

# Using Your Spiritual Gifts

## 1 Timothy 4:14-16

1 Timothy 4:14-16 NAS:

<sup>14</sup> **Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you**, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

<sup>15</sup> Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

<sup>16</sup> Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

**Scripture** is the foundation on which an excellent minister builds his ministry. Now it was Paul's intent to return to Ephesus from Rome where he was writing this letter (1 Timothy 3:14). Until Paul arrived, Timothy was to continue to grow the church by submitting himself completely to the Holy Spirit. His task was to "**give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching**" (1 Timothy 4:13). "**Give attention to**" as translated from the original Greek means to continually give his attention to those things; it was to be his way of life.<sup>1</sup>

The reading of Scripture was followed by an **exposition**, which means to give a verse by verse explanation of the passage read so that the hearers could understand it.<sup>2</sup> Anything that needed to be clarified would be explained. In our day, when we are culturally, geographically, linguistically, philosophically, and historically far removed from biblical times, **exposition is essential**.<sup>3</sup> We pastors must be certain we have done everything possible to help people understand what the Word of God is really saying to them.

**Exhortation** says, "*Take these truths that you have been taught and apply them to your own lives. You had better obey if you want the blessing and the reward that goes with obedience. Otherwise you may lose your reward. And if you are a nonbeliever and do not accept these truths, you will be judged and sent to Hell.*" Exhortation informs people and strongly urges them to obey the Word they have heard from the Lord; but it also encourages them to do so by strengthening their hearts and giving them hope and confidence that God will keep His promises to them.

**Teaching involves explaining the Word of God.** This is called expository preaching or

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, Donald, *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah 8:1-8; Luke 4:16ff.

<sup>3</sup> Op. Cit, Guthrie.

teaching, and that is what we do at Village Church. We are therefore endeavoring to be obedient to the kind of preaching and teaching that God told Paul to pass along to ministers. This can be accomplished individually, in small group Bible studies, or by preaching to the entire church. The bottom line here is that a good minister will use every possible means available to provide solid biblical teaching to his flock.

From its earliest years, the church has been committed to the teaching of God's Word. Writing in the middle of the second century, the apologist Justin Martyr described a typical worship service of his day:

“On the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites us to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen.”<sup>4</sup>

The reading and explanation of the Word was central to the worship service. The fourth-century bishop of Constantinople **John Chrysostom** was nicknamed "**golden-mouthed.**" John R. W. Stott described him in this way:

“He is generally and justly regarded as the **greatest pulpit orator** of the Greek church. Nor has he any superior or equal among the Latin Fathers. He remains to this day a model for preachers in large cities.

“Four chief characteristics of his preaching may be mentioned. **First, he was biblical.** He was an expository preacher and punctuated his teaching with references to other Bible verses related to the passage he was preaching on. **Secondly, his interpretation** of the Scriptures was simple and straightforward. **Thirdly, his moral applications** were down to earth. **Fourthly, he was fearless in his condemnations.** In fact, *‘he was a martyr of the pulpit, for it was chiefly his faithful preaching that caused his exile.’*<sup>5</sup>

**The Reformers** (during the Protestant Reformation) were deeply committed to the expository teaching of Scripture. **Martin Luther** often preached four times on Sundays. Every quarter of the year he would teach a two-week series on doctrine using a

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<sup>4</sup> (Cited in Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* [New York: MacMillan, 1978], 287).

<sup>5</sup> Cited in John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), P.21.

catechism.<sup>6</sup> **Calvin** ministered in Geneva from 1541 until his death in 1564. He preached twice each Sunday, and every other week preached each weeknight.<sup>7</sup>

The harder a man/woman works at teaching the Word, the more honorable he/she is according to:

1 Timothy 5:17 NAS:

*The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of **double honor**, especially those **who work hard at preaching and teaching**.*

Remember what we talked about last week about the importance of “*practicing what you preach*”? When each of us is careful to live out what the scripture teaches, we have “*worked hard at preaching and teaching*.” This hard work also involves diligent study and research so that one remains faithful to what the Bible is actually saying. It requires the full attention of the pastor-teacher.

“Preaching and teaching is the highest calling of a minister. It is tragic that so many in our day have been diverted from that. They spend their time on nonessentials, and their people end up spiritually impoverished.”<sup>8</sup>

Warren Wiersbe has put it this way:

“There can be no real pioneer advance in one’s ministry unless there is total dedication to the task. “*No man can serve two masters*” (Matthew 6:24).

“While I do not want to sound critical, I must confess that I am disturbed by the fact that too many pastors and Christian workers divide their time and interest between the church and some sideline. It may be real estate, trips to the Holy Land, politics, civic duties, even denominational service. Their own spiritual lives suffer, and their churches suffer, because these men are not devoting themselves wholly to their ministry. “*This one thing I do*” was Paul’s controlling motive, and it ought to be ours too (Phil. 3:13). ‘*A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways*’ (James 1:8).”<sup>9</sup>

1 Timothy 4:14 NAS:

***Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.***

Paul gives us an insight into the pressures Timothy faced at Ephesus:

2 Timothy 1:3-8 NAS:

<sup>3</sup>*I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my*

<sup>6</sup> A summary of religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers.

<sup>7</sup> Op cit., Guthrie.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Faithful*. Wheaton IL: Victor Books, ©1981, p. 65.

*forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,  
<sup>4</sup> longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.*

*<sup>5</sup> For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.*

*<sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

*<sup>7</sup> **For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.***

*<sup>8</sup> Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but **join with me in suffering for the gospel** according to the power of God,*

### 2 Timothy 1:12-15 NAS:

*<sup>12</sup> For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

*<sup>13</sup> Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>14</sup> Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*

*<sup>15</sup> You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

Paul reminded Timothy of his constant prayers on Timothy's behalf. Paul had to emphasize to Timothy that he needed to continually remind himself of the spiritual gift he had been given. He reminded him that **power, not fear, came from God**. Could it be that Timothy felt temptation from the unbelievers in Ephesus to be ashamed of Paul and possibly even Jesus? Paul urges Timothy not to become a victim of this kind of evil.

There were also other temptations that Paul knew Timothy would have to deal with, such as not giving proper attention and care to what was now expected of him, and then there was also the problem of lust. Ephesus may well have been the sin city of the first century. Paul therefore wrote to Timothy.

### 2 Timothy 2:1-7 NAS:

*<sup>1</sup> You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>2</sup> The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

*<sup>3</sup> Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>4</sup> No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

*<sup>5</sup> Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he*

*competes according to the rules.*

<sup>6</sup> *The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.*

<sup>7</sup> *Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

2 Timothy 2:22 NAS:

<sup>22</sup> *Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

To encourage Timothy to remain faithful and not give up on his ministry, Paul reminded Timothy of the spiritual gift within him. The original Greek word translated as spiritual gift refers to the gift given each believer at the time of their salvation.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this.*

<sup>2</sup> *You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols.*

<sup>3</sup> *So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>4</sup> ***There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.***

<sup>5</sup> *There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord.*

<sup>6</sup> *God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.*

<sup>7</sup> ***A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.***

<sup>8</sup> *To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give **wise advice**; to another the same Spirit gives a message of **special knowledge**.*

<sup>9</sup> *The same Spirit gives **great faith** to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the **gift of healing**.*

<sup>10</sup> *He gives one person the **power to perform miracles**, and another the ability to **prophecy**. He gives someone else the **ability to discern** whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to **speak in unknown languages**, while another is given **the ability to interpret what is being said**.*

<sup>11</sup> *It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*

<sup>12</sup> *The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.*

<sup>13</sup> *Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.*

***14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part.***

*15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body.*

*16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body?*

*17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?*

*18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.*

*19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part!*

*20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body.*

*21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."*

*22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.*

*23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen,*

*24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity.*

*25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.*

*26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.*

*27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.*

*28 Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can **help others**, those who have the gift of **leadership**, those who speak in unknown languages.*

*29 Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles?*

*30 Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? **Of course not!***

*31 So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.*

Each believer's gift is from God by which the Spirit of God ministers to others through you. Timothy's gifts included evangelism, preaching, teaching, and leadership.<sup>10</sup> While that is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, we can see it clearly by looking at the ministry that Timothy had.

You may be very struck with the idea that God has given you a special, spiritual gift to be

<sup>10</sup> 1 Timothy 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 4:2, 5.

used to help the work of the church and to build up fellow believers (1 Corinthians 12:1). We just read one list of gifts from scripture, but that is not an exhaustive list. Other Bible passages list additional gifts for there are many. We hope you already know what yours is, but if you don't you are probably wondering how to find out. There are several ways, some better than others. One way that some groups use is to take a paper and pencil test. While this may be a good jumping-off spot to start you thinking about your spiritual gift, it is not the best way to find out what yours actually is. Very often, other Christians see your gift before you do and they tell you about it. Or, you may try various ministries and see which ones God uses you in and blesses. Often when you are working in the area of your spiritual gift, you find a special joy and have a sense that "this is just the right kind of ministry" for you. Spiritual gifts are different from the skills and talents that you also have. But rest assured God wants to use them all: spiritual gifts, skills, and talents. It is up to you, however, to be sure that God gets the glory for whatever achievements come from the use of these gifts.

Paul reminded Timothy that his gift was given to him by a direct revelation from God, and **was bestowed upon him through prophetic utterance**. There was a public affirmation of his gift through direct revelation from God (1 Timothy 1:18). This event could have taken place shortly after Timothy met Paul on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3).<sup>11</sup>

Acts 13:2-3 NLT:

<sup>2</sup> *One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul [later renamed Paul]"<sup>12</sup> for the special work to which I have called them."*

<sup>3</sup> *So after more fasting and prayer, **the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.***

If God wants a certain man or woman in the ministry, He will give them that desire and open a door of opportunity for them. John MacArthur comments:

"Timothy's gift was validated by **the laying on of hands by the presbytery**. Timothy's call to the ministry was thus confirmed by the recognition of his spiritual gift by the church. The laying on of hands never makes anything happen. You do not transfer anything to the person who the elders lay their hands on. **It simply is an indication of a shared ministry**. "*Prophecy*" in this verse probably suggests that Paul had predicted what Timothy would do. Every new pastor or missionary should receive the laying on of hands by the church indicating they are partners with them in ministry. Again Paul tells Timothy that he should make it a daily routine to study God's Word and so should every other Christian. **If you are a pastor and you are not**

<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 170-181.

<sup>12</sup> Brackets mine.

**providing expository (verse by verse) preaching, God will consider that to be sin.** You would probably be better off if someone were to tie a millstone around your neck and toss you into the river.”<sup>13</sup>

For Timothy to leave the ministry would be by all accounts a rejection of God’s call for the direction of his life. Paul urges him to remain faithful to his calling.

1 Timothy 4:15 NAS:

***Take pains*** with these things; ***be absorbed*** in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

Notice carefully the wording in this verse. “*Take pains with*” means to carefully think through and even meditate on things before taking action. A faithful minister is consumed by his/her work. Ministry is not just another item to mark off on your to-do list; it is not a flighty whim that strikes your fancy for a while until you get bored. It is something you put your heart and soul into. “*Take pains*” suggests a lot of effort and exertion. “*Be absorbed*” tells us God’s Word and our ministry are to take up a lot of our thinking time. And then, “*your progress will be evident to all.*” Progress in what? Having a congregation of thousands, or the largest Bible class in town, or everyone exclaiming over how wonderful your ministry is? Not really. Look back to the earlier portions of this chapter and we find the kind of progress that will be evident to all. Progress in living a godly Christian life. Progress in letting God’s Word shape all your thinking and guide all your actions. Progress in holiness--that is the progress that is to be evident.

Philip Ryken states it well: “Richard Baxter warned ministers to watch how they live, ‘lest you may unsay with your lives that which you say with your tongues.’” What a minister’s life ought to say is that he is God’s man, all the time: at home, at church, at the grocery store, on the freeway, on the playground, at the barber shop. . . . everywhere.<sup>14</sup>

A man or woman of God must be totally devoted to the purpose for which God has called them and living out for themselves the principles they are teaching and preaching to others. They are not to be like the unstable man in:

James 1:5-8 NAS:

<sup>5</sup> ***But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.***

<sup>6</sup> ***But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.***

<sup>7</sup> ***For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,***

<sup>8</sup> ***being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

Paul was not pulling any punches with Timothy. He was not making suggestions, but

<sup>13</sup> Op. Cit. MacArthur.

<sup>14</sup> Ryken, Philip Graham, *1 Timothy*. Philipsburg NJ: R & R Publishing, 2007, p. 183. [underline added]



rather telling Timothy what he should do. We see that especially in the second letter that he wrote to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:*

<sup>2</sup> *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*

<sup>3</sup> *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers **in accordance to their own desires,***

<sup>4</sup> *and will **turn away their ears from the truth** and will turn aside to myths.*

<sup>5</sup> *But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry.***

We might sum this up by saying: “*Preach the Word, Timothy, no matter where or when you have the opportunity to do so.*”

A minister of God is not without character defects (sin), even though some ministers do try to give the impression that they are very holy men. Others may prefer having their congregations think that their pastor is really “cool” and “with it,” and do not even give a passing thought to the importance of righteousness. **Paul says that it is important for a minister’s flock to see that he himself is making spiritual progress.** A pastor should not try to hide those character defects from his congregation, but rather be willing to admit those flaws so that people might see the spiritual progress he/she is making in their walk with God.

Even Paul admitted his need for improvement.

Philippians 3:12-14 NLT:

<sup>12</sup> *I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.*

<sup>13</sup> *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,***

<sup>14</sup> *I press on to reach the end of the race and **receive the heavenly prize** for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

“Tprokope, translated **progress** in the English version was used in military terms to speak of an advancing force. The Stoics used the word to speak of advancing in learning, understanding, or knowledge. It could also refer to the strenuous effort of a pioneer blazing a trail to a new location. An excellent minister is to be

advancing to Christ likeness, and his people should be able to mark his progress.”<sup>15</sup>

1 Timothy 4:16 NAS:

*Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*

Paul concludes his remarks to Timothy regarding the qualities of a noble servant by commanding him to **pay close attention to himself and his teaching**. Each of the characteristics of an excellent minister found in 1 Timothy four, verses 6-16, fit into one of these two categories:

A true man/woman of God will concentrate totally on personal holiness and public instruction. Such behavior on the part of a minister will not only confirm his/her salvation but will also bring a reward when the minister stands before the judgment seat of Christ at the Rapture.

This will be **an indication of true salvation both** for the minister **and for those whom he teaches**. It will bring about salvation for him in the sense that final salvation, deliverance from sin and entrance into eternal glory, demands perseverance. Persevering in the faith is a mark of genuine salvation. **If you are truly saved, if you have confessed to God that you are a sinner in need of a Savior, and have accepted the death of Jesus as payment for your sins, then the Holy Spirit lives within you and will stand by you when the going gets tough. He will not let you slip away no matter what the persecution might involve.** It is those who simply say they are Christians, when they do not have a clue what it truly means to be a Christian, who will break ranks and be led away by false teaching and fear.<sup>16</sup>

John 8:31 NAS:

*So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*

Matthew 10:22 NAS:

*"You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."*<sup>17</sup>

Such perseverance is the result of daily Scripture reading, devotion, prayer, meditation, sharing the Gospel, and of course obedience. Such perseverance is only possible by the power of God and the submission of the believer to the Holy Spirit

When a minister lives his/her life in this way, he/she will be the channel through which God brings to salvation those who are willing to acknowledge that Christ is the One-and

<sup>15</sup> Op cit., MacArthur.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 24:13; Acts 13:43; 14:22; Rom. 2:7; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:14.

Only true Savior. This should be the goal of each and every minister,<sup>18</sup> and it should be your goal as well.

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<sup>18</sup> Op cit., MacArthur.