



NEW LIFE IN HIM *From seed planting to fruit growing*

Spiritual Gifts

What are you doing with yours?

The late Don Welborn defined a spiritual gift as: "A divine endowment and enabling of the sovereign Spirit of God in the life of the believer, given in grace for the express purpose of furthering the spiritual growth and development of other fellow saints to the glory of God." Each line of this definition condenses biblical truth.

A divine endowment and enabling

The apostles and prophets laid the spiritual foundation for the church (Eph. 2:4). This process included supernaturally declaring the Word of God and putting it on the pages of Scripture. Sign gifts appeared during this time, or "at the first," to "confirm" the authenticity of the Word of God (Heb. 2:3f). The primary focus of sign gifts was to gain the attention and respect of unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 14:22; 1:22). After the foundation was laid, the on-going building program for believers began and continues to this day. God equips His people with spiritual gifts such as service, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy, faith, and helps (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-30). And although the apostles and prophets may have passed, God has bequeathed to the church at large gifted men such as "evangelists, pastors [shepherds] and teachers for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11f).

Of the sovereign Spirit of God

Spiritual gifts are sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11; Eph 2:21f). These spiritual gifts are suited to each possessor: "every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7). There should be no jealousy or envy in the body of Christ over the distribution of God's gifts. They are specifically given for the profit of all (1 Cor. 12:7). Each gift plays a necessary function in the body. Just as the hidden organs of the physical body play the most vital roles, so do the less visible gifts in the spiritual realm (1 Cor. 12:22,24; Rom. 16:1-16). No believer is able to say, "There is nothing for me to do in service for the Lord." Sadly, what this statement may really mean is this: "There's nothing showy for me to do." God is not impressed with outward-



ly spiritual showmanship regarding these gifts but rather with sincere service for Him (1 Cor. 14: 2-19; 12:31).

In the life of a believer

Spiritual gifts should not be confused with natural talents such as athletic, musical, and artistic abilities. Most unbelievers possess natural talents. Spiritual gifts, however, are unique to believers, sometimes working in tandem with their natural talents for God's glory. As graphically illustrated in Acts 10:44-45 and Ephesians 1:13-14, believers are spiritually empowered upon conversion. It is exciting to learn from God's Word that every believer has a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 7:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). God supernaturally equips His people for "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12).

Furthering the spiritual growth of other fellow saints to the glory of God

A pipe wrench is a wonderful tool but may be rendered inoperable over time from lack of use and neglect. Similarly, spiritual gifts must be developed to be effective; they are of no value to anyone if they are not utilized. In 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul exhorts Timothy to "neglect not the gift that is in thee." Later Paul reminds Timothy to "stir up the gift of God" in him (2 Tim. 1:6).

As individual believers cultivate a humble, submissive servant's heart, they will discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Moreover, it is the Spirit of God that points each believer to his or her own unique gift and role in the body of Christ (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18). Others will also discern a believer's areas of giftedness as he or she labors for the Lord in various ministries. Paul observed Mark's effectiveness and said, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). May the saints of God be good stewards of the supernatural gifts He gives the believer for His glory!

—RANDY HORN