

Writer's Lesson
Grace to Exercise Our Spiritual Gifts
October 2021

Special Prayer Theme for October: *God would grant us grace to exercise our spiritual gifts to edify the church and exhort others to good works.*

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. [I Corinthians 12:4-5]

Most of us love to receive gifts. The idea that someone thought enough of us to give us a gift can be exhilarating, especially when it is a surprise. Such is the case when we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit, Himself, gifts each of us. How many of you have taken the time to discover what your gifts are? Our gifts were graciously given to us, but not for self-edification. Instead, they are intended for use to strengthen and edify the entire body of Christ. What are spiritual gifts? They are special gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon Christians for the purpose of building up the church. [Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1995] Spiritual gifts are God given graces to benefit the church and to serve or help others and to advance the kingdom of God.

¹⁰ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:* [1 Peter 4:10, ESV]

The gifts are given according to the sovereignty of the Spirit 1 Cor. 12:11: ¹¹ *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

Our special prayer focus for this month is that *God would grant us grace to exercise our spiritual gifts to edify the church and exhort others to good works.* To realize this prayer petition we will need to spend time discovering what they are. We need to take time to familiarize ourselves with the following bible passages which describe the gifts of the Spirit: Romans 12:6-12, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Ephesians 4:7-12, and 1 Peter 4:10. In 1 Corinthians 12:10, it is important to note that tongues as used in the original language of Greek here are *glossolalia* meaning languages. It is the ability to speak in an unlearned living language as opposed to unintelligible jargon. See Acts 2:11.

Each one of us has been uniquely equipped by the Holy Spirit to play specific roles or functions in the church. We should ask God to reveal our *function* in the body of Christ: or in other words, the particular task or purpose assigned by God.

⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,* ⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

⁶ *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in*

proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. [Romans 12:4-8]

How do we discover what our spiritual gifts are? First of all, you must be a Christian. The gifts are given to Christ followers. Begin the process by praying and asking God to reveal to you what your gifts are? Read and study the biblical passages describing the gifts. Consider taking a spiritual gifts inventory that helps to pinpoint areas of giftings. Be willing to participate in church activities that require the use of that gift. For example, teaching is involved when working in Vacation Bible School or a Sunday School Class. Others in the body of Christ will confirm whether you have the gift or not. Be open to their evaluation and counsel. Seek the counsel of mature believers who display your gift to help you along.

Exercising our gifts first begins with a desire to use our gifts. If desire is lacking, then we need to go before the Lord in prayer asking Him to grant us both the desire and motivation to use our gifts. Once we are motivated to use our gifts, we must seek to use them faithfully as good stewards of God's grace. Why is it necessary then to pray for grace to exercise the gifts when God gave each one of us grace as noted in the following Scripture?

⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." [Ephesians 4:7-8, ESV]

In our prayer petition, we are requesting grace to exercise the gifts God has graciously given us. Just because we are granted a gift does not mean that we will put it to use. How many gifts have we received that remain in the box or hanging in the closet unused? As Christians, we must put forth the required effort to use our gifts in the appropriate settings, at the right times, in accord with the values of the church, and the church leadership. Most importantly, adherence to biblical principles is first and foremost.

As we serve, we cannot always depend on our own strength but we need to draw strength from God to be effective so that God may be glorified through our ministry efforts. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the true dynamic behind the gifts. [Boa, Kenneth, *Conformed to His Image*] Our gifts, whether they are teaching, helping, serving, leading, or exhorting, must be exercised in dependence upon his power. When a member exhorts us to do good works within the church, let us not get angry. Instead, seize the opportunity to glorify God.

According to Kenneth Boa, ministry roles such as intercession, faith, service, helps, mercy, and giving are the responsibility of all believers, not just those who are specifically gifted in these areas. For example, some have the spiritual gift of evangelism, but all believers have a role of evangelism that corresponds to the opportunities they have been given. [Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image*]

Finally, we should exercise our gift in love. Paul placed his great description of love (1 Corinthians 13) in the middle of the most extensive biblical passage on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14). Romans 12 and Ephesians 4) also include exhortations to love (see Romans 12:9–10; Ephesians 4:15–16). {Boa, Kenneth]

Prayer

Father, thank you for the spiritual gifts you have granted me. I pray that you will give me the grace to exercise them in the spirit of love for the edification of the church and the exhortation of the believers. God, allow me to serve with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. I pray that what you enable me to do will be for your glory alone. Amen