**Identifying and Using Spiritual Gifts - BD26-02**

Shall we bow in prayer please? Heavenly Father, we can do nothing without thee. Thy Word has warned us that we are totally helpless and our lives are a pathetic mess except that thou art in it to guide and to enable. We are also very conscious of the fact that it is possible for us to not capitalize on thy great power that is available to us simply because we are ignorant of the principles of the Word of God. So we enter this moment into a very sacred experience in the study of Bible doctrine. We pray therefore that thou will help us to search our own hearts in order that we may be in a condition receptive to the Word, that we may be filled with the Spirit by the confession of every known sin. We pray that our hearts may now be opened to entering into the things thou hast prepared for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit may be entirely free to teach us and to lead us. We pray that thou would keep us from distracting surroundings, distracting voices around us, and distracting thoughts. We pray for the concentration for the moments we spend in Thy Word would be maximum. We pray that God the Holy Spirit would perform His ministry of bringing glory to Thy son, for we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

We are taking up the second part of spiritual gifts. Let’s review a few things. In the church age, God has provided every believer with spiritual gifts or spiritual abilities at the point of salvation which are to be used by the Christian in his service for the production of divine good. These gifts are in operation today, having been provide for the specific reason of enabling us to serve the Lord. We looked at nine of these permanent gifts. It is possible that these are general categories that have other sub-areas within them. There is a great variety within the particular nature of each of these gifts and in their use.

**The Permanent Gifts**

So the permanent gifts are:

Evangelist – The ability to reach the lost with the gospel. It was in the nature of an itinerant ministry.

Pastor-teacher – The chief elder of a local church who instructs the congregation in Bible doctrine and to administer the local ministry. It is a combination gift. You cannot be a pastor without being a teacher because that’s the primary function of a pastor.

Exhortation – Applying doctrine so as to move Christians to some spiritual action. It deals with the implications of the Word and clarifies them for our guidance.

Ministering – This is a service of the local believers of a general nature. Perhaps under this gift are sanctified our natural abilities. This has a variety of expressions.

Administration – Leadership in spiritual enterprises of the local church. This does not mean that because a person is a leader out in the world, he is a good leader in the things of the Lord. He is to do this with “today” quality; that is, with an energy and devotion with a sense of urgency about him—a diligence.

Giving – The capacity to invest effectively large sums of money in the Lord’s work, compared to what is kept. It does not necessarily mean that you are a wealthy person, though often this may mean this. It is the ability to give money in large ways compared to what you do keep, and in such a way that great returns are effected in the way of divine good. You know where to put your money. This is a very important to the local ministry of course.

Showing mercy – This is a service of comfort and aid to the sick and afflicted.

Teaching – The ability to explain doctrine so that Christians understand and learn it, and are able to act upon it. Some people have the gift of teaching who do not have the gift of being a pastor.

Faith – This is the capacity to move out trusting God to accomplish great projects and supply all the needs to that end—moving out when you don’t see exactly how a certain thing can be accomplished, but moving under the condition that God wants you to do this. God wants you to move in this direction to accomplish this thing. One of the great historical examples of this was George Mueller (England), who for many years conducted an orphanage, and was obviously a man who had the gift of faith. There were occasions when there was literally nothing more to eat in orphanage, and nothing left for the next meal. When the staff inquired of George Mueller as to what to do, they were instructed, “Set the table. Put out the plates. Have the children wash up and get ready for breakfast. God will provide.” On more than one occasion, they had indeed the knock on the door and some local tradesman come by and say, “Here’s some food that I’ve had left over in my business and I want to give it to the orphanage.” And God provided. Now if some of us tried to operate on this basis, with such complete abandonment, without this gift it would lead to disaster, and most of us would starve. So I would not suggest that you just sit around with the breakfast table all set, hoping by faith that there will be a knock on your door, because you really better have it, or the only knock you’re going to hear is that from your empty stomach.

We also found that these are things that you have today, and you are to identify within your own experience for your own ministry. We also pointed out that spirituality is not a matter of possessing any spiritual gift. You are not because you possess one of these gifts. But the fruitful exercise of these spiritual gifts is dependent upon your spirituality. Some of these gifts carry authority in the local church, so they’re more important. But this does not mean that the person who exercises this gift if more important in the local church, because he happens has a gift that carries authority, or he has a gift that the Bible says is more important than other gifts. The Holy Spirit gives the gift, the Son directs the specific application of the gift, and the father determines the results of the exercise of the gift.

Permanent gifts today are for the building up of the believers during this church age in the body of Christ. These gifts are not for self-gratification.

**Identifying Your Spiritual Gifts**

We want to take up the matter of how to identify your spiritual gifts, because obviously, now that we know what the gifts are, it is very important that we should be able to identify these. There are three basic steps that usually prove helpful in finding what your gift is:

**Desire**

1) Have a desire to serve in a specific ministry. God the Holy Spirit who gives the spiritual gift will also incline your heart to serve in the capacity that He has given you. This however does not mean that because you have the desire for a certain gift that that indicates that you have it. You may have the desire for a gift that you think is very glamorous and very spectacular and very exciting. However, just because you have the desire in your life to exercise this gift does not mean you have it. The point is that if you do have a certain spiritual gift, of these nine that that we have mentioned, of the permanent classification, the desire will rise in your heart to exercise them. You must beware of serving in a capacity from a mere sense of obligation, or because others have pressured to fill a certain need. Or, because you’re carried along by some current fad within yourself.

It is important to answer the question, “Do I have the desire to exercise this particular gift?” That doesn’t mean that you will necessarily be happy in exercising it—that you will see that there are no problems, that you can anticipate a bed or roses, or that you will not have difficulties in exercising a certain gift. Yet in spite of what is before you, there is a desire to perform this particular function. That’s the issue.

**Recognition by Others**

2) The second guidance is the guidance of recognition by others of the gift in us. You may make a claim to have a certain gift. If indeed you do have that spiritual gift, that claim should be confirmed by those whom you serve with that gift. The Christians in the church where you are associated may, as a matter of fact, recognize that you have the gift before you do. They may come up to you and say, “I think you have the gift of this or this or this.” And when someone comes up to you and says they think you have a particular gift, you should give that some serious attention and consideration because it is an indication that God is directing you to the identification of your gift. It is very important that you have the confirmation from the other believers that you do have a gift. It is bad for you to encourage a Christian to perform a service for which he evidences no spiritual gift. If someone gets up and tries to teach, and he leaves everybody all confused and up in the air, and raises far more questions than are answered, and bores everybody silly in the process, and when it’s all over It’s been just absolutely almost fruitless and profitless, that is a pretty good indication that he does not have the gift of teaching. You should not walk up to him afterwards and say, “That was a splendid explanation,” just because you’re trying to encourage him to be active. Many times because we want to encourage people to participate in the Lord’s work, we encourage them in ministries that they are trying to perform for which they just don’t have the spiritual knack. So you may possess a gift, and if you do, others will recognize it in you. You may possess a gift, buy you may be stifling its fruitfulness because of the wrong exercise of that gift, and we’re going to look at a few things this morning that could stifle and neutralize a gift indeed you do have so that it may not appear that you have this gift. Remember that Satan is a spoiler, and if you have a gift, which you do, the first thing he’s going to try to do is to neutralize that gift, and he has several approaches to doing that.

**Evidence**

3) The third guideline for identifying you spiritual gift is evidence—evidence of divine blessing from the exercise of the gift. Certain results should follow the use of the gift. If a gift is not accomplishing the purpose for which it was designed in the lives of the believers, there is a question that you possess that gift. Fruitfulness is the plan of God for us in our Christian service. In John 15:8, the Lord says, “And this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.”

So if you want to identify your spiritual gift, here are three guidelines that have general proven helpful to believers:

1) That you have a desire—an inclination of heart— to serve in one of these nine capacities.

2) That others recognize that you do have the ability to perform in that capacity. And you’re not going to have your feelings heart if somebody indicates that you don’t. Sometimes people are tempted to be attracted to some glamorous areas of ministry, and we have our glamorous areas around here—the Berean Youth Club being one of those. And we have had to go to people who have asked to be on the staff in working with the Youth Club ministry, with young people, and have had to say, “We don’t think you should continue in the capacity of a Youth Club leader. We don’t believe you have the spiritual gift requisite for this area of ministry.” When people have received that in a welcomed spirit, all it did was to enable them to find where they really did fit so that their ministry proved the third factor here:

3) It gives evidence of fruitfulness.

**Hazards in Exercising Your Spiritual Gifts**

There are certain hazards in the exercise of your spiritual gifts. We should look at those this morning because Satan seeks to spoil:

**The Wrong Location**

1) Using a gift in the wrong geographic location. Please turn to Acts 16:6. This is dealing with the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. Speaking of Paul and his party, Acts 16:6 says, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia (which is what they wanted to do), after they had come to Mysia, they were tempted to go unto Bithynia, but the Spirit allowed them not. And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia beseeching him and saying, ‘Come over into Macedonia and help us.’ And after he had seen this vision, immediately, we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

Now here is the situation with the apostle Paul wanted to go into two directions as the next stage of his missionary enterprise, and in both cases, the Holy Spirit came and said, “No, that is the wrong geographic location for the exercise of your spiritual gift at this particular time, Paul.” On both occasions, the apostle Paul obeyed the negative signals that he received from the Holy Spirit. The result was that he was led to the right geographic location in Macedonia. Consequently, he and his party got into a boat, they came across from Asia Minor, and they entered Europe, and brought the gospel to the European continent with the salvation of the Philippian jailor. What would have happened had Paul disobeyed the leadings of the Holy Spirit and persisted in the direction of Galatia, the direction he wanted to go with the gospel when God the Holy Spirit said, “No.” He would not have gone to Europe. He would not have gone in the direction of opening up the continent that has been the fountainhead of spiritual leadership in the missionary enterprise around the world.

Now this is not to say, of course, that God would not have accomplished that. But he would have had to do it through someone other than the apostle Paul, for Paul’s gift would have been comparatively fruitless where he had intended to minister, as over against his going to Macedonia where God wanted him to minister.

Christians who move from one city to another without giving first consideration to the exercise of their spiritual gifts end up in the wrong location, and consequently in the wrong church. If you are in the wrong church, in the wrong city, or the wrong church in the right city, it’s sin, and you neutralize your spiritual gift. This is one of the favorite devices of Satan to undermine a Christian’s spiritual gift. He cuts his fruitfulness. He doesn’t cut the person’s activity—the person may be just as active. But he transforms it into the productivity of human good.

Most geographic moves today, that you and I know so well, are made for secondary reasons. People move from one place to another, not on the basis of their exercise of their spiritual gifts, not on the conviction that God is now calling them to move from one city to another gift so that they may exercise their spiritual gift, or that they may be called to spiritual enterprises to the advancement of the Lord’s work in this new place—but they move because of a job. They move because of economic advantages. They move because of climates that appeal to them. Or they move because of recreational facilities and opportunities that they envisions.

Someone pointed out to me the other day that over the years they’ve noticed that people will come into the Berean ministry. They will come in from very good churches, and we’re pleased to see them coming, knowing the spiritual heritage that they have because we welcome what they will be able to contribute to the Lord’s work in the exercise of their gifts here, and the preparation that is behind them. But, often we’re disappointed, in spite of the good church background they came from. And then we realized that these people have come to this city, and have ended up in this church, because of economic reasons. They have come to this city because of job changes that were imposed upon them, or offered to them. They have come to this city because of climate or recreation or other things. What we are getting from good churches are losers. They were losers by the very fact that they left a good church ministry and a good opportunity of serving with their spiritual gifts to go to someplace else for secondary reasons without giving consideration to the effectiveness of their spiritual gifts. So, naturally, when they get here, they’re not at all spiritually effective. They’re out of pocket. I think there may be a good deal to that. The wrong location will neutralize your gifts for years, and perhaps permanently. When it comes to the point where your gifts are neutralized to the point beyond which there is not function and no return, you will experience the sin unto death. And God will take your life and remove you to heaven.

Hazard number one is using your gift in the wrong geographic location.

**Using Your Gift on a Temporary Basis**

2) Hazard number two is using your gift on a temporary basis—the “sometime” Christian worker. In the Bible listing of these permanent gifts that we have looked at, some of these gifts are in the form of verbs. These are regularly placed in the present tense in the Greek, which means that they are indicating that these gifts are to be continuously exercised over the years. There is no stage where they are to be discontinued. There is no stage where you are to phase out of functioning under your gift.

You may not always have the happiest circumstances, or the easiest conditions, for using your gift. But that is not a signal to start phasing out of exercising your spiritual gifts, or your natural abilities sanctified under your gift of ministering. The apostle Paul was confronted with just this time of temptation. In Philippians 1, Paul continued into old age, and through hardship, with the exercise of his spiritual gift. He never came to a point where he said, “Now it is time to phase out.” In Philippians 1:15, Paul said, “Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife, and some of good will.” He is in prison in Rome while he’s writing this. “The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.”

Paul had some very hard circumstances under which to operate his spiritual gift, when people were competing with him, contending with him, and dealing him misery, in the Lord’s work while he’s in prison. We’re not going to take up verse 18, but it lays out an important principle of when people are competing and dealing misery in the Lord’s work to you, and the principal of reaction is no emotional outburst, but welcoming that the Lord’s work is being done—the Word is being proclaimed, even though people are doing it with something less than commendable motivations, or out of competition for which God will discipline and for which they will lose reward, but for which there not be a lack of return of the truth of God.

In Philippians 1:25, Paul says, “And having this confidence, I know I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Paul says, “I’m not going to cut out and quit because I’ve got people dealing me misery, or because I’m in an unhappy circumstance here in prison. I’m looking forward to when this is behind me and I shall again be with you for the exercise of my spiritual gifts, for your benefit, to the furtherance of your joy and of your faith.

Then in the book of 2 Timothy, the last book he wrote, on the eve of his death, in verse six, Paul says, “For I now am ready to be offered.” (He has moved up in the years of his life.) “And the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have not been a sometimes spiritual gift exerciser. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there lay before me a crown of righteousness. The reward is the for the consistent exercise of spiritual gifts, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give to me that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing.” We have no justification from the Word of God to exercise our spiritual gift upon a “sometime” basis. We have no reflection of this in the Christians of the New Testament era, under extreme hardships and difficulties.

Now the grammar of the verbs that describe some of these spiritual gifts is generally in the active voice. That means that you as an individual are responsible for exercising your spiritual gift. If you are cutting out on the Lord’s work for functioning your gift, it is your fault, and you will be held accountable for it. When you were given the gift, you were given it in a present tense context, that you are to continually use this through your lifetime. Also, you were given it under the condition of actively engaging in it, and using it. If you do not, you are responsible.

2 Timothy 4:10 tells us about a man who did not do this. “For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world and has departed unto Thessalonica.” Demas, as we read about earlier in Paul’s experience, was an active member of Paul’s team of workers. Demas was one of the men who was a spiritual leader, who was on the scene, who was a functioning member of Paul’s ministry—a valued and esteemed member of the team. Demas came to this point—not some character in church all his life and never raised a finger, but a man who had been out there doing the Lord’s work, and carrying the ball, with everybody leaning on him, being sustained by him, and benefiting by the exercise of his spiritual gift. The time came when Demas “retires” from active use of spiritual gifts in the Lord’s work and his associations with Paul. Demas phased out. Why? Well, the Bible tells you why. He phased out in order to get time to do that things in life that held his fancy. Some of those perhaps were in connection with the local church work. But they were not the things of his spiritual gifts, but the things that held his fancy. So he pursued some kind of fad. He was too tied up with Paul and all of the traveling and all the preaching, all the getting ready, all the Bible study, and all the organizing. Demas said, “There are so many things I’d love to do.” So he phased out, and he pursued things that held his interest and fancy.

The Christian who is confident often of his call to discontinue some service is pursuing another interest that originates in his old sin nature. Be careful where your ambitions really come from when you think it is time to stop functioning in some capacity in the local ministry. Beware of phasing out a fruitful expression of a spiritual gift unless you have divine authorization.

Now, there is a time for change. There is a time to change pace as the years pass. But there is never a time to phase out your gift. In Deuteronomy 33:25, the latter part of the verse, God says to Moses, “… as your days, so shall your strength be.” There is a time as the days of your life go by for you to change pace. But there is no time to phase out the gift. If you use your gift erratically on a temporary basis, it will keep you neutralized most of the time, and that’s what Satan is trying to do.

**Using Your Gift in the Wrong Situation**

3) Hazard number three is using your gift in the wrong situation. The Lord’s work, I remind you, as you well know, has many constant urgent needs, and all of them are worthy. You and I consequently, as involved interested Christians, are tempted to run about trying to meet all these constant urgent needs of the Lord’s work, instead of meeting the specific needs that we have been called to in a particular local ministry. Many times appeals are made to a local church in some respect to assist. Many a local church has no problem doing that. They are so inactive, the people are so uninvolved, the program is so run-of-the-mill nothingness, that there are scads of people sitting around doing absolutely nothing, so it’s no problem to get out there and to get involved and to start functioning off in some other area, often a very commendable area, of the Lord’s work. But if you’re in a local church ministry that is on the ball and that is functioning toward the family and toward the believers and toward the unbelievers and toward the segments of humanity that come into the circle of its ministry, and its people are involved in fruitful production of divine good, and you’re part of that scene, there is a very serious question that God is going to call you to cut out of that need to meet some need someplace else. This is always done. Outside organizations have no compunction about encouraging people to neutralize their spiritual gifts in which God has called them in a particular situation, and transfer them to another situation, commendable as that one may be. This is known as pirating. In the local Christian circle, it’s known as pirating from one group to another. And non-church organizations are forever pirating the spiritual gifts and capacities of the people in the local church in order to achieve their goals and to function. The Lord Jesus Christ, we have already learned from 1 Corinthians 12:5, determines the area of His vineyard for your service, and He does not expect you to wander all over the vineyard. If you apply your gift to the wrong area of the Lord’s work, you will neutralize the effect, and what you will start producing is old sin nature human good.

Please turn to the book of Acts, chapter 13, beginning to read at verse 13. Here’s a man who put his spiritual to work in the wrong situation. The apostle Paul and Barnabas had been on the first missionary tour. They decided to make a second return visit. You’ll remember that on that first tour, John Mark began with them. He got to a certain point and then Mark decided to go back home. He decided to cut out of the party, and he left them at a certain point. “When Paul and his companion left Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John departed from them returned to Jerusalem.” He went back home. His mother had a house there, and he lived in Jerusalem, so he went back home.

Now, notice in Acts 15. When they decided to make the second tour, “Barnabas, who was related to Mark, determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark, but Paul thought it not good to take him with them whom depart from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” Now John Mark had been called by God the Holy Spirit to use his gift on the first missionary tour, or I don’t think the apostle Paul would have taken him. Paul recognized the members of the team that the Spirit of God had selected. So Mark was rightfully in that area of the vineyard. But what happened? Well, as he got into the heavy job of missionary enterprise, he got tired of it. So he decided to wander off from that area of the vineyard to go home and work in the Christian Service Brigade back in his church in Jerusalem. Acts 12:12 tells us that when all of the Christians were gathered praying for Peter when he was in prison, they were gathered in the home of John Mark. So his mother had a pretty large house, which was the kind of house the early believers needed, because they didn’t have churches—they met in homes.

So he went home and proudly said to his mother, “Let’s run something in the way of a social life for all of the believers. I like that better than I like missionary work. Let’s run some social activities for all the poor Christians so that they’ll be more spiritual, and more devoted to the Lord. We’ve got a nice big house, so let’s roll.” Well, whatever he went out, he was copping out in the area of the particular situation where God had called him to use his gifts, whatever else you want to say about it. And some Christians are under the opinion that they should not continue in the same service year after year. So they flit about. And what do they do? They achieve Satan’s goal of neutralizing their spiritual gifts. For when you flit about the vineyard, as time passes you will look back, and there will be very little of substance to show for your investments. But where you have stayed on the job to which God has called you to the particular situation of exercising your spiritual gift, you will find as the years go by that there is a mounting build-up of impact upon the body of Christ. And what you begin in lives will just permeate and go out and out and out, without any limit to it. For what you do under a passing fancy fad, comes and goes. So beware of using your gift in the wrong situation.

**Using Your Gifts for Personal Glory**

4) Hazard number four is the hazard of using your gifts for personal glory. Much Christian service is motivated by the lust for praise, by the desire to be appreciated, by the seeking of a status position, or by the desire for recognition. In Acts chapter 5, we have an example of this. Acts chapter, beginning to read at verse one. This is the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. “Now a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

When the Christians in the early church were sharing things in common, they would sell things, and they would bring the price. They could bring part of it, or they could bring all of it. It was still theirs to do with as they pleased. These people came and said, “Now here’s the whole thing. We’ve sold the property and here’s the whole thing.” And they weren’t. They were lying. And Peter knew it because he had that gift of discerning when a person was lying about spiritual things. And, the man died. In verse 8, his wife came along and answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, ‘Yes, for so much.” And she lied. Why did she do it? For the glory. They had seen other believers came and bring things, and there was a certain commendation, a certain praising of the Lord for this great act of Christian kindness and mercy for the mutual benefit of believers in the early church, and they wanted part of that status, part of that praise, and part of that appreciation and recognition. So they lied about this matter. And the result was that she died.

In the book of 3 John verse 9, it speaks about a man named Diotrephes, a man in the local church, a man with spiritual gifts, and a man who exercised his gifts in a very forcible way. John said, “I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, a man of preeminence among them, received them not. Diotrephes used his spiritual gift to maintain a big-man image in the local church. And God’s people are forever plagued with Christians who are exercising their spiritual gift to play the big-man image in the local assembly. When you use your gift to write a spiritual success story of any kind, I guarantee you, you neutralize your fruitfulness, because God is not interested in your spiritual success stories. I would be very careful to let anybody start writing up articles about your spiritual success achievements. That may be the first step toward neutralizing your spiritual gift. You and I are nobody. The grace of God has made us something useful in the hand of God. Whatever we accomplish, there should never be a time when we are beginning to be praised, and lauded, and heeded, and honored, and written about, and interviewed, and anything else down the line, because we are nothing, but the Word of God is everything. That is the thing we are putting out, the exercise of our gifts—that’s the thing. Who exercises it is beside the point. So beware of pursuing a big-man image.

In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let us each esteem others better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the thing of others.

**Using Your Gift Independently of the Guidance of Spiritual Leaders**

5) A fifth hazard is using your gift independently of the guidance of spiritual leaders. “If I do it, I’m in charge, and I want that understood.” That’s the attitude we’re talking about. You’ll find this among believers, “If I do it, I want it understood I’m in charge.” That means that they’re to answer to no one. That means that they are not to be expected to coordinate with the local spiritual leadership. That means that they are to be able to move out on their own. Well, out in the world, this kind of old sin nature expression is acceptable, and that’s the way the world works. But this attitude is often productive of services which are actually destructive to the Lord’s assembly. I’ve seen more destruction done among God’s people by someone who rose up to exercise spiritual gifts, in independence of a coordinated effort of the spiritual leadership of the church, who had the picture, and who had the fingers on the pulse of the work to know what was useful, what was valuable, and what was the direction to which God was leading the work. I’ve seen more harm and more destruction done with this spirit alone. Splendid, terrific, capable, gifted people are permitted to dissipate themselves because somebody egged them into a role perhaps, or their old sin nature egged them into a role of acting independently of the spiritual leadership in some local assembly.

Now the apostle Paul makes this very clear in many of his writings. The writer of the book of Hebrews in chapter 13 verse 17 puts it in very specific language that we are exercising ministries within coordinated efforts of the spiritual leadership. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey them that have the rule over you (local spiritual leadership—the elder/pastor team), and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls. It is they who must give an account that they do it with joy and not with grief for that is unprofitable to you.”

They watch for you. They shepherd you. It is fantastic to think how local leadership is trying to keep them from joining something, trying to frustrate some legitimate divinely ordained directed effort, which is the last thing any sharp spiritually oriented local leader should want to do at all. What he may want to do may be well in order, but it may be the wrong time, or it may be the wrong effort, it may be the wrong method, or it may be the wrong team which he’s trying to do it with. You’d be surprised how much information local spiritual leadership has by the fact that everything is flowing in one direction to them, and they’re getting information from all sources within the congregation, as well as an orientation of that information from the Lord. This is a great tragedy, when a gift is neutralized by acting independently. This is often done in sincerity, but it will neutralize your spiritual gift.

**Using Your Natural Abilities as Spiritual Gifts**

6) One more hazard is using natural abilities as spiritual gifts. You and I tend to have our changing fads and interests. It is the easiest thing in the world, especially if you are a naturally talented person, to come along with your natural talents, your natural capacities, and to start interjecting yourself into the Lord’s work with your natural abilities that are not sanctified by the Spirit’s guidance through the gift of ministering—just to use your natural abilities and call them service for the Lord. Do you see what that does? It’s a very neutralization by Satan because he gets you functioning in this way, and he neutralizes your use of your real spiritual gift. This kind of service is counterproductive of your divine good, and it keeps a person so preoccupied on the level of his natural abilities, that his spiritual gift never comes into operation. A lot of Christians, a vast number of Christians, in a vast number of churches, because they have never been warned and cautioned and instructed in this are doing this very thing. They’re taking natural abilities, and they’re walking in, and they’re conducting themselves in the service of the Lord’s work, and it is nothing. It is absolutely human good nothing. God accepts nothing in service for which he rewards except that which you do through one of these nine permanent spiritual gifts.

Our time is up this morning. We are now ready to take up temporary gift number one. We will do it next time. We will begin with the temporary gifts, and the second segment of that will move into the miraculous gifts. We will then move in detail in that segment concerning healers and the tongues movement, which is what we have been toward in preparation.

John E. Danish, 1971