these passages teach you about gifts and how they should be used?*
- *What things energize you, come naturally, or bring you great satisfaction? How are these things clues to your spiritual gifts? How can you develop these and use them to edify the Body of Christ?*

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How To

Unleashing the Gifted Church

Using an equipping model is one starting point in the emancipation of God's entire priesthood.

by George Mallone

Sandy called me with a simple request: "George, a friend of mine is in the hospital. Would you go and share some comforting words?"

I'm all for hospital visitation and helping a friend, but at that moment my ministerial priorities outweighed my ministerial guilt. Mustering up my courage and attempting to be as empathetic as possible, I said, "Sandy, my job is to equip you to do the ministry, not to do all the ministry myself. It is your job to visit your friend. There are three ground rules for hospital visitation: don't sit on the bed, don't stay too long, and pray and read the Word with your friend before you leave. When you have done these things, call me back, and I'll share some more tips."

You can imagine how I felt when the conversation ended. All afternoon I wondered if I had done the right thing.

Am I being lazy? What am I getting paid for? Am I a leader or not?

But after a few hours, new thoughts began: I'm committed to the full employment of every believer. Putting that into practice may create a few awkward moments in relationships with people, but if I love them, teach them, and have confidence in their ministry, someday they will be off the spiritual welfare rolls and be full, active partners in ministry.

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At our church we have decided to make an effort to train others. In many ways we're still learning, but we're making progress. Here are several we've found that enable leaders and churches to equip people to assume ministry.

Redefine the role

Over time, begin to redefine your role as one who equips others for ministry rather than one who does all the ministry. Describe yourself as a leader among fellow leaders rather than as "the pastor" of the church. You will need to say these things to those you serve so people begin to hear and see you in a different light. At the same time, you must affirm them, encourage them in their gifts, and although they may not have your training, show them they are necessary and useful for building up the body of Christ.

Design structures that fulfill these goals

It does no good to advocate giftedness and not provide structure for it to work. Church structures, therefore, must be designed to help all believers minister. Here's one example.

I am the primary teacher in our church. But I believe there are more teachers and preachers in the community, and they deserve the privilege of growing in their giftedness. One way to encourage this growth, for example, is to preach no more than 65 percent of the sermons. The remaining Sundays are not given to travel or speaking in other places, but to hearing those in our community who are growing in their preaching gifts. It demands that I listen to their teaching, record my response, and spend time with each speaker, providing affirmation and giving suggestions for improvement. It also means keeping them up-to-date on study materials and teaching resources, and giving them further opportunities to preach.

Delegate in faith

If people are to grow in their gifts, we must be prepared to give ministry to them. By faith, we must believe that God can use them as well as ourselves. God's plan will not be thwarted because we can't be there. The more time we spend equipping others, the more confidence we will have that they can do the job.

Prepare for flak

You may not be at every social event or committee meeting. An educated congregation, still having the traditional role in mind, will no doubt have some questions about your absence. Graciously answer

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those concerns, but stick to your equipping priorities. You are a servant of Christ, called to do his bidding. You are not a slave to people's notions of your calling.

Gift exposure

Eleven years ago I could not carry a tune in a bucket (I still sing pretty poorly). At the same time, I was exposed to men and women who had gifts in leading worship and I began to covet those gifts for our church. I remember watching one pastor lead his congregation in singing for forty-five minutes. There was no musical accompaniment, only his gentle voice leading them. I saw then that music was not only a performance gift but a gift for gathering the body together in collective worship. I went home and began (somewhat nervously) to model this in our own community. From this beginning, I took every opportunity to expose myself to as many worship leaders as I could find.

Giftedness needs exposure

As those called to equip others, we need as much exposure as possible to all the gifts. You may not have a particular gift personally (prayer for healing, for example), but you need to know what the gifts are and who can train your community in a given ministry. For me, this has meant traveling on my sabbaticals, attending one or two conferences per year, and making sure I am acquainted with the other pastors in my area. The latter has led me to a fellowship of some forty men and women who meet every two weeks for prayer and worship. The spillover from this meeting is that we exchange equipping ministries with one another. I led a workshop on facilitating congregational worship in Bob's church, and he led a workshop on evangelism in mine.

As we have been trained, people in our congregations will be equipped through exposure to real-life situations. Here is an example: Graeme was an unpaid intern in our church. He contributed twenty hours a week to study and ministry. In return, I spent time with him in reading tutorials and lectures. One such lecture dealt with church discipline. It was pretty much the simple transfer of teacher's notes to student's notebook, except for a few personal illustrations I was able to give.

A short time later, as a co-leader in a small home group, Graeme was confronted by a problem demanding discipline. Our elders decided to let the house group handle the discipline and not involve themselves unless it was absolutely necessary. No doubt Graeme felt in over his

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head, but he had been trained in the principles of biblical discipline, and I was sure his exposure to this real-life situation would be beneficial. It was indeed, for Graeme successfully led the group through the process of discipline and ultimately saw the restoration of the person back to the church. The equipping opportunity had been married to life exposure and produced a mature disciple.

Ministry Laboratory

An equipping church will foster a climate of experimentation with all the gifts. One year we ran a “gifts fair” in the church for two successive evenings. Over thirty workshops were offered in which people had an opportunity to learn about some of the gifts available to believers, see these gifts in action, hear how leaders grow in their giftedness, be warned of some of the pitfalls, and be given suggestions for discovering and using one’s gifts. These workshops included the areas of helps, administration, working with prisoners, worship leadership, drama and dance, photography, writing music, preaching, counseling, ministry with the handicapped, and leading evangelistic Bible studies. As limited as this was, the climate invited people to experiment and see where and how God wanted to use them.

One of the primary places for gift discovery and affirmation is in small-group meetings. Within a relational environment, people can share their spiritual desires for ministry. When someone wants to use a gift, there is a good chance God has put that desire there. Spiritual pride can occasionally skew this principle, but generally we should encourage people who volunteer a gift.

The small group should manifest an attitude of expectation. If Karen believes God has given her gifts in songwriting, then we want to bring this before the group in prayer and give Karen a chance to share her compositions. We know she is only a beginner and her self-image and confidence are shaky, but affirmation and careful evaluation will help her to take the next step. As the group gives Karen opportunity to minister and expects her to grow, she most likely will. The group may encourage her to share one of her songs in the Sunday service. Whether she does a great job or falls flat on her face, the group is there to encourage her in the process and to give helpful suggestions.

Decentralizing Strategy

Few of the things we have discussed so far will be possible if a church retains the old wineskins, so to speak. The leadership team may have a

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new attitude about equipping ministry, but it will be defeated if there are no structural changes.

The average church today is highly centralized. Everything happens at the church building (the “successful” church is open seven nights a week), and the senior pastor or one of the paid staff usually administers the program. Performance by a few is the norm over against participation by many. Attendance and passivity are stressed at the expense of interaction and leadership. This being the case, a highly centralized church will need fewer equipped people for its ministry.

Unfortunately, it will also sacrifice the priesthood and giftedness of the believer to see this happen. A decentralized philosophy, on the other hand, demands more equipping because everyone is working.

In our church, the decentralization strategy becomes visible on four levels: personal, small-group, congregational, and citywide. Each level builds on the previous one.

The basement: personal and family development

In any building, the foundation is most important. So it is with building a body of equipped saints. Individual growth and family strength is the foundation. Growth can’t happen without individuals involved daily in Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. But seldom do we take these practices seriously enough to teach how they are done and provide the necessary materials to do them. Our congregation writes its own study guide to lead members through personal study, discussions with spouse and children, and preparation for the next Sunday’s worship.

First floor: interpersonal and small-group development

From the foundation, we build the ground floor—interpersonal relationships and small groups. Four sections make up this level.

Personal discipleship—the design is to have everyone learning from an older, more mature Christian and then sharing information and life with a younger believer. Bible-reading programs, Scripture-memory covenants, and prayer partnerships all play a part. Each of these involves some training and equipping.

Hospitality. As Karen Main’s book *Open Heart, Open Home* suggests, hospitality and entertainment are two different things. It is essential





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that we train in the ways of hospitality. We've had special workshops to discuss the dilemmas of hospitality and how to get out of the entertainment rut.

Friendship evangelism. Most people come to Christ through contact with Christian friends or family members. Our emphasis should be upon sustaining contact with non-Christian friends and slowly winning the right, by our character and service, to share Christ with them. We try to train people in ways of friendship evangelism.

Household groups—probably the single greatest tool for gift discovery and development. Ranging from ten to twelve people and meeting in homes for up to three hours per week, these small units are able to know one another in an atmosphere of study, sharing, worship, prayer, and mission. House-group leaders in our fellowship are designated by the elders and serve as the primary pastoral team for their groups.

Second floor: large groups and congregation as a whole

The traditional church sees the Sunday service as the performance of the few and the best, which is quite different from Paul's description found in 1 Corinthians 14:26. Although he believed in forms for worship (e.g., the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11), Paul also advocated a system in which believers were given freedom to share in that service. Such involvement can be greatly enhanced by equipping more people to participate on a regular basis.

In addition to Sunday services, we also use large-group activities to train people. Saturday seminars, weekly training programs, weekend retreats, summer camps—all are excellent tools for developing effective workers for the mission of the church. We encourage large groups to become involved in *extensive* evangelism. While friendship evangelism (*intensive*) focuses on friends and relatives, extensive evangelism reaches beyond the borders of our friendships to people unknown to us. Consequently, activities such as door-to-door visitation, open-air preaching, and evangelistic dinner parties can be great opportunities to train people to share their faith.

Third floor: citywide ministry

Every congregation needs opportunities to participate with other believers in a city for the purpose of proclaiming Christ and

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demonstrating the unity of the church. Crusade evangelism, inter-church worship rallies, and corporate demonstrations for social justice are a few examples. Each opportunity carries the potential for equipping.

These four levels we have looked at offer dozens of opportunities for people to be trained and to employ their gifts. Again, this is not a program but a strategy for decentralizing the church so that more people fulfill their God-given ministry.

“Outrageous—the whole process is outrageous,” you may be saying. “It would never work in my church. We can’t even recruit enough volunteers to serve on our committees!” Maybe that’s the point. Maybe believers are tired of fitting into fixed slots that have no relationship to their giftedness. Don’t you feel this anxiety from time to time? An equipping model of the pastor-teacher is one starting point in the emancipation of God’s entire priesthood.

George Mallone is former pastor of Grace Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Arlington, Texas. This article first appeared in the book Growing Your Church Through Training and Motivation, a LEADERSHIPBOOKS, 1997.

Thought Provokers

- *As a leader, how are you committed to developing the giftedness of those you serve? How is your organization’s structure designed to foster growth in this area? How could you improve your structure to better encourage others in their spiritual gifts?*
- *How could you provide opportunities for those you lead “to learn about some of the gifts available to believers, see these gifts in action, hear how leaders grow in their giftedness, be warned of some of the pitfalls, and be given suggestions for discovering and using one’s gifts”?*
- *How would a “decentralization strategy” impact those in your organization? What would be the advantages or disadvantages?*





GETTING DEEPER

Seduced by Power

The warning signs of giftedness gone wrong.

by Gary Sinclair

A neighboring pastor's ministry imploded. It was a slow, inward collapse over a five-year period, with the blast at the end rather than the beginning. Jim was a gifted communicator, a man of vision brimming with potential. But he was slowly seduced by his power. His giftedness to lead was overtaken by a drive to control. There were warning signs that could have alerted him to his peril, but neither Jim nor his church recognized them.

Jim came to Englewood Community Church* with an impressive resume. He trained under one of the world's premier pastors. The church that had plateaued began to grow again under Jim's leadership. They revamped some structures, added a contemporary worship service, and expanded the annual holiday music programs for which the church was known.

The energetic pastor's tell-it-like-it-is preaching style was appreciated by the church's stalwarts and newcomers alike. Jim headed and completed a building campaign in his first three years. When Jim ran a meeting (which was most of the time), it was thoroughly planned and each person understood his task before leaving for home. Englewood church, once aging and a little clunky, now operated like a well-oiled machine.





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But few people realized what was happening behind that façade. Englewood's pastor was being seduced.

Warning Signs

Englewood was a trusting church. Most members could remember only two pastors. Both had long tenures. One died in office and the other left for a prominent ministry opportunity at a time when most pastors would have retired. The church respected the office of pastor and generally gave those who held it freedom to innovate. That, combined with their joy at Jim's early successes, might account for their failure to see the changes in Jim and his relationship to the leaders.

Shrinking accountability. It started with the youth minister incident. The church's board of deacons, according to the constitution, are the church's spiritual authority, and the pastor is ultimately responsible to them. On those rare occasions when the board told Jim he should do a particular thing, he had—until the complaints arose from the youth department. Several members reported a discipline problem to the deacons. Youth pastor Scott wasn't handling it to their liking, and some dissension was spreading. The deacons wanted to meet with Scott, but Jim didn't want his protégé brought before the board. "I'll take care of it," he told them.

He never did. And no one on the board said anything more about it.

After that, Jim began to ignore other board suggestions and sometimes vetoed their actions. But, because everything was running smoothly, no one seemed to mind—not at first.

Erosion of trust in others. Another shift took place with the hiring of the new associate pastor. Jim was getting busier. From his perspective, Jim was simply keeping the ministry growing, but he agreed when the deacons said he needed some help. Perhaps they intended to retrieve some of their former responsibilities, but the plan evolved into hiring an associate pastor.

Jim offered to conduct the search himself. "After all, I know the kind of person we need," Jim told the board. He soon hired a full-time ministerial staff member without the involvement of the personnel committee or a vote of the board.





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Jim's presence in church programs became more noticeable. He restructured the education program, then announced the changes to the leadership team. There was no doubt that he was a gifted leader, but his attitude began to reflect a deadly presupposition: "If I want it done right, I have to do it myself."

It wasn't that Jim didn't trust others. He simply trusted himself more. He desired to build his people into capable leaders, but he felt intensely the weight of others' mistakes. Jim thought he was being prudent by ensuring things didn't fall apart. But most of his leaders began to think, You don't trust me.

Redefining loyalty. Soon the emphasis was on the church projecting a polished image, a smooth-running operation led by a content, unified leadership team.

This spirit caught on, and not many people were willing to fuss over something that might upset the morale. Most leaders determined their concerns were probably minor and said nothing. Those who spoke up found their objections unwelcome.

A few began to leave the church. Jim suggested that their exit was probably for their good and the good of the church, but as is often the case, their departures were more indicative of the disease than the cure.

Loyalty and dissention were redefined. Loyalty came to mean agreement, not with Scripture or with the mission of the church, but with the pastor. Eventually Jim was surrounded by those who would tell him only what he wanted to hear. Those who did question Jim's leadership decisions were met with chastisement for "complaining" and being "unsubmissive."

Guarded by loyal followers, a leader is insulated from fair criticisms of his ministry. And he is not likely to see its oncoming collapse.

Withdrawing from people. This may be the most obvious warning sign; but since it usually develops later in the cycle, it's often noticed too late to make a difference. For Jim it came near the end.

Jim became busier and more isolated. With such important decisions to make and so few people he trusted, Jim worked alone. His leadership team did not bother him. The staff remained at a distance, turning to each other for prayer and support. While the associate staff

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and the deacons each maintained a sense of teamwork among themselves, their camaraderie had little effect on the church or on Jim. He had few meaningful relationships, and small accountability groups didn't fit into his packed schedule.

His contact with fellow ministers dropped off. While exciting things were happening at Englewood, he readily told us, his peers, about them. Later, Jim became increasingly critical of the church and the leaders, an obvious warning sign that I see much better now. After the implosion, I wished someone could have talked to Jim. Perhaps we could have averted his resignation.

Jim left the church after his key relationships turned sour. He's in business now. I fear it's becoming another fix for his power habit.

Smarter Moves

Most members of Englewood still wonder what really happened. It's hard to explain that their pastor was felled by an ugly mistress. "The deacons should have stopped that a long time ago," one member said. True.

Jim wept that he should have seen the signs. True. Some pastors who are seduced by power have huge television empires. Others pastor churches of less than one hundred. None of us is exempted by ministry size.

This power-mongering is not to be interpreted as bold leadership either. It bears some of the same external characteristics, but the lust for power kills effective leadership. It cultivates mistrust and sets staff members to rewriting their resumes. Eventually, it sends members in search of new churches.

Wondering what we could do to avoid succumbing to the temptation, five leaders and I visited with the staff of a well established church with a solid reputation for godly leadership. The church has a dozen full-time pastors and a multi-million dollar budget. They agreed for us to sit in on their staff meeting, after which we met with individual associates to talk about their specific ministry areas.

The pastors, their senior pastor included, answered every question we asked with candor and vulnerability, sharing successes and failures. Though blessed with resources and influence, they modeled for us a form of servant leadership very different from what we might have

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expected in such a powerful ministry. I came away with several conclusions on safeguarding myself.

We must humble ourselves through prayer. I must constantly ask God to help me monitor my pride. It is only as I read God's Word and admit my fallenness before Him that I keep it all in perspective.

We must vividly remember our place as servants. We are called to lead, to cast the vision, to challenge poor assumptions, teach the Word in everyday language, and help others see the big picture of what God could do in our fellowship. Sounds impressive, doesn't it?

But we are commanded to serve people all the while. Paul's reminder in Philippians 2 of Jesus' humility is a poignant picture of the attitude we must adopt. And 1 Peter 5:2-3 reminds us that we should be "eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

We must surround ourselves with accountability and counsel. Seek out a team of people similar in theology and vision, but different in abilities, personalities, and life experiences. Let their diverse perspectives be refining influences on you.

Ask your team members, or other leaders to let you know when you're pushing the power envelope. You may not feel you're overstepping the boundaries of pastoral power, but others may. Remember "Intention is one thing, perception is everything."

I try to have a private lunch with every one of my key leaders each year. They do most of the talking, and I just listen. This past year one of our deacons had a critical, but helpful suggestion. I began to work on it, and then asked him later if he saw a change. Today, I'm a better pastor for it, and he knows that I value what he thinks.

We must constantly give leadership away. Gore Vidal is reported to have said, "There is no human problem which could not be solved if people would simply do as I advise." Perhaps what makes power so seductive is its promise that we can minister more effectively without the conflicting visions or methods of others.

We get seduced by power when there are too many people relying on what we say, what we think, what we decide, and what we determine for the future. Like Moses learning to delegate, we must pass the baton of responsibility to capable others who will run many races of their own.

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The church we visited is already developing a plan to replace its senior pastor in the next ten years. They want to do everything possible to assure their people that the church can be just as vibrant with someone else in the pulpit. Even the senior pastor is not irreplaceable. It takes a confident servant leader to encourage his church to think that radically.

Power itself isn't evil. Power propels airplanes, lights cities, and wins wars. It also packs a charge that will destroy our ministries unless it's properly used.

**Names have been changed.*

Gary Sinclair is pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Mahomet, Illinois. This article first appeared in the Fall 2001 issue of LEADERSHIP journal.

Thought Provokers

- *What are the subtle ways a leader can be seduced by the power of possessing a spiritual gift? How can you relate to this?*
- *Which of the author's suggestions for fighting "seduction" is the most challenging for you and why—humbling yourself through prayer; remembering your place as a servant; surrounding yourself with accountability and counsel; giving leadership away?*
- *The author writes, "We get seduced by power when there are too many people relying on what we say, what we think, what we decide, and what we determine for the future." Take time to consider whether or not this is true in the areas you serve. How does 1 Corinthians 13 guide us in the use of our spiritual gifts?*





GETTING DEEPER

When Good Gifts Turn Bad

Missing the joy of using your God-given gifts?

by Amy Simpson

In my observation, some of the worst “troublemakers” in organizations of all kinds are women with frustrated leadership gifts.

Like all gifts, leadership can be used in positive or negative ways. Someone with the gift of hospitality may use it to build up the body of Christ—or to foster a clique. A gifted teacher may help others learn—or sit back and ridicule those who do teach. And women with leadership gifts can choose to embrace their gifts and the responsibility God has given them to exercise their gifts for his glory. Or they can reject their gifts, try to be someone else, and end up leading others in destructive ways.

Because they can’t squelch God’s gift, they can’t help but lead. They lead others astray, seek (and often find) followers, lead rebellions, and champion pet causes that are at odds with the goals of the organization as a whole. They criticize and find fault with their leaders. They manipulate others into doing what they want them to do.

I’ve known a few women who refused to embrace their leadership gifts. One of them tried to portray herself as a passive follower but behind the scenes, relentlessly bullied church leaders into supporting





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her pet causes. Another smiled demurely, disarming people while manipulating them into projects they'd later regret. One constantly led others in rebellion against whatever the boss said. And one bitter soul actually said she had the "spiritual gift of criticism."

So why do women fail to embrace leadership gifts? Some are simply unaware of the gifts and calling God has given them. Some aren't encouraged or even allowed to use their leadership gifts. Others are so uncomfortable with the idea of being leaders, they simply can't accept the roles God has called them to. That's when the trouble starts.

Such women are missing the joy of using their God-given gifts, and it shows. I pray that more women will grow in their gifts, accept them, and use them wherever God has placed them.

*Amy Simpson is Vice President and Publisher of the Leadership Media Group at Christianity Today International. This article first appeared on **GiftedforLeadership.com** on April 25, 2008.*

Thought Provokers

- *The author writes, "women with leadership gifts can choose to embrace their gifts and the responsibility God has given them to exercise their gifts for his glory. Or they can reject their gifts, try to be someone else, and end up leading others in destructive ways." In what ways have you seen this to be true? How can you relate?*
- *What are your spiritual gifts? How are you seeking to grow in these gifts? How are you using these where God has placed you?*





GETTING PERSONAL

Hidden Treasure

What secret gifts and dreams has God tucked in your heart?

by Liz Curtis Higgs

Did you have a secret wish as a child, something you longed to do “someday” when you grew up? Me, too. I wanted to write a novel.

When you make such a bold confession at age 10, people hide their smiles. “Is that so? Good luck, honey,” they comment. (For the record, they say the same thing when you’re 20, 30, 40, or 50.)

At 10, I only heard the “good luck” part.

I bought a ruled notebook with a fake marble cover and began my first novel, *The Mountain Cabin Mystery*. Hand-written with a Ticonderoga pencil, it was page after page of perfectly awful prose, such as ...

“Eighteen-year-old Betsy Lane was a girl of action and excitement.” (Oh, dear. Pray for Betsy.)

“She found a thin manilla (hmmm ... like vanilla?) envelope in the secret passageway, hidden in a dark corner.” (Never guess I was writing a mystery, huh?)

Three months later, I proudly displayed the finished product on my bookshelf, bought a second notebook, and started *The Secret of Lakeview Manor*, followed by *The Ghost of Pine Lane*, *The Mystery at Snow Castle*, *A Clue by Candlelight* ... you get the idea.





Spiritual Gifts

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Nancy Drew: Take Two, with deepest apologies to Carolyn Keene.

Ten juvenile mysteries poured from my pencil before I went off to college, storing my fiction hopes in a cardboard box in my parents' attic. Those notebooks quietly gathered dust while I pursued a broadcasting career, then marriage, motherhood, and public speaking, my dream of writing a novel all but forgotten.

But God didn't forget, not for one patient minute.

He nudged me year after year—just as he may be tugging at your heart right now—whispering, “What are you waiting for, child? Open it. Open your gift.” Since “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17), then you can be sure whatever gifts were tucked in your young heart came from the hand of God.

Often we display our gifts proudly as children, then hide them in adulthood, hoping no one will ask us, “Do you draw? Can you play the piano? Do you know how to sew?”

“Not really,” we murmur, fearing risk, dreading failure, convinced those things we loved to do as kids were nothing but child's play, when in truth they were a gift from God, placed in our small hands with big expectations.

Last summer, my husband came strolling into my office, a grin stretched across his face. “Your brother called. Says he found something of yours in the attic.”

When the crate from Pennsylvania arrived, I paged through *The Mountain Cabin Mystery*, teary-eyed and overwhelmed. I'd forgotten the story, but I remembered well the girl who wrote it—curled up on her bedroom chair, pouring her heart out on those lined pages, dreaming of the day she might write a real novel.

The Lord knew, long before I knew him, that I would become a storyteller someday. Just as I'd hidden that box in the attic for safekeeping, God had stored that dream deep inside a corner of my heart and waited for me to find it again.

“Someday” took a long while. From my first pretend novel to my first published one took—gulp!—35 years. By our measure, a lifetime. By God's reckoning, right on time.

Features





Spiritual Gifts

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My kids looked over my shoulder, wide-eyed, as I paged through my notebooks. “Wow, Mom. If you were an author when you were ten, why’d you wait so long to start writing stories again?”

You and I know the truth: The question isn’t “Why did I wait so long?” The question is, “Why wait another minute?”

Open your gift, beloved. It’s never too late for a child’s dream to see the light of day.

Liz Curtis Higgs, author of 26 books, including six novels. This article first appeared in the November/December 2002 issue of TODAY’S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Thought Provokers

- *What was your “secret wish as a child, something you longed to do ‘someday’ when you grew up?”*
- *Reread James 1:17. How can you be sure that the gifts in your heart came from the Lord?*
- *Why wait any longer to open your “gifts”?*

Features





LEADERSHIP TOOLS

Genderless Gifts



What women need to know about “word gifts.”

An interview with Jill Briscoe

GFL: What do women need to know about preaching or communicating gifts?

Jill Briscoe: I think they need to know everything men need to know. And I think that’s something that needs to be said because there seems to be a growing awareness that women need equipping for the speaking. They need equipping for the speaking skills to use in church and mission, but there are a lot of programs beginning to be crafted for them that don’t start with the communication basics that both men and women need.

And I think what we need to realize is that speaking, teaching, preaching are not gendered gifts. I don’t believe gifts are gendered. Therefore, women need all the training you get in a seminary or other teaching institute.

GFL: How do you know if you or someone else has the gift?

Jill Briscoe: I’m looking for the technical ability to explain yourself. Good communication is explaining yourself well in words. And always it’s a leadership thing.

For example, in my travels as a speaker, when I get off a plane and meet the conference host, I want this person to explain to me what





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I'm supposed to be doing. I ask these questions: *Who is my audience? Who will be in front of me this afternoon? Whom will I be talking to?* Now, if she can explain that quickly and succinctly to me, then she's gifted in communication. If I'm still trying to figure it out at the end of the conference, then she may be in leadership but she doesn't have a word gift. So with this I'm trying to say, Can this person explain what this is about?

Next, I want to know if she can explain her heart. So the second question I ask is, *What is your heart for the meeting? Not your mind for it; not what you want to accomplish on paper.* They've done this course. They've passed the test. But, *What do you want to see happen in the leaders that have come? What's your vision for this?*

Then, I listen very carefully, and sometimes I'm just blown away. I think, *Oh my word! This woman is so gifted.* So she might not be trained, but she gets me excited. And that's what I look for. Am I now excited? Do I feel this is my vision for the entirety of the conference? Can she sell it to me? Can she get it over to me? If so, that woman has a gift.

This can be an illiterate woman trying to fumble through an interpreter, trying to tell me what her heart is. But if she's gifted, if God has gifted her, this is wonderful. And the Spirit can use those words to inspire others to come alongside her and help her in her work.

*Jill Briscoe is executive editor of Just Between Us, a magazine for ministry wives and women in leadership, and serves on the boards of World Relief. This article first appeared on **GiftedforLeadership.com** on July 17, 2007.*





Additional Resources

More places for more help.

Discover Your Spiritual Gifts—Updated and Expanded, by C. Peter Wagner (Gospel Light, 2001). Like every believer, you receive gifts from the Holy Spirit at the time of your new birth. But how can you know for certain what your gifts are? Once you do know, how should you use your gifts to best serve God? *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* gives you life-changing answers to these questions and more. You'll be involved in and enlightened by Peter Wagner's self-guided questionnaire and the explanations of the 28 spiritual gifts he has identified in the Bible. You'll also understand the difference between your natural and spiritual gifts. Most important, *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* will equip you to use your gifts within the Body of Christ to become the person God wants you to be and to bless others!

Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts: The Women of Faith Series by Phyllis Bennett (Zondervan, 1998). This guide will give you the tools you need to explore a fundamental aspect of your walk with God with other women who want to grow, too. It will also give you permission to be yourself, to share honestly, to care for one another's wounds, and laugh together when you take yourselves too seriously. Each session includes six sections: A Moment for Quiet Reflection; Knowing God's Heart; Friendship Boosters; Just for Fun; Praying Together and Making It Real in Your Own Life.

Finding Your Place in Ministry, a downloadable resource from the TodaysChristianWomanStore.com. Scripture tells us that God chose women to do extraordinary things. Today's Christian Woman has built this resource to help women, of all ages, find their specific place in ministry. These articles and testimonies will inspire you to pursue





Stewardship: A New View of Money

Additional Resources

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your dreams, while putting God's given passions to work. Don't miss out on the serving and ministry opportunities God has for you.

Leading with Confidence, a downloadable resource from GiftedforLeadership.com. Learn to respond to the challenges God throws your way with confidence because of his strength. God often calls us to do things that at the very least stretch our gifts or at the most force us to step out on faith in unknown territory, depending on God alone to equip us with what's needed for the tasks. This download will help guide you in learning to lead with confidence in this way.

Spiritual Direction and Formation, a downloadable resource from GiftedforLeadership.com. Learn what these terms mean, and how to make them a part of your life. This downloadable packet from Gifted for Leadership explains what you need to know about spiritual direction and formation. The guidance offered will help transform your spiritual life.

Spiritual Gifts for Women: Helping Women Find Joy in Ministry by Ruth and Elmer Towns (Thomas Nelson, 2001; \$11.99) Do you sit in church every week and wonder how you can minister? Discover your special talents! Each of nine "task gifts" is presented with contemporary examples and inductive Bible study questions in this interactive workbook. Dangers or weaknesses of each gift are also identified. Includes a "Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire." Suitable for individual or group use.

What's So Spiritual About Your Gifts?, by Henry and Mel Blackaby (Multnomah, 2004). Surprises are in store when we explore biblically what spiritual gifts really are, how they fit with our natural strengths and talents, and how they match our calling and assignments from God. What's So Spiritual About Your Gifts will help restore the Holy Spirit to the center of your understanding and practice of spiritual gifts, and set you free to serve God as never before.

Your Spiritual Gifts Group Starter Kit, by C. Peter Wagner (Gospel Light, 2001). Show your congregation how to discover and understand their God-given talents---and watch your church come alive. Starter kit includes updated and expanded editions of Wagner's classic tools: *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* book; *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* book and study guide; and five copies of the *Finding Your Spiritual Gifts* questionnaire.





Stewardship: A New View of Money

Additional Resources

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Do You Feel **Alone** as a Woman Leader?

IF you're a capable, called, and gifted Christian woman in leadership, join the conversation at **GiftedForLeadership.com**. This blog, along with downloadable resources, will help you safely converse with other women about the issues you face. You'll walk away feeling encouraged, supported, challenged, and definitely not alone!



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