

# Spiritual Gifts: *Unfamiliar Gifts* (*Exorcism, Voluntary Poverty, Martyrdom, Celibacy*)

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August 11, 2002

## Introduction

Today, we'll be discussing four unfamiliar gifts, or, rather, four spiritual gifts which are unfamiliar to *us*. We'll take an interactive approach to the presentation. Those of you who come from a Catholic tradition will have heard of several of these. The definitions for these gifts are from C. Peter Wagner, author of *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*.

Dr. Wagner has an "open-ended approach" to spiritual gifts, meaning that he believes the body of Christ is not limited to the spiritual gifts which are actually listed in the Bible. Rather, the nature of God is much greater than we can imagine, and the quantity and quality of the gifts He bestows upon His church is beyond enumeration.

Therefore, we should not arbitrarily dismiss or discount areas or ideas which are unfamiliar to us just because they are unfamiliar to us.

The song we sang last week – "My Heart, My Home" – can be applied to the first gift we'll be covering.

## Exorcism

Of the four gifts we'll be discussing today, this first one is perhaps the most dramatic, and is certainly the gift most misrepresented by Hollywood. It is also perhaps the spiritual gift most feared by Satan and his demons. That gift is the gift of exorcism.

**Definition:** The gift of exorcism is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to cast out demons and evil spirits.

Throughout the ages, people have either refused to believe in the existence of demons or they have taken the opposite extreme of worshipping them. Scripture tells us that demons do exist and that God has dominion over them. Through the spiritual gift of exorcism, God gives His children dominion over the dark side as well.

Matthew 12:28            "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Luke 10:17,20           Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Look, even the demons are subject to us in heaven." ... Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Acts 8:7                 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

Acts 16:18             ... But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

How does “My Heart, My Home” apply to the spiritual gift of exorcism? Certainly it doesn’t accord with Hollywood’s idea of holy water and spiritual incantations. But that song speaks of spiritual regeneration and purification. It speaks of discarding the old man and being clothed with the new man. It speaks of making a home in one’s heart for God to dwell, and if God is in us, Satan is not.

Though not *literally* dealing with exorcism, *My Heart, Your Home* speaks of *spiritual* cleansing, yielding to God’s presence and will in every area of our lives – an exorcism of whatever is ungodly from our lives.

## Voluntary Poverty

The next spiritual gift was evident immediately after the establishment of the church and has become a well-recognized aspect of the Catholic Church. That gift is the gift of voluntary poverty. Mother Theresa is perhaps the most well known modern example.

**Definition:** The gift of voluntary poverty is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal life-style equivalent to those living at the poverty level in a given society in order to serve God more effectively.

We find the gift of voluntary poverty alluded to in the love chapter.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-3    Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Acts 2:44-45            Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:34-35            Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them; and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

## Martyrdom

The next spiritual gift is one which was very familiar to the early New Testament church as well as to the contemporary church in many parts of the world which are hostile to Christianity today. That gift is the gift of martyrdom. Biblical examples include Stephen (Acts 7) and the apostle Paul (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:23-28).

**Definition:** The gift of martyrdom is the special ability that God has given to certain members of the body of Christ to undergo suffering for the faith even to death while consistently displaying a joyous and victorious attitude that brings glory of God.

The spiritual gift of martyrdom is also alluded to in the love chapter.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-3 And though I bestow all my goods to the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

## Celibacy

The final spiritual gift we'll be discussing today is also well-recognized within the traditional Catholic Church and is certainly a gift overlooked within non-Catholic Christendom. It is also a gift which is regularly ridiculed by our popular culture today. That gift is the gift of celibacy.

**Definition:** The gift of celibacy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to remain single and enjoy it; to be unmarried and not suffer undue sexual temptations.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:7-8 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

Notice that Paul is speaking about singles and those who have lost a mate. Paul then gives this caution:

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Jesus also spoke of this spiritual gift as one which is voluntarily accepted.

Matthew 19:10-12 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

I believe that God has given this under-appreciated spiritual gift of celibacy to some members of our fellowship. When I became part of the Worldwide Church of God in January of 1985, the church had many events, activities and seminars for singles. This was understandable, given that we were an exclusive fellowship and could only marry within the Worldwide Church of God. But in some ways, the message was sent that being single is somehow not as fulfilling as being married, that singles were in a way second-class citizens of the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul, and, more importantly, Jesus Christ, both say that this is not so. For those who have been given the gift of celibacy, you have been given a gift from God, a gift which the apostle Paul used in extraordinary ways to achieve extraordinary accomplishments for God and for His people. This gift of celibacy, in part, enabled Paul to accomplish God's will unencumbered by marital and family responsibilities and it enabled him to use his *other* gifts more fully to serve God and His church.

Author Nancy DeMoss has written a book called "Singled Out For Him." Nancy says singleness enables singles to "serve the Lord with undistracted devotion." Many of the singles in our fellowship are involved in serving people in our church. They serve at church services or other church functions or serve apart from regular church activities. And they are able to do so because they are single.

## **Conclusion**

Brethren, as you reflect upon and study these spiritual gifts we have discussed today – and the other gifts in this series of presentations – I hope that you will take an “open-ended approach” to God’s spiritual gifts, that you will see the incredible greatness of our Creator, and that you will more fully appreciate the various gifts and diverse ways in which God has gifted His children. Our God is so much greater than we could ever imagine. Thank you.