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## Spirit-filled: Gifts, Ministry, and Leadership Narcissism

Today's leaders live in an interesting and challenging time. The barriers and opposition to things having to do with the Spirit-filled life have almost disappeared since the Charismatic renewal. Moving in Spiritual gifts, private Spirit-filled experience, and the rediscovery of all the Ephesians 4 ministries have been accepted in most circles.

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At the same time the rise of the online world in which you can present yourself, your gifts, your ministry, and your perspectives worldwide with the click of a button have both rewards and temptations. Most social media sites have some sort of instant reward/gratification by showing you how many people view and follow you instantly. Your "likes" tell you a story.

These things are a great opportunity for good as well as a great temptation for harm.



Our Spirit-filled gifts and ministries must not be seen as an end in themselves. If narcissism takes hold then the gifts become about the gifted. Ministries become an end in themselves. The goal of gifts and ministries becomes the fulfillment of the gifted or the minister. What Paul told Timothy, "fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5), can be mistakenly interpreted as fulfill your personal dream, calling, or your personal image of success and influence. Even the word "ministry," which has a Biblical context

of "serving," can be twisted to mean something more like therapeutic self-fulfillment.

Walking with God and in real accountability with His people helps avoid the pitfalls, but another thing that is important is that our understanding of gifts and ministries must be firmly rooted in God's clear Biblical design for them.

## The 5 Passages Describing Gifts and Ministries

There are 5 passages in the New Testament that give instruction on Spirit-filled gifts and ministries. When you look at all the passages in their context you find clearly that they are exercised with a servants mentality with a very clear aim, building up local churches. They were not an end in themselves. The goal wasn't the gift or minister but the churches Christ was building that they were to serve. It wasn't about the gifted or minister becoming famous, it was about Christ becoming famous through healthy expressions of His body. It wasn't about great ministries but great churches. As a matter of fact, when people began to make it about the importance of their gift over other people's gifts, Paul rebuked them (1 Cor 12:13-27). Consider the 5 passages with their emphasis on walking among and serving the people of God in local churches.

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- **Romans 12:3-16** *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (6) Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly... (10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*
- **1 Corinthians 12:1-12** *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren...(4) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. (6) There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...(12) For even as the body is one and yet has*

*many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.*

- **1 Corinthians 14:1-40** Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.. (4) One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; **but one who prophesies edifies the church.** .. (12) **So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church...**(26) What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.**
- **1 Peter 4:10-11** **As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God..
- **Ephesians 4:7-12** But to **each one of us grace was given** according to the measure of Christ's gift...(11) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (12) **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**

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someone's ministry. If leaders don't see this they will attempt to use the church to fulfill their gifts and callings instead of their gifts and callings being used to build His church. The goal is not us becoming famous and admired but local churches revealing the many-sided wisdom and glory of God (Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:10-11).

I have spoken with many leaders over the years about their "ministry aspirations" and have heard things like, "I am looking to be the pastor of a church of 200-300 people within an hour's drive of the house I just built..I want to be on staff as a worship leader in a church that is big enough to support me while I have the flexibility to record some of my own stuff."

I remember one of my prophetic friends challenging one minister, "is that all churches are to you...a place to do your ministry and receive offerings...what about the family of God? How about rolling up your sleeves and getting into the mess of local church life and helping God's family become all He intends them to be."

Paul understood God's design for gifts and ministries and it caused him to live in such a way that isn't seen in narcissistic leadership. ***Colossians 1:24-25*** *I am glad that I can suffer for you. I am pleased also that in my own body I can continue the suffering of Christ for his body, the church. (25) God's plan was to make me a servant of his church.*

Come on leaders. Look at God's design. Make it your aim to serve Christ and His body so they become all He intends them to be. Your gifts aren't about you; they are about Him and His body.

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