

Are we in S·H·A·P·E to do God's work?

Ian Ridpath,
Three Cord Ministries

PART 1. God wants us to be in SHAPE to do His work.

Serving our God requires us to be in SHAPE.

- To be **physically** in SHAPE,
- To be **mentally** in SHAPE and especially ...
- To be **spiritually** in SHAPE.

To be physically in S·H·A·P·E, well we all know how to do that. We probably spend more time on this one than the other two.

To be mentally in S·H·A·P·E means to be mentally healthy. Our mental health is determined by what we allow our minds to take in from this world.

To be spiritually in S·H·A·P·E means to be spiritual healthy. Our spiritual health is determined by our **obedience** to God's will, our **servant heart** and our **humility & grace** towards others.

We don't get into Spiritual S·H·A·P·E by ourselves, by our busy-ness in the church or even our participation in church activities.

Here are three questions to keep in mind.

1. How do we know we are in S·H·A·P·E to do Gods work?
2. If we are not now in S·H·A·P·E, how can we get in S·H·A·P·E?
3. When we are in S·H·A·P·E, what will we look like?

PART 2. There are differences between Spiritual Gifts, Heart Passions, Abilities (Talents, & Skills), Personal traits and Life Experiences

1. SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

It is clear in the New Testament, what are the **Spiritual Gifts** given by the **Holy Spirit** and by omission, what are not Spiritual gifts. These God-given **Spiritual Gifts** are the main focus of my presentation this morning.

2. HEART PASSION:

We have heard people say ... "he is so **passionate** for the Lord" or "she has such a **passion** for the poor". **Passion** is good to have – it is God given. Even the **passion** between husband and wife – is God given. It is called "Eros love". We also know though that we can have **passion** for something that may have little to do with Spiritual giftedness.

In the eye of the doer and sometimes even in the eye of the receiver, the **passion** may seem "**spiritual**". However, an over zealous **passion** for something that seems "good" and "for the Lord", may be in truth have the trappings of spirituality but upon investigation, only builds up the individual and not God.

3. **ABILITIES** (Talents & Skills):

Our God given talents such as **school teaching, business management, accounting, designing, repairing, even singing, speaking and reading** are our earthly skills and abilities given to us and practiced by us so that we may live our lives and even earn an income. They are not necessarily **Spiritual Gifts** unless God imparts them to us for His purpose.

The ability to play the guitar or the piano or the organ, even to play them extremely well, is not a **Spiritual Gift**. The **Spiritual Gift** is that God would use the playing of those instruments to draw people to the Himself, to focus their hearts on Himself ... to have God speak through the music ... that is the **Spiritual gift of God**.

In the Old Testament, God gave His people many wonderful **skills and talents** in craftsmanship in order to beautify His Holy dwelling places such as the Arch of the Covenant. You can read about this in Exodus 35. He gave others **skills and talents** in the preparation of the offerings. Were these Spiritual gifts or practical abilities? ... Both can be used by God for His glory.

4. **PERSONAL TRAITS**:

Our personal Traits are God given but Oh, how at times we wish they were different. These traits can be used with our gifting to enhance them. If you have the characteristic of always **smiling** – and God has given you the gift of **servicing others**, then your serving will be **pleasing** to all who are affected. If you are always grumpy, contentious or moody ... then your ministry will not be very effective. Hmmm ... !

5. **EXPERIENCES**:

We quite often draw on our life's experiences and use them in the church in order to help others and minister to their needs. As helpful as our life's experiences are, they do not always make the person the best "counselor". When helping others through situations, the Spiritual gifts of **compassion** and **encouragement** are what God gives to His "ministers".

The experiences and Christian walk even of our parents, our husband or wife, our children or grand-parents, even within the same church, is not a criteria for Spiritual gifting ... God gives gifts to individuals and at his own discretion. The gifts of others are not OUR gifts just as the salvation of others is not OUR salvation.

Paul was very clear to the Corinthians when he wrote in **1 Corinthians 12: 1,3**

"And now, dear brothers [and sisters], I will write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of us, for I must correct your misunderstandings about them. ... I want you to know how to **discern** what is truly from God:

- No one speaking by the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one is able to say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

PART 3. Six truths about Spiritual Gifts.

The purpose of Spiritual Gifts is to accomplish God's will through His people.

1) Spiritual Gifts are **given only by God**. They are not allocated by man.

- **Romans 12:6** says: *"We have different gifts according to the grace given us."*

2) Spiritual Gifts are for **Spirit filled believers**. *God has not entrusted His Holy Spirit gifts to unsaved people for they do not have the Holy Spirit within them. God only gives Spiritual Gifts to His church, to His bride.*

3) Spiritual gifts are given as a means of **helping the entire church**.

- In **1 Corinthians 12:7**, we read that *Holy Spirit gifts are not given to edify the individual believer but to edify the church. But He has also given to the individual believer the gift of praying in the Spirit that is sometimes referred to as "praying in tongues".*

4) Some Spiritual Gifts need to be **activated**.

God will make the believers aware of their Spiritual Gifting and show them how and where to activate them.

However, someone may have the gift of speaking or praying or even interpreting a tongue but that person, because of fleshly weakness, may not automatically know how to use these gifts. It may be necessary to have another gifted person assist in activating these gifts.

5) Spiritual Gifts need to be **used and not neglected**.

Spiritual gifts are given to someone when God has a task for them to do. They will be given to someone else if God sees that they are not being used. We cannot say "Here I am Lord, send Aaron!"

- In **1 Timothy 5: 14-15**, Paul says – *"Do not neglect the Spiritual gift you have received through the prophecies spoken to you when the Elders of the church laid their hands on you."*
- And in **1 Thessalonians 5: 19-20**, Paul reiterates – *"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies but test everything that is said."*

And lastly ...

6) Spiritual Gifts are given for a purpose to the mature in Christ. They must be used **according to His will**.

- **Hebrews 5:14** says – *"Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right."*

Spiritual Gifts are some of the 'solid food' that Paul talked about when he said that we can no longer exist only on Spiritual "milk".

Spiritual "meat" requires maturity.

The using of Spiritual gifts requires maturity as well.

They are not man-made nor are to be man-pleasing.

But ... Paul reminds us ... better than all gifts though, is LOVE.

PART 4. Before we partake of His Banquet Table of Spiritual Gifts, let's reflect on the following from our Scripture reading in 1-Corinthians 12: 4-11.

Paul said:

4. Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all.

5. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving.

6. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us.

Now, let's have a meal of 18 choices on God's Spiritual Gift menu!

In Romans 12: 6-8, Paul describes several of the Spiritual gifts that God gives us. He said:

"So if God has given you the ability to (1) prophecy, [then] speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you.

If your gift is that of (2) serving others, [then] serve them well.

If you are a (3) teacher, [then] do a good job of teaching.

8. If your gift is to (4) encourage others, [then] do it!

If you have (5) money, share it generously. (Are you tithing?)

If God has given you (6) leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. (Are you seeking to learn about your leadership abilities?)

And if you have a gift for (7) showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

But LOVE is the over-riding requirement."

Let's continue with the selections from 1 Corinthians 12: 7-10.

To one person ...

... the Spirit gives the ability to (8) give wise advice.

(Who here has never given to or received from anyone wise advice?)

... to another he gives the gift of (9) special knowledge.

(Who here has never received from or given to someone special knowledge about a situation?)

... The Spirit gives (10) special faith to another,
(who here has never received a faith elevated in a spiritual situation?)

... and to someone else he gives the power to (11) heal the sick.
(who here has ever been healed or seen healing take place by God's power?
Who here has laid on hands and seen God heal?)

and [even] more ... HE HAS DESERT for us.

He gives one person ...

... the power to (12) perform miracles, ...
... He gives someone else the ability to (13) discern whether [something] is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking.
... Still another person is given the ability to (14) speak in unknown languages,
... and another is given the ability to (15) interpret what is being said.

Paul continues ... "The Church cannot decide who gets what gift. It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have." Then, in verse 28 ... and this is most important ... Paul lists in a precise and purposeful order, some of the key "members" of the church that God has placed in the body of Christ as follows:

... first are (16) apostles,
... second are prophets,
... third are teachers,
... then those who do miracles,
... those who have the gift of healing,
... those who can (17) help others,
... those who can get others to (18) work together (overseers),
... those who speak in unknown languages.

Paul reminds us that all are not called to be Apostles or Prophets are even Preachers.

He finally exhorts us with one key demand in verse 31 when he says;

"And in any event, you should desire the most helpful gifts."

PART 5. So then who gets what gift? How many gifts can one receive? How do I know I have that gift?

We are told in Ephesians 4: 4-7:

"We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. However, He has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ".

I believe there is only one way that God bestows His Spiritual gifts on His church. He has tasks to do and He provides His Holy tools to the obedient believer!

Therefore,

- I believe that we must have an intimate relationship with Christ and **ASK** Christ ... where do you want me to serve you? Not, what Spiritual Gift do you have for me so that I can do something for you?
- Then, we must **LISTEN** to His answer. His answer may come aurally, visually, by a deed done by someone else, an image, a dream and even a vision.
- We must **TRUST** that God will give us only those gifts that are good and perfect and according to His will.
- Finally, and this is a stumbling block for most of us, we must be willing to absolutely **OBEY** His will for us.

Through our obedience, God will equip us with **His Spiritual Gifts** in order to enable us to accomplish **His work** through us.

No Spiritual gift will ever be given to the disobedient.

ASK, LISTEN, TRUST & OBEY

I call it – **“ALTO”**

PART 6. Church Leadership is to make sure the church environment is such that God’s Spiritual Gifts can be freely used in the Body of Christ.

Paul’s command regarding gifts and leaders in the church is found in **Ephesians 4: 11-13**

“It was he who gave

- some to be **apostles**,
- some to be **prophets**,
- some to be **evangelists**,
- and some to be **pastors**
- and **teachers**,

[In order] to prepare God's people for **works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the **Son of God** and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Brothers and Sisters, we have no option, we are **commanded by God** to use our Spiritual Gifts because **God is given the glory** since He equips us with **His Spiritual Gifts** in order to accomplish **His will** through us.

The converse is also true. God is not glorified when His Saints refuse to do His will and through disobedience, disallow the use the Spiritual gifts that they have been given. Finally, Spiritual gifts are still alive in Christ’s church today because **He is** the same today as **He was** yesterday and as **He will be** tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow

In **1 Peter 4: 10-11** Paul states that:

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.