

A bright sun in a blue sky with white clouds. The sun is in the upper left corner, creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a vibrant blue, and there are several fluffy white clouds scattered across it.

# **Serving in High Places!**

*Booklet Three*

**J. Robert Hanson**

# Serving in High Places!

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*Ephesians 1:3 The Amplified Bible*

*3 May blessing (praise, laudation, and eulogy) be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual (given by the Holy Spirit) blessing in the heavenly realm!*

Disciple,

We have another step to make in *The Disciple's High Places* series. By determining to grow closer in relationship to Jesus, with every focused stride we join together on a spiritual odyssey. As a disciple of Christ, I refuse the negativity of the skeptic and venture forward knowing that I draw closer with every step to the *High Places* with Jesus.

Here we come to the third booklet in the series: *Serving in High Places*. I am reminded of our Lord's spiritual attitude while walking this earth; "*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" For every disciple of Jesus who is drawn to service for God's house, yet knows not how to serve, this booklet is written for you! In here we discover *Strategic Spheres* of opportunity. We'll see how the early church found occasion to assist in these spheres much like we can today. Our goal: uncovering our spiritual gift for *Serving in High Places!*

J. Robert Hanson

# Serving in High Places!

*Ephesians 1:3 New King James Version*

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

The Christian life is an odyssey! Just as you think you have an understanding of what God wants, something new and exciting is placed on your path. There are obstacles and barriers, sanctuaries and shelters, but these are all land markers pointing to progress. For over 35 years I've been amazed by the adventures and excitement of serving God! I'm attempting in *The Disciple's High Places!* series to share some of these steps of discipleship that I've learned from experiencing the Christian life. Let me relate what I've covered so far and mention what we'll do in this new theme, "*Serving in High Places!*"

First, in "*Walking in High Places*" the goal was establishing the all-important everyday walk with Jesus Christ. The discovery of the disciple's *commitment to God* by using the *5 Strategic Tools* built a foundation for spiritual growth. The *Strategic Tools* of the *Word, Fellowship, Worship, Prayer* and *Sharing* are the important principles we share in common with the early church. These tools were instrumental in developing the first disciples. I really enjoy the way the *New Revised Standard* version of the Bible presents the verse on the topic:

*Acts 2:42 New Revised Standard*

*42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

These four things, plus the fifth of sharing, are just as true for today's disciples as they were in the first century of the early church. Consistency to these *5 Strategic Tools* produces a greater devotion and stability with God.

The next footprint travels a little farther on our journey. "*Living in High Places*" touches the topic of the *priesthood of all believers!* I think the *Message Bible* has an interesting outlook on this subject:

*1 Peter 2:5 Message Bible*

*5 Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God.*

There is nothing for us to enlist in—all that is asked of us is show up and present ourselves. It was Jesus who secured our involvement. It was Jesus who gave His life to make us one together. And, as disciples of Jesus we discover the secret of *answerability* when showing up and presenting ourselves in a living church fellowship. This topic teaches the experiences of a growth in Christ that results from a living fellowship environment using *5 Strategic Assignments* from God. These assignments are: *Ministering*

*God's Word, Participating in Fellowship, Offering in Worship, Surrendering in Prayer and Sharing in God's Mission. Living in High Places* flows out of our *commitment to where God wants us* to experience His presence.

Now we come to "*Serving in High Places.*" This third area of development is for our discipleship and spiritual growth on this Christian odyssey. Subsequently, in this topic, we come to learn that the disciple has unique *Spiritual Gifts* for assisting the Body of Christ. We'll discover each member has a unique gift that will benefit the individual and the church together. Here we're going to look at *5 Strategic Spheres of Spiritual Service* to help discern what our spiritual gift is. So, let's discover how we can serve in the *High Places.*

## ***Assisting in the High Places***

There is nothing worse than being involved in some endeavor and unable to make a contribution to the enterprise. I've often wondered how frustrating it must be for a football player to be sidelined by an injury and watching his team progress through the finals. As much as his cheering and waving of towels may be an inspiration to the fellow teammates, the place the injured player wants to be is on the field contributing his special talent and gift.

God gives everyone of His people some spiritual gift and commissions them to use it in the Body of Christ. Peter points this out in his first epistle:

*1 Peter 4:10 NIV*

*10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

It's tragic to see spiritual gift wasted and unused. There are lots of reasons why this happens, and frankly, it is not my objective to concentrate on the negative. My desire is to build up and inspire believers to discover what their spiritual gift is and use it for *Serving in High Places*.

The Message Bible has an interesting way of paraphrasing verse 10:

10 Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it:

Spiritual gift by design is meant to be something everyone enjoys and benefits from. If a believer is not encouraged to use and pass around the gift God gave him or her, then many miss out on the benefit of that spiritual endowment.

The violin that *Niccolò Paganini* used was made by *Joseph Guarnerius del Gesù* and called *the Cannone*.<sup>1</sup> Paganini consigned it in his will to the town of his birth, Genova, and it resides in the local museum. However, violins in general have a problem, they lose tone quality if they remain unused for extended periods of time. In order to maintain the excellent tone of *the Cannone*, the museum's curator violinist periodically plays the instrument in public. The beautiful tone of Paganini's most prized instrument is preserved by usage and all get in on the enjoyment of the gift when it is played.

In many ways it's the same with God's people. We are not museum pieces called to be tucked away and rot unused in a corner display. In order to maintain the beautiful rich tone, spiritual gift must be used consistently. It is designed to serve others. Let's see if we can locate different spheres of use for God's people to serve and minister the spiritual gift God has given.

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<sup>1</sup> The "Cannone" of Joseph Guarnerius del Gesù <http://www.giordanoviols.com/english/cannone.html>

## Strategies for Serving in the High Places

There are five different areas of ministry identified in the scriptures. We're going to call these different ministries the *5 Strategic Spheres for Spiritual Service*.

I'm hoping we can look at these five spheres and see where we might best identify and then use the spiritual gifts God has given each of us. As we grow in Christ it becomes more and more evident which of the *5 Strategic Spheres* God calls us to focus on.

While there may be priority of spiritual gift, there are never endowments of greater value. Learning to avoid the practice of placing value upon any particular spiritual gift leads to an honest evaluation. This helps in discovering our gift faster.

Demanding a person use a spiritual gift, where God never intends it to be used, will only impair and confuse our calling. Proverbs 18:16 must become real to us, "A man's gift makes room for him."<sup>2</sup> The key is to be humbly content and rest with who you are in Christ with your spiritual gift and learn to enjoy serving there!

Discovering your spiritual gift takes an attitude of maturity and humility. Recognizing you're not called to do something and instead letting another person with true gift perform that task demonstrates stature and growth in Christ. Problems develop when we honor and value one endowment above another.

The solution? Find the *Strategic Sphere* you can best contribute and serve with your gift there! Let's look at the *5 Strategic Spheres for Spiritual Service*.

<sup>2</sup> New American Standard Bible

## A. The Strategy of the “Ministry of the Word”

The first *Strategic Sphere* is what I’m going to call *The Ministry of the Word*. In seed form, in the church’s earliest stage, the Book of Acts, verse 2:42 calls this *The Apostle’s Doctrine*. We’re told that all the disciples were devoted to the teaching of the Twelve. By the time we get to Acts 6, a new phrase is used for this same ministry originally served by the Apostles. In verse 4, the *King James Version* translates the Greek “*diakonia tou logou*” as *Ministry of the Word*.

In modern day equivalents, one could say this *Ministry of the Word* is understood to be a faithful systematic teaching of the Bible, the Word of God. This *Strategic Sphere* is a specific calling, task and gift. When it comes to describing the spiritual gift needed for the *Ministry of the Word* a good phrase to use for teaching is *communicating with people*.

It would be great if all disciples were able communicators for teaching the Bible, however, all are not, neither should it be expected of every believer. That would be an amazing weight to place upon someone who struggles with the simplest of communication skills. It’s not that every believer doesn’t desire to teach God’s Word; the reality is that imparting a clear systematic teaching of the Bible takes spiritual gift. Remember, there were other disciples following with the Lord’s ministry on earth, Jesus chose only twelve apostles for a few reasons—one of them being they were communicators (Acts 1:15-26).

This ability to teach the Word of God is *fundamental* for the growth of every disciple

in a living church. Followers of Jesus learn to walk and grow in the knowledge of and in relationship with God through the communication of God’s Word. All believers are called to enjoy the privilege of understanding the Bible. The spiritual gift of teaching makes sure that happens. For an example of someone with this endowment, let’s look at Timothy. Paul writes of him:

2 Timothy 3:14-16 NIV

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

Timothy’s spiritual gift was communicating in the sphere of the *Ministry of the Word*. This ministry was presented to him through four means—the Old Testament, the sound doctrine of the Apostle Paul, the Apostle’s Doctrine, and other authors who were involved with the process of developing the New Testament.

The same principle applies to the spiritual gift of teaching today. The only difference is that we enjoy the completed canon of scriptures—the Bible—cutting the areas of our study down to the Old and New Testaments.

All methods used to clearly communicate God’s Word by this spiritual gift ought to



be encouraged: preaching, writing, composing poetry, writing songs or hymns, are but some endowments God uses to communicate the systematic teachings of the Bible.

G Campbell Morgan, himself a gifted communicator of the Bible, once said, “There are three essentials of a good sermon: truth, clarity, and passion.”<sup>3</sup> This little quote is an excellent barometer to use in determining if someone has this spiritual gift for the *Ministry of the Word*.

The *gift of teaching* involves a love for and a clarity in communicating Biblical truths systematically! God gives this spiritual gift to the church to see growth and life happen from the systematic study of the scriptures.

## **B. The Strategy of the “Ministry of Care”**

The second *Strategic Sphere* is what I’ve called *The Ministry of Care*. If *communicating with people* is a phrase that describes the *Ministry of the Word*, then *connecting with people* works excellently for explaining the *Ministry of Care*!

This strategy exists for strengthening a living fellowship. If a church does not grow in care for one another, it will soon lose its strength of unity (Ephesians 4:3). The *Ministry of Care* is essential to maintaining a vibrant living fellowship. There are passages in Bible where we see the *Ministry of the Word* and the *Ministry of Care* working together. A great illustration of the two ministries functioning with a common goal is found in Acts:

Acts 6:1-4 KJV

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the **ministry of the word**.

As the church fellowship grew, problems developed. Up to this point the twelve Apostles, who taught the Word, were doing everything. Soon after they discovered the amount of labor was too great for them alone. It became physically impossible to minister the Word and oversee the “daily ministrations” of the widows—there were not enough hours in the day.

From this the *Ministry of Care* was developed. I’d like to suggest *four different activities of calling* within the *Ministry of Care*. What I’ll do is title the calling and then share what it’s like. I’ll eventually tie everything into an acronym to make it easier to remember. I’m hoping this helps to define how each of us might contribute with our spiritual gift.

Let’s identify the activities of calling with the phrase, *Connecting with CARE*. CARE represents *Compassion, Action, Resources, and Encouragement*. These are four ways we connect to people with CARE!

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<sup>3</sup> *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*, John R. W. Stott; Quoting G. Campbell Morgan (pg 284)

### **1. The Shepherd's Care** – *Connecting with Compassion*

The first *calling* is the *Shepherd's Care*. There's no greater example of seeing this spiritual gift at work than observing it in the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd of the sheep:

*Matthew 9: 35-36 NIV*

*35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

This is an incredibly moving passage. Looking on the multitudes, the Savior was moved in compassion for the needy about Him. Like the Savior, there are men and women who have a special gift of seeing the needs of others. Without reservation, possessing a natural capacity for care, they extend themselves (Philippians 2:20). God gives keen insights of compassion to them and they connect with the needy. *Connecting with Compassion* as Jesus did is a spiritual gift.

### **2. The Steward's Care** – *Connecting with Action*

The *Steward's Care* is the second *calling* within the *Ministry of Care*. Every church has skilled individuals that contribute their talents to helping others. These are men and women of action that use what they do best to see the ministry of a church grow. I've

identified this as *Connecting with Action*. There is an example of a woman of action that Paul speaks about to the church at Rome:

*Romans 16:1-2 NIV*

*1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. 2 I ask you to receive her...for she has been a great help to many people, including me.*

Paul identifies Phoebe as a servant—a steward, if you'll allow me some liberty with the word. Phoebe's help with the activities in the church kept the fellowship functioning in practical ways. Paul writes that she was *a servant of the church!* While her tasks aren't specific, we know they were substantial enough for her to be recognized by the church as a gift of service.

For us today, this goes from fixing lights, to setting up chairs; you can imagine a long list of practical needs. If there are private needs within the fellowship—the *Steward's Care* helps out! I cannot tell you the many times friends have come over to help my wife and I with things we had zero capacity to do or understand. This type of service is all about *connecting with people* and is part of the *Ministry of Care*.

### **3. The Sharing Care** – *Connecting with Resources*

This next *calling* is an interesting one. I identified this as the *Sharing Care*. There are fascinating verses in the Bible that speak of people with resources, wealth to be specific.

Maybe they've received it through inheritance, or possibly the resources are a result of hard work for a great education and high paying job. Anyway you look at it, if a man or woman has resources and are wise, they will acknowledge it is ultimately because of divine blessing. Paul has some specific thoughts for someone with wealth:

*1 Timothy 6:17 NIV*

*17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

Can a person's wealth be used as a spiritual gift to others? It depends on the surrender and *Sharing Care* of the holder. The *Ministry of Care* needs people who desire to connect with others by *Connecting with their Resources*. There are many who are in serious need of financial help. Maybe a main provider has lost a job or experienced terrible health issues, the disciples of Jesus with great financial capacity can help. That is a spiritual gift every time it's connected to a recipient in need—just ask them!

#### **4. The Supporting Care** – *Connecting with Encouragement*

The fourth and final *calling* within the *Ministry of Care* is what I have titled, the *Supporting Care*. Situations happen to people where things spin so out of control that an

individual or family needs someone to support them. By *Connecting with Encouragement* we find a word and work of love. Even the Apostle Paul had situations where he needed this type of care with encouragement. While in Roman custody Paul had needs and was allowed by Antonius Felix, the Roman procurator, to let friends take care of him:

*Acts 24:23 NIV*

*24 He [Felix] ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.*

Whether physical or emotional, at times we all have needs. Tragedy strikes, cataclysmic events occur, and people are displaced with nothing or very little! There are disciples of Jesus capable of ministering this care. They have a gift at recognizing a person at a low point in life and sharing wherewithal to meet those needs in word or deed.

Summing it all up, *Connecting with CARE* is a way to discover what your spiritual gift is. Do you find a tendency toward any of the mentioned *CARE* activities? Maybe there are several things you lean toward. The important thing to remember is to seek counsel of godly people and act. The *Ministry of Care* is the largest of the *5 Strategic Spheres* where a disciple can discover his or her spiritual gift in a living church. Prayerfully ask God what He has for you to do.

### C. The Strategy of the “Ministry of Building”

The third *Strategic Sphere* is what I’ve called *The Ministry of Building*. Strengthening, encouraging and comforting are words best describing this activity; it’s for *Comforting the People!* Of all the gifts that a believer can desire to have, Paul notes that the spiritual gifts to give most focus to are ones that build up the church:

1 Corinthians 14:12 NIV

12 “...Since you are eager to have spiritual gift, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.”

Without sounding trite or silly, before the completion of the Bible many different types of gifts among the first century disciples were employed. There were gifts used for personal benefit, and others of a public nature designed to comfort. Those gifts that were most affective were ones that focused on building up the church. These endowments were founded in sacrificial love and exhibited in excellent manner the charity between brethren. From writings on the history of the early church we read that these spiritual gifts were spontaneously given and generally extemporaneous in nature.<sup>4</sup>

Within these spiritual gifts, there is one endowment that Paul notes as particularly useful in seeing the church built-up—the *Gift of Prophecy!*

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, (p. 42). M. Renwick, *The Story of the Church*, (p. 22-23).

1 Corinthians 14:3 NIV

3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”

In fact, Paul has a very interesting way of demonstrating the importance of this spiritual gift by comparing it to others. He writes to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 14:1 NIV

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gift, especially the gift of prophecy.

The reason this gift is so significant is that prophecy builds up the church like none other! This spiritual gift was a key to the *Ministry of Building*. It helped in comforting God’s people in a very brutal and difficult Roman society. When strengthening, encouragement, and comfort were needed; the *Gift of Prophecy* was employed. In 1 Corinthians 14:4 Paul writes, “but he who prophesies edifies [builds] the church.”

Defining the meaning of this gift is a bit difficult. Is it the ability to predict the future? Or, is it enjoying the sudden inspirational understandings of God’s will? Maybe prophecy is as simple as telling forth the divine counsels of God! These are all very good thoughts with plenty of initiative on the part of scholars. So many concepts have circulated over the centuries about the value of this spiritual gift, that it’s difficult to discover any irrefutable meaning without sounding like you’re justifying a position.

The definition of prophecy as *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* suggests is, “*the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God!*”<sup>5</sup> Can't the *Gift of Prophecy* subsist in the context of the completed Bible? Surely a student of scriptures can speak forth the mind and counsel of God by communicating what the Bible says about any given subject. Interestingly, Paul does seem to imply that a *prophetic ministry* is meant to be somewhat universal for use in the church as a tool for growth and instruction:

*1 Corinthians 14:5, 31 NIV*

*5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy.*

*31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.*

Looking at 1 Corinthians 14 as a key reference, let's see if we can discover areas in which the *Ministry of Building* works with a *prophetic ministry* for public use today.

As far as 1 Corinthians 14 is concerned, there are basically two elements to the worship service of the early Corinthian church. For the sake of clarification I'll call them *open praise* and *open ministry*. I use the adjective “open” because the passage seems to imply the worship service was open for any of God's people to share in (with one exception which I'll mention later). Reading from the NIV verse 31 says, “...you can all prophesy...” hence, again, the use of the word *open*.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www2.mf.no/bibelprog/vines?word=%AFt0002236>

Let me define this a little further. This may seem academic, but to me understanding the terms helps clarify the passage. The chapter seems to indicate there is room for all disciples to extemporaneously offer thanksgiving to God in a public manner (i.e. *open praise* — 1 Corinthians 14:14-17) and opportunity for brothers at some point to extemporaneously speak before the church (i.e. *open ministry* — 1 Corinthians 14:29-33). I'm going to look at these two elements as they relate to a *prophetic ministry* for the *Ministry of Building!*

**1. Public Prayer and Praise** – There is an interesting verse that refers to praying in a *Public Prayer and Praise* meeting while using an unknown language. This verse indicates the importance of having understanding when we speak our thanks to God. When praising in an unknown language:

*1 Corinthians 14:16-17 NIV*

*16 ...you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?*  
*17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.*

Paul is simply saying, pray so everyone understands and can say “Amen!” There is no profit to the public service if no one understands a word a worshiper is saying! No one is edified or built up. These verses imply praise and thanksgiving to God builds up others

who are listening. If we pray with understanding, the *Ministry of Building* is hard at work while we offer praise and thanksgiving to God. Let's take out the negative words in verse 17 and see if the positive implication makes the point clearer. By "you...giving thanks... the other man is...edified [built up]."

Of course, this is what we fear most about an *open worship* with *Public Prayer and Praise*. Even though everyone speaks the same language, the worry is that no one will understand us and we end up speaking something silly and embarrassing. Praying in public extemporaneously, unless you are naturally inclined this way, can be excruciatingly difficult.

There is really only one way to overcome the fear of praying and praising in public. Using *Vine's* definition of prophecy as a guidepost; first, we fill ourselves with understanding from the scriptures, and then, "speak forth the mind and counsel of God!" By filling ourselves I mean reading with understanding from the Bible. See what God says to us about how He has blessed. See how He has protected and understand just how deep God's grace goes by reading of it in the scriptures.

Will we still be nervous as we speak aloud in a prayer to God during worship? Probably. But now we are prepared with a full heart of appreciation and we build up the church by speaking in *Prayer and Praise*.

However, now we are officially entering into the *Ministry of Building*. In fact, Paul has a very interesting way of expressing just how far to go in preparing beforehand on your own for building up the church through prayer and praise:

1 Corinthians 14:26 NIV

26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

The *Strategy of the Ministry of Building* blesses others. Prophesying seems to be a spiritual gift we can all desire, use, and share in. Paul gives no command or law to using this gift; we are under no compulsion. Never feel guilty or inferior for not being able to speak or pray aloud—not all people can do it! Paul is simply saying, "you *can* all prophesy." God is giving us the opportunity and not reserving it for a few select people. To see this gift working in public prayer and praise is edifying, not to mention beneficial to every living church fellowship.

**2. Public Speaking and Preaching** – The second element in 1 Corinthians 14 is the arena of *Public Speaking and Preaching*. If we desire to follow the chapter chronologically, we see a speaking and preaching time occurs after the *Public Prayer and Praise* service. However, as a schedule, the order is nothing to be rigid and unbending about. (Though it is the order Paul presents this subject in; we'll let others debate the importance of sequence.) My goal here is to see how spiritual gift relates to this service of speaking and preaching. Let me state the verses and then come back to them:

29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace....

This passage is challenging on many levels. There are a few things I'll take note of about these verses.

**First**, the canon of scriptures had not been completed at this time so the nature of prophets and prophesy were quite different in that time period, still the principles of extemporaneous speaking and preaching are very much valid for our present situation.

**Second**, for today, a *prophetic ministry* demands careful and diligent study of the scriptures before practicing in an *open ministry*. By the phrase, extemporaneous<sup>6</sup> speaking or preaching, I mean delivering a message without a systematic text. For this service, generally, a loose outline is prepared beforehand, and from this comes the comforting communication. If we are not ready with a full heart and clarity upon a subject, it's best to sit silent and wait patiently until we've developed a theme or topic more completely.

**Third**, an understanding of the scriptures to "speak forth the mind and counsel of God" from the Bible is paramount before any extemporaneous speaking and preaching

<sup>6</sup> American Heritage® Dictionary's second definition is "Prepared in advance but delivered without notes or text"

is acted upon. I'm not linking a *prophetic ministry* to the gift a *teacher* brings to a church. It cannot be expected that this spiritual gift, connected to the *Ministry of Building*, is as insightful as the ministry of a *teacher* who has studied the Word of God for years and developed a gift for systematically teaching the Bible. It is therefore wise and prudent that the *prophetic ministry* stay short and concise to its theme or topic.

**Fourth**, it appears the undertaking for *Public Speaking and Preaching* in an *open ministry* falls upon the men in a church fellowship (1 Corinthians 14:32-34). Every element of a church's worship service is available for all disciples with the exclusion of *Public Speaking and Preaching* (This is the one exception I referred to earlier). There are reasons the Apostle Paul communicates these things; it's not within the range of this study to undertake the explanations for the scriptural rationale.

To conclude the *Strategy of the "Ministry of Building,"* let me mention that the length of time is never a fixation of Paul's in 1 Corinthians 14 regarding a church's worship service. There are different capacities with each fellowship and the *Ministry of Building* must be flexible to the realities of the needs at the moment. Understanding the *prophetic ministry* and *Comforting the People* is of great benefit to all the disciples of Jesus who desire to contribute in the *Ministry of Building!*

## D. The Strategy of the "Ministry of the Spirit"

We're going to look at the fourth *Strategic Sphere* and what I've named *The Ministry*

*of the Spirit.* Discovering how the Spirit of God helps us in prayer should reveal the Holy Ghost's undertaking of the task, *Supporting the People*. In *Living in High Places*, we read about a *Strategic Assignment* that is assigned to every believer—*prayer!* This is perhaps the most difficult of all the assignments God asks of us.

We really have no developed aptitude for doing this on our own. Prayer that touches God cannot be duplicated in the natural arena. It is only spiritual and acted upon with the assistance the Holy Spirit.

In fact, there is a story related to us in the book of Mark where the Lord says this very thing to three individuals. In the garden of Gethsemane, while the Lord goes off to pray alone He assigns Peter, James, and John with the duty of watching, which implies prayer also. When He returned He found:

*Mark 14:37-38 NASB*

*37 ...them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" 38 "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

When it comes to prayer, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." This is because the human condition, without the born-again illuminated human spirit, has zero capacity for relating to prayer. Every other assignment for a disciple finds a place to relate and can be somewhat comfortable with its efforts, but not when the assignment is praying. This

can only be done by the Spirit-enabled life, which is foreign to the natural man.

Into this comes the support of the Holy Spirit! When we discover we are full of weakness for praying, Paul gives a resolution to our problem. We're going to read of a prayer guarantee in Romans 8! The Amplified Bible enhances the meaning Paul is communicating:

*Romans 8:26-27 The Amplified Bible*

*26 So too the [Holy] Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance. 27 And He Who searches the hearts of men knows what is in the mind of the [Holy] Spirit [what His intent is], because the Spirit intercedes and pleads [before God] in behalf of the saints according to and in harmony with God's will.*

When we don't know how or what to pray for, the *Ministry of the Spirit* helps support us in our weakness! He is the spiritual gift from God that dispenses grace for all prayer. *Serving in High Places* through prayer is possible by the support of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Ghost is discovered *Supporting the People*. There are two things about His support.

**1. He Supports Us With Supplications** – If you are the type that enjoys reading about



men and women serving God, every now and then you will come across a godly person that prays every morning for hours on end. If you're like me you've asked, "How does someone develop the capacity to do that?" The individual has learned the secret of praying in the Spirit so the weakness of the flesh does not get in the way.

This person has mastered the Spirit, or, more precisely, allowed the Holy Spirit to master them. That disciple has discovered time has lost its barriers and slipped into irrelevance. They've learned there's no penalty for falling short in duration, there is only the Holy Spirit supporting and time becoming immaterial. Paul writes of the experience this way:

*Romans 8:26 The Amplified Bible*

*26 ...but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance.*

Through the support of the Holy Spirit, three minutes or three hours are of the same. He meets our supplications and directs our prayers. And when we are still and quiet, He even fills the silence with unspeakable yearnings and groanings, too deep for utterance.

**2. He Supports Us With Intercessions** – Who is beyond crisis? Whether personal, shared or heard of from others, tragedies are unbiased and strike everyone at one time or another. There are moments when even the truest of disciples is rendered speechless for

any plea to God. We have a provision from the Father for this occasion. Paul says of the Holy Spirit:

*Romans 8:27 The Amplified Bible*

*27 And He Who searches the hearts of men knows what is in the mind of the [Holy] Spirit [what His intent is], because the Spirit intercedes and pleads [before God] in behalf of the saints according to and in harmony with God's will.*

When we cannot find a clear thought of comprehension or string together one simple sentence of utterance, the Holy Spirit understands us and intercedes before the Father in our behalf. The Holy Spirit is the gift we can use and rely on. As we look to Him, our prayers become Holy Spirit inspired. The *Strategic Sphere of the Ministry of the Spirit* is found *Supporting the People of God* in prayer.

## **5. The Strategy of the "Ministry of Reconciliation"**

The fifth and final *Strategic Sphere* is what I've called *The Ministry of Reconciliation*. I think Paul best describes this ministry in 2 Corinthians 5:

*2 Corinthians 5:18 NIV*

*18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of***

**reconciliation:** 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

We know that Ephesians 4:11 mentions the gift of evangelists. The definition *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives evangelists is literally "a messenger of good news." There are great examples in the Bible of men who were gifted evangelists. Generally, they are great at *Relating with People*.

However, not all of us are as gifted as evangelists. Learning to relate to people and to use our different gifts as tools can be of great benefit. By surrendering our talents (Romans 12:1-2) we develop spiritual gift (Romans 12:3-8) that helps a local church spread and share the good news. Disciples learn to use devices and techniques to relate and interest the unsaved. Crusades, concerts, plays, musicals, movies, arts, and crafts have become part of the modern day evangelist effort. These are tools used to touch the hearts of people. These spiritually gifted disciples help in the *Ministry of Reconciliation*.

We have exhortations from the Bible that all of God's people are commissioned to go into the world and preach the good news—many call it the "great commission." Your gift, surrendered to God, helps add strength to this ministry. We are ambassadors for Christ who stand in the place of Christ giving testimony of transformation.

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What we've just covered are the arenas of ministry that can employ our spiritual

gifts. These 5 *Strategic Spheres of Service* need to be discussed and prayed over with seriousness and commitment. God gives spiritual guides to the church to help us uncover and direct our contribution. Prayerfully ask God and seek counsel of others as to where He wants you to serve with your spiritual gift!

## ***Strengthening in the High Places***

What is the reason God gives spiritual gift to the church? The answer is not as mysterious as you might think. God endows gift to the Body of Christ for the ability to build itself up in love! Paul makes this point in Ephesians when writing:

*Ephesians 4:16 The Amplified Bible*

*For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.*

All members, joints and ligaments, are knit together and supplied by Him! When each works properly, growth happens and *Strengthening in the High Places* takes place. Everyone in the Body of Christ has some gift and endowment supplied by the Holy Spirit in service to others. We know this from Peter when he writes:

*1 Peter 4:10 NIV*

*10 “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others...”*

The Greek word for *gift* in this verse is *charisma*.<sup>7</sup> The meaning of the word focuses on the giver of the gift and not so much the gift alone. More specifically, the Greek word for *grace* is *charis*.<sup>8</sup> Charisma then is a gift of grace, or spiritual gift<sup>9</sup> because of who gives it. The phrase found in verse 10, “*each one*,” is one word in the Greek and it literally means *every single one*.<sup>10</sup> Peter is saying something like, “Every single one gets a God endowed gift of grace and is called to use it.” This being the case, now we can ask, “What is my spiritual gift and where can I use it?” Let’s see if we can discover the answers to these two simple questions.

### **A. The Surrendering of Spiritual gift**

What is my spiritual gift? There are a lot of disciples of Jesus that would contribute if only they knew *what* they had to contribute. Sometimes simple things are the most difficult to uncover.

A relative called me on the phone for some help on their computer. It is always a little more difficult assisting with computer issues over a phone as you cannot physically see what is happening with the hardware. We spent about 45 minutes trying to uncover why the monitor was black and blank. Suddenly it occurred to me, if there’s no image

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<sup>7</sup> Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words: Charisma.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*; Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.preceptaustin.org/1\\_peter\\_410-13.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/1_peter_410-13.htm)

when the computer turns on, maybe the monitor has become unplugged somehow. It was simpler than that. I asked if the power light on the monitor was lit-up; it wasn't. I requested they tap the power button on the device and instantly the monitor sprang to life—it was really that easy. The whole time I was thinking we were dealing with some large complex issue. It never occurred to me the difficulty was as simple as turning the monitor on.

The same thing can happen as we are praying about discovering our spiritual gift. We have in mind something complex and nuanced. If you'll just tap the power light of grace you'll uncover it! There are no aptitude tests to take. There is nothing to apply for. We'll find no casting calls, tryouts, or auditions for spiritual gift. Generally, it can be as easy as discovering what you like and are good at.

There are folks who will not agree with me on this and that's ok. I spent a lot of years personally anguishing over uncovering what my spiritual gift was and waiting for that bolt of lightning to define it for me. I was told spiritual gift was an endowment from God in a spiritual form; eventually it would manifest itself. What's more, everyone would see my gift and acknowledge it working in me!

I waited and waited and waited. Then I gave up my wait and settled for apathy. My zeal for serving God was almost sucked out of me. I wanted to serve God, but had nothing to serve Him with! It was about that same time someone I knew asked me to use a talent I had before I received Christ and help him with a certain aspect of a ministry. I thought inside, "I like doing this talent; surely God will never use what I enjoy!" But, I set

aside my preconceived notions and asked God to help me with that talent to honor Him. I *surrendered* that gift to Christ and discovered God encouraged others with it! I gave that talent back to God and uncovered His grace to use that endowment as a spiritual gift. The apostle Paul lends the same kind of clarification on this topic and how it works, when he addresses the church in Rome:

*Romans 12:6 NIV*

*6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...*

So, let's first ask the obvious question, "What makes a gift spiritual?" It's made spiritual by the same thing that saves a person in the first place—the grace of God. "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us!" The second obvious question becomes, "How does an individual apply the grace of God in light of their gift?" If we do the logical thing and put Romans 12:6 in context with verse 1 we get the answer:

*Romans 12:1 NIV*

*1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

When you offer your body as a living sacrifice you're including the surrender of your talent. That activity is a "spiritual act of service (worship)." The gift becomes a spiritual

offering of worship to God, a spiritual gift as it is surrendered to Him.

If an individual has talent, let them surrender that gift to God, as Paul urges, and just watch what happens when the gift of grace is applied to that endowment. When everyone gets out of the way and lets God's grace work through that offered body, miracles happen.

The surrendered musician can reach others and glorify God. If you're a really great writer, surrender that gift to be used for His glory and service. I'm convinced more believers would get involved in local area churches if they knew God could use their surrendered, "God-given talent" instead of reacting in useless paranoia about it being a "natural" ability and thus, not spiritual. The church is rich in resources, we ought to cultivate gift not hide it.

I know of disciples that became paralyzed and worried whether their gift brought glory to God or to themselves. Look, just start serving Christ, surrender all to Him, and let others will help you figure out if you're bringing glory to self or God. The first reason for that spiritual gift is to serve others! The *Surrendering of Spiritual Gift* is the key to blessing brothers and sisters who are with you in *High Places*. If you don't use it you can't serve it.

## **B. The Sorting Out of Spiritual Gift**

The second question to answer is, "Where can I use my spiritual gift?" It would be a waste to have something and not to use it.

The eccentric millionaire, *Howard Hughes*, spent millions of dollars developing a seaplane named the *Spruce Goose*. It was the largest aircraft ever built and was tasked

for the purpose of carrying huge payloads across the Atlantic during World War II. The prototype seaplane made one historic test flight in 1947. Howard Hughes personally flew it about 70 feet above the water, the flight lasting approximately one minute in duration. Directly after the test he built a custom hanger and parked the *Spruce Goose*. It was stuck there for 33 years at the cost of about a million dollars a year—the seaplane was never to be seen or flown again during that time.

Growing up I remember driving by the building in Long Beach, California. My dad told me the story of the mystery surrounding the hanger. It was shrouded in secrecy, men sworn to silence about the project. As such a large, impressively capable aircraft, it was sad to me it sat wasting year after year. Why? With the invention of jet engines and with the close of World War II, the *Spruce Goose* sat completed, without purpose, and antiquated. No one could figure out a use for this amazingly endowed seaplane. It sat there, unused, until the day came when its only use would be that of a museum relic.

May that never be the case with any spiritual gift that God gives to the church! The challenge for us to figure out where your gifts are best utilized for bringing Christ glory and then using them in that sphere. It is really not up to us to decide what is the best use of spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit is the One who does the *Sorting out of Spiritual Gift*. He determines where we are most effective! And, I can guarantee you, He does not mean to turn us into antiquated museum relics! Paul tells the gift-laden Corinthians just how to employ our spiritual gifts:

*1 Corinthians 12:4, 11, 18 NIV*

*4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

*11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.*

*18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*

The Holy Spirit determines the gift and where it is best used. In fact, in the analogy Paul presents, we are arranged *parts* in the body. Those parts are the members of the Body of Christ. Practically, that means the spiritual gift God has endowed us with has the ability to be used wherever He deems it most useful. The Holy Spirit knows and directs everything: from which local church He wants us in, to the best way we can contribute. In all cases we'll know the gift and calling are God's will because we find it is our *reasonable service* and not a mystically obscure adventurous calling.

Pray that God will lead and direct you in light of His ministry for you. Take the *5 Strategic Spheres* and look objectively at where you can contribute with your spiritual gift. Ask a spiritual mentor where they see you using your spiritual gift. Do you have a desire to engage that gift somewhere, or see a need for something to be done? You will discover there are many occasions where this is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Ask others who

are humble and have spiritual insights what they see in light of your desires.

### **C. God is Glorified Through Your Spiritual gift**

Let's finish this up! As you surrender to Him it becomes apparent where your spiritual gift is most useful. That is generally where God is leading you. You can't force yourself to have a gift that the Spirit of God never intended for you to use. That is disastrous. Coveting another disciple's gift benefits no one. Spiritual maturity is the remedy from these pitfalls. The best choice is to discover security in what Christ has given you as a spiritual gift. Choosing to let God choose blesses everyone! Let's read one last time the benefits of serving your spiritual gift to others.

*1 Peter 4:10-11 NIV*

*10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 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. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

You can now look at your spiritual gift and see where you can use it in the *5 Strategic Spheres of Spiritual Service*. This leads to the discovery of where *Serving in High Places* is best achieved.

