

GIFTED FOR CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION:

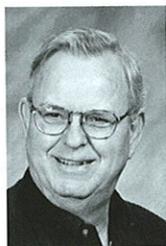
TEN SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR RENEWING YOUR PREPAREDNESS

by Lloyd Elder, Th.D.

JUST HOW PREPARED ARE YOU for your ministry position as a church business administrator? In one way or another, haven't we all faced that question about our work? It could be that even this basic review of your "spiritual giftedness" offers a fresh, major contribution toward renewal of your total preparedness.

More than two decades ago, a mere lifetime away, I was being considered for an executive leadership position in a large not-for-profit organization. So the search committee shipped me off to Akron, Ohio, to spend the day with a skilled and experienced psychologist. We met first over a cup of coffee, as he set out for me what his task for that day really was. He explained, "We will be working together to answer only two questions: Are you suited for this job, and, is this job suited for you?" He stayed persistently with that task throughout our day together, looking at it from differing angles and approaches.

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"Suited for the job/job suited for you" is a profound, if simple, way to talk about preparedness for an assignment such as yours. In fact, preparedness may come to your door or mine by traveling down some converging, winding pathways:

- Seeking a treasure of knowledge for job-related information and expectancies
- Comparing your position description/expectations to your own set of skills
- Assessing your congregational, community, and work environment
- Building relationships with others who serve as mentors or provide models
- Knowing, growing, and applying "systems thinking" to administrative functions
- Accumulating life and leadership experiences over an enlarging chunk of time
- Learning to lead from your successful and failed efforts as a minister
- Investing time in constant skill development for your specific tasks
- Exercising mental and spiritual tenacity to do whatever it takes to get the job done
- Laying down a track of proven performance in similar positions
- Renewing spiritual giftedness for the tasks of church business administrator.

Spiritual giftedness in no way diminishes other contributions made to your

considerable readiness for the work you do. In fact, the convergence of your pathways to preparedness may be so complete that you hardly distinguish among them, including this critical element of spiritual giftedness. One thing we do know is that neither church employment nor position title confers readiness for the ministry role of church business administrator. You may find that the renewal—that is the intentional discovery, development, and practice of your spiritual gifts—generates a breakthrough to preparedness, effectiveness, and enjoyment.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Starting with biblical language, "spiritual gifts" are expressed in the New Testament primarily by two Greek words: 1) *pneumatikon*, a general word referring to a thing, event, or person which serves as an instrument of the Holy Spirit; and 2) *charisma*, which means that which is graciously given to believers to be expressed as a means of grace to others. New Testament material is found prominently in five passages:

- **One body, differing gifts:**
Romans 12:3-8
- **One Spirit, differing gifts:**
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- **One body, many parts:**
1 Corinthians 12:27-31, 13:13

- **One calling, many grace gifts:**
Ephesians 4:7–13
- **Gifts to serve others:** 1 Peter 4:7–13

Drawing from these sources, my understanding of this concept is, “Spiritual gifts are attributes and expressions of God’s power and grace, given through the sovereign Holy Spirit to Christian believers to empower them to make known through words and deeds His grace and power to others, especially within ‘the body of Christ.’”

Only ten spiritual gifts (from among 22 to 24 usually identified) are selected for this special focus on renewing your preparedness as a church business administrator. Which gifts do you evidence? Which do you support with learned skills? As you consider each one of these, think about your own preparedness and performance.

LEADERSHIP

As a spiritual gift, **leadership** empowers believers to work within the body of Christ, motivating them to pursue the goals, objectives, and strategies of Christ’s kingdom mission. Romans 12:8 says, “If it is leadership, let him govern diligently.” The word “diligently” means “hastily, correctly, with zeal.” The word “leader” literally means the one standing in front; the one taking the lead; to take charge; to be protector or guardian; to superintend, rule, or govern. (See also I Timothy 3:13, 5:17, Hebrews 13:7.)

Leadership can be applied to your preparedness in the following contexts:

- When you consistently practice servant leadership after the pattern of Christ
- When you lead by your example, rather than by your positional authority
- When you think of the congregation as an organic, social, spiritual system

- When you lead your team to pursue the kingdom mission of the church
- When you think and practice strategic planning, and guide others to do so
- When you champion a worthy cause, or give voice to a neglected people

ADMINISTRATION

Some are gifted by the Spirit to lead the church body to organize its ministries, resources, and tasks to move together toward the larger purpose. I Corinthians 12:28 refers to “those with gifts of administration.” **Administration** means “governance, organizing, wise guidance, management; those with power to guide, or to get others to work together, managers.” (See also Acts 6:1–7, Luke 14:28–30, Matthew 9:35–37, 10:1–4, Mark 6:30–44.)

Administration can be applied to your preparedness in the following situations:

- When you plan the annual budget to pursue the church’s mission
- When the calendar is planned around church strategic priorities
- When the church property is utilized to serve the congregation and its communities
- When you supervise your staff with effectiveness and respect
- When you coordinate with others to help them accomplish their tasks
- When the team effort is more successful because of your contribution

PASTORING/SHEPHERDING

Some are gifted with disposition and skills to understand and care for the spiritual welfare of the “flock of God” and to do so in the pattern of Christ, our good and great Shepherd. Ephesians 4:11 says some are given the gift “to be pastors and teachers.” Translations from the Greek word meaning “to protect” include shepherds, pastors, the ability to guide and teach others; a **pastor** is a shepherd with the essential function of protection patterned after Christ the Great Shepherd. (See also I Peter 5:1–4, John 10:11–16, Acts 20:28.)

Your position may focus on administration, but you are functioning as a shepherd when you love and care for the congregation as a minister of the gospel in all that you do.

FAITH

Faith as a grace gift is boldly claiming the presence and promise of God to do mighty things, to trust God with conviction as you live your life in relationship to God. Such faith also encourages others to attempt the impossible in human strength. I Corinthians 12:9 says some are given “faith by the same Spirit.” Other translations say, “a grace gift,” “special faith,” “wonder-working faith.” (See also I Corinthians 13:2, Matthew 17:20, 21:21, Hebrews 11:1.)

“Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God” is a bold statement of faith, attributed to William Carey,

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who energized English Baptists of the eighteenth century toward a new missionary movement.

Do you have a faith to move your mountains?

Have you ever resolutely determined to be a true believer, to have faith even while others stood on the sideline and doubted? "God is in this; this is His work and by His grace and guidance together we can get this job done."

PROPHECY

The spiritual gift of **prophecy** empowers some to interpret, proclaim, and foretell the saving message of God with insight, boldness, and passion, calling hearers to believe, to be transformed and the church to be built up.

I Corinthians 12:10 says, "and to another [the gift of] prophecy" is given. The meaning of "prophet" is, "one who

speaks forth," one moved by the Spirit who becomes a spokesman for God, especially regarding matters of His kingdom; an inspired preacher, not always one who predicts the future. (See also I Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6, Ephesians 4:11.)

An application of the gift of forth-telling may be to analyze prayerfully a large situation using all available tools, add the insight of wisdom and intuition, claim the promises of God, and propose a preferred plan of action or choice among options.

TEACHING

Some are gifted by the Spirit with an ability to communicate God's truth with clarity through example and instruction to point the way to salvation, to instruct in the way to live, and to build up the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11 refers to "pastors and teachers," and I Corinthians 12:28 refers to "teachers." An inter-

pretation of a **teacher** is one who teaches, instructs, discourses with others; those gifted with the special assistance of the Holy Spirit to do so. (See also I Corinthians 12:28, I Peter 4:11, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 13:1, James 3:1.)

You serve in the teaching role when you show someone how to do a task, delegate an assignment, train a new staff member, guide a committee in its work, or teach and apply a carefully prepared Bible study.

SERVICE

The **service** gift is to identify the needs of others, joyfully providing helps and support, often without recognition, but with rewarding satisfaction, and to the glory of Christ. Romans 12:7 states, "If it is serving, let him serve. . . ." Service means "to lay hold of in order to assist those in need," such as the office of deacon; to provide helps, aid, and ministrations; or to give direction to those who

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do. (See also I Corinthians 12:5, 28, Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 25:34-40, Acts 6:1-6.)

Service as a broad term may refer to the supervision of giving aid to the needy; managing benevolence functions may be in your assignment. The narrower meaning expresses the providing of material needs of believers, perhaps part of your own discipleship service.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality as a spiritual gift enables believers to create a sense of belonging, to open their hearts and homes, and the congregation to generously accept guests, newcomers, and fellow church members, drawing them joyfully into the larger fellowship and tending their immediate needs. I Peter 4:9 commands Christians to "offer hospitality" to others and tend their immediate needs. To be hospitable literally means "to love (philos) others as brothers," from guests to strangers to members. (See also Romans 12:13, Acts 16:13-15, I Corinthians 16:23, I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, Hebrews 13:2).

The congregation's hospitality functions may be within the administrator's assignment: visitors' desk, greeters, ushers, use of facilities, security, and such. Your giftedness gets these tasks

accomplished, encourages others to do the same, and hopefully does so with a smile, if not with a holy kiss.

WISDOM

Some have the gift of **wisdom**, the special ability to understand God's message, to discern the mind of Christ, to recognize the working of the Spirit, and to make this known in practical ways within the body of Christ. I Corinthians 12:8 states "For to one through the Spirit is given a word of wisdom. . . ." The translation of wisdom (*sophia* in NT) is "broad, full, spiritual intelligence." (See also Luke 21:12-15, I Corinthians 2:4-6, Ephesians 1:8-9, James 1:5; 3:13-17.)

The gift of wisdom is expressed when you comprehend and accept the moral ways of God, making them known within the body of Christ. Large administrative decisions and actions need to reflect the controlling hand of God in human affairs, such as standing for justice in church practice, guiding the congregation to relocate to another part of the city; or recommending a multimillion-dollar debt, or increasing budget or staff positions well beyond boundaries, or radically changing the constitution, beliefs, or values of the congregation.

EXHORTATION

Some are gifted to stimulate the faith of others, to stir up their enthusiasm, to encourage and challenge them in the life and service of Christ. Romans 12:8 instructs, "if it is encouraging, let him encourage." Translations include "a calling near (alongside), summons (especially for help), supplication, entreaty, admonition, encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace. . . ." (See also Acts 4:36-37, 11:23-24, 14:21-22, I Timothy 4:11-16, Hebrews 10:24-25).

You can express the gift of **exhortation** by a quiet, calming presence, by acting on the facts of a particular situation, by creating an environment of respect and trust. Also, your team may often need you to be an excited, informed "cheerleader." There is a time not only to crunch the numbers but to hold up the banner of the Christ you seek to serve.

PREPAREDNESS AND PRACTICING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Let us end our study as we began, hopefully with some value added along the pathway. Just how prepared are you for your ministry position as a church business administrator? It could be that even this basic review of your "spiritual giftedness" offers a fresh, major contribution to a renewal of your preparedness, performance, and satisfaction. In still the larger view of things, let us act upon Peter's message: all spiritual gifts are to be faithfully used to serve others and to bring glory to God (I Peter 4:8-11). 

Postscript: Incidentally, in case you are wondering, the psychologist I mentioned at the beginning of this article did in fact commend me for the position then under consideration.