

ACTIVATING GIFTS

1. RECOGNISE THE SPIRIT'S POWER.

1.1. BEHIND EVERY HERO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT.

VISUAL AID AND APPLICATION: Place ornaments and electrical appliances on the table and explain the difference between an ornament and a tool. An ornament has no useful purpose but is designed purely decoration. God hasn't made us ornaments but tools. Unfortunately, most Christian only have a decorative value in church; they're doing nothing useful: *'It is astounding how much dead weight there is in the average congregation. Dead timber produces no fruit and dead weight must be dragged along. Somewhere along the way we have missed the very essence of the Christian concept and the result is that we have the greatest accumulation of unused talent and the richest deposit of untouched ability of any group of people on earth. If we are going to be honest in our plea for restoration it is time that we begin to revolutionize our thinking so that every soldier will don the armour and every child of God will be active in ministering.'*

Each of these electrical tools has specific purpose but they have one thing in common: **THEY DO NO WORK WITHOUT ELECTRICITY.** Similarly, a gift will never be operation unless it is energised by the Holy Spirit.

ELECTRICAL ITEMS:

**TOOTHBRUSH
MIXER
HAIR STRAIGHTENERS
DRILL
LAPTOP
MOBILE TELEPHONE
CD PLAYER
HEATER
HOOVER**

DESIGNER

**MANUFACTURER
POWER SOURCE**

A gift vocation is activated by the Holy Spirit. Jesus stands between the Old and New Testaments and is the dynamic paradigm for ministry. The pattern that he adopts is characteristic of gifted people in both Testaments. The difference in the activity of the Holy Spirit in both Testaments is too complex to enumerate. The primary difference is that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon chosen individual for a specific task. This empowering was not necessarily permanent. After David's sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, her husband, he pleaded with God not to take away the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 51:11). In the New Testament, however, all God's people have gifts and the empowering of the Spirit; the gift of the Spirit is a permanent reality and will never be withdrawn (John 14: 16; Acts 2:17-18; Romans 8:8).

- **JESUS.** He was anointed by the Spirit in the Jordan river, was immediately led by the Spirit into the desert for his dual with the devil, and returned to begin his public ministry in the 'power of the Spirit'. He read the Isaiah scroll in his local synagogue in Nazareth and attributed to himself the anointing to preach good news and the ensuing emancipation of the oppressed (Luke 3:21-4:30).

- **SAMPSON: RAMBO.** Samson was empowered by the Spirit and was given supernatural strength. He was the original Rambo: a one man army (Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14, 19).
- **GIDEON: THE GENERAL.** Gideon was empowered for generalship (Judges 6:34)
- **DAVID: KING, POET , SONGSTER AND CHORISTER.** David was anointed for his task of kingship and monarchy (1 Samuel 16:13).
- **BEZALEL AND TEAM: CRAFTSMEN.** These men were given by the Spirit the practical skills to make the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-6; 28:3; 35:31).
- **EZEKIEL: PROPHET.** The Holy Spirit empowers Ezekiel for his vocation as the prophet of the Exile (Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24).

As organs in Christ's living Body, all of the people of the New Covenant have gifts. These gifts are not natural endowments but require the activation of the Holy Spirit. Paul describes the supernatural origin and exercise of gifts in this way:

‘ Now there are varieties (diagnosis) of gifts (charismata), but the same Spirit; and there are varieties (diagnosis) of service (diakonia), but the same Lord; and there are varieties (diagnosis) of activities (energema) but the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation (phanerosis) for the common good’ (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7).

i. GIFT: ‘VARIETIES OF GIFTS, BUT THE SAME SPIRIT’. To clarify the meaning of this passage I will use my visual aids. Here on the table I have a number of electronic appliances. All of them are useful but they all fulfil different functions. These are analogous to our gifts. There may be some overlap in gifts in the church, but each gift is unique. For example, two people may have a teaching gift but their approach to Biblical material and communication may be completely different. Each gift is designed for a specific purpose. It would be ludicrous for me to try and drill wood or boil a kettle with my electric toothbrush!

ii. FUNCTION: VARIETIES OF SERVICE, BUT THE SAME LORD. Each electrical tool in my collection is designed for a different purpose. Each of us have a different purpose but we are all linked to the same Lord.

iii. EFFECT: VARIETIES OF ACTIVITIES, BUT THE SAME GOD WHO ACTIVATES ALL OF THEM IN EVERYONE’. God is responsible is responsible for the effect of our gift.

iv. PURPOSE: MANIFESTATION OF SPIRIT FOR THE COMMON GOOD. The gift is not given for the benefit of the user but the Church. For meet ‘health and safety’ requirements, wear plastic gloves, an apron and chef's high hat. Make a fruit yogurt in the mixer and give to a member of BOCF to drink. The electrical mixer has been used for the benefit of another person.

ILLUSTRATION: *‘He began to pace New York streets at night, wrestling, panting for Pentecost. In broad daylight he walked down one of the busiest streets in Broadway or Fifth Avenue – he scarcely remembered which, while crowds thrust by and the clomp clink of cabs and carriages was in his ears and the newsboys shouted. The last chain snapped. Quietly, without a struggle, he surrendered. Immediately an overpowering sense of God’s presence flooded his soul. “God almighty seemed to come very near. I felt I must be alone.” He hurried to the house of a friend nearby, sent up his card, and brushed aside an invitation to have food. “I want to be alone. Let me have a room where I can lock myself in.”*

The host though best to humour him. Moody locked the door and sat on the sofa. The room seemed ablaze with God. He dropped to the floor and lay bathing his soul in the Divine. Of this communion, this Mount of Transfiguration, “I can only say that God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand...The dead days were over: “I was all the time tugging and carrying water. But now I have a river that carries me.” (J.C. Pollock, Moody without Sankey, p 87)

2. GLORY IN THE WEAKNESS THAT IS STRENGTH.

VISUAL AID: A power cut can render all electrical tools useless. Negative attitudes and sins can create a power cut and make us impotent in the service of God. The Bible calls this ‘quenching’ (bennumi) the Spirit, extinguishing his fire in our hearts (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Failure to co-operate with God and use your gift can effectively quench the Spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy to rekindle (anazopureo) his gift (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy I: 6, 7). Inferiority and superiority are both obstacles to being used by God.

2.1 POWER CUTS

- * **SIN.** Sin impedes the activity of the Spirit. Refusal to use and develop our gifts is regarded in Scripture as sin (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30).
- * **IGNORANCE (Refer to notes on ‘Developing Gifts’.)**
- * **LAZINESS AND PASSIVITY (Refer to notes on ‘Developing Gifts’.)**

2.2 TIMIDITY AND OVER CONFIDENCE: FOUR CASE STUDIES (Tell these stories).

- * **PETER: TOO STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.** Peter is an example of overconfidence. He overestimated his courage and commitment to Christ (Matthew 26: 69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 24: 54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27) and fell flat on his face.
- * **GIDEON: TOO UNIMPORTANT (Judges 6 & 7).** Gideon felt he was too insignificant for God to use.
- * **JEREMIAH: TOO YOUNG (Jeremiah 1:4-10)** Jeremiah felt that his youth disqualified him from the office of a prophet.
- * **MOSES: TOO INARTICULATE (Exodus 2 & 3).** Moses told God that he was not eloquent and was therefore an unsuitable

candidate to lead Israel out of slavery. Moses' problem was not an inability to speak publicly but a false perception of himself. He was described by Stephen as a man 'powerful in words and deeds' (Exodus 7:22). His inferiority complex made him doubt his own abilities. The man was genius but felt that he was a clown and a dullard.

2.3. THE WEAKNESS THAT IS STRENGTH.

There is a form of weakness that de-motivates and neutralises any kind of initiative; there is another kind of weakness which is the precursor to the power of God (2 Corinthians 12: 7-10; 13: 4). Grace is given so our gifts can operate:

'Gifts (charismata) differing according to the grace (charis) that is given.'
Romans 12:6).

'Grace according to the measure of the gift (doreas) of Christ (Ephesians 4:7).

Our gifts are not activated as we grow in self confidence but in the grace of God.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR SPHERE OF MINISTRY.

VISUAL AID: Each electrical appliance has its own sphere of operation:

CD PLAYER:	ENTERTAINMENT
HEATER:	COMFORT
LAPTOP:	INFORMATION
MIXER:	CUISINE
HAIR STRAIGHTENERS:	BEAUTY
DRILL:	HOME MAINTENANCE
HOOVER:	CLEANLINESS
TOOTHBRUSH:	PERSONAL HYGIENE

Identification of one's gifts is only the first stage in ministry. Your cluster of gifts will probably direct you to a specific sphere or spheres of ministry. These are the most common spheres of ministry:

SPHERE'S OF MINISTRY:

- 3.1 EDUCATION**
- 3.2 EVANGELISM**
- 3.3 COMMUNITY ACTION**
- 3.4 CHURCH PLANTING**
- 3.5. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**
(1 Corinthians 12:28. kubernesis).
- 3.6 LEADERSHIP**
- 3.7 PRAYER**
- 3.8 PROPHETIC**
- 3.9 PASTORAL**
- 3.10 HEALING**

- 3.11 COMPASSION**
- 3.12 ARTISTIC**
- 3.13 SUPPORT (1 Corinthian 12:28. antilepsis).**
- 3.14 MOTIVATIONAL**
- 3.15 GIVING**

CLIMAX:

1. Identify your sphere of ministry and decide how you will use your gifts.

2. Invite people to pray for the anointing of the Spirit.