

THE RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS
AND THEIR CHALLENGES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

The Relevance of Spiritual Gifts and their Challenges in Pastoral Ministry is a work towards identifying better understanding in the ministry. The main thesis of the research is to examine ways one can understand the relevance of spiritual gifts which enhance meaningful and effective pastoral ministry. It portrays spiritual gifts as indispensable and should be a challenge to every minister of the Gospel.

In the research, therefore, chapter one examined the problem, purpose and the researcher's interest in the subject. The highlights are, methodology, limitation of the study and definition of some operational terms.

Chapter two considered the perspectives of the spiritual gifts and their grouping in the New Testament. The basic concepts and the effective use of the gifts in both Testaments are highlighted. The controversial nature and the wrong application of the gifts particularly in the New Testament is considered as the bone of contention that needs explanation. The research pointed out vividly that understanding the dimensions of the gifts enables every minister to appreciate the spiritual gifts better.

Chapter three enumerated clearly the relevance of spiritual gifts in the pastoral ministry. It emphasised the endowment of the gifts by God as to promote better ministry of the church and to equip her for effectiveness. The ideas of relevance are enhanced as the gifts are used for an empowered

ministry for every individual and church life ministry to the world. It will also be as a spiritual guide to the church and the pastor in the ministry.

Chapter four explored vividly the numerous challenges facing the ministry of church and pastor. The ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, leadership, evangelism and counseling cannot be operated meaningfully and effectively without realising the great challenges involved. The chapter stated openly that these areas of ministry involves great challenges to a pastor and the church.

Finally, chapter five concludes the research with a summary and recommendations. It recommends various way and means the church and the pastor should imbibe the spiritual gifts for effective ministry.

Recommendations

The Church through the ages has been struggling with the issues of the Holy Spirit and its gifts to the Church. The period of Apostle Paul was not exempted. In this temporary era, the incumbent ministers of the gospel and gifted Church of Christ should see it as a collective responsibility to battle against these misconceptions. To this end, the following are recommended for effective pastoral ministry.

1. Studying of the Scripture: The need for the church members, officers and theologians to continue to study and search the Scriptures together as to bring understanding, faith and life of the Church into accord with the teachings of the Bible about the Holy Spirit cannot be neglected.⁴ Every pastor should endeavour to study the Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17) to enable him interpret and teach the biblical truth that will make them wise unto salvation. It is only adequate teaching of the Scriptures and the convincing power of the Holy Spirit that can save the church and the members from this perennial problem of misconception and misunderstanding of the proper functions of the spiritual gifts. It saves both the pastor and the church and guides towards effective pastoral ministry. It will help to renew the awareness and for the desired gifts in consonance with the Scripture for the purpose of building the church.

2. An Ideal Fellowship: A pastor who has a close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ or church members who keep in close touch with the Lord of the Church will be able to work with the Holy Spirit. He will not "quench or grieve the Holy Spirit" and will be filled with the Spirit, live, walk and be led by the Spirit of God (1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; Rom. 8:13, 14; Gal. 5:18, 25). The good standing with God is evidence of receiving the joy and fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life. Every pastor should strive to remain faithful and put his dependence on God in the ministry.

This fellowship will also promote love and understanding with the pastor and the members of the church. Where there is love there will be

patience and trust. They will be able to tolerate one another as to sharpen each other in faith and advance the work of Christ.

3. The Holy Spirit and the Church: As to avoid distractions in the church and in the pastoral ministry, the pastor who is called to minister to the flock of God should stand clearly to teach the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church as to enable them understand that,

The Holy Spirit gave birth to the church (Acts 2:1-47), baptizes believers into the church (I Cor. 3:16), unifies the church (Eph. 2:22; 4:3-4), gives gifts to the church (I Cor. 12:4-11), provides leaders for the church (Acts 20:28), directs the work of the church (Acts 13:2), and uses the church to hold back or hinder evil in the world.⁵

This emphatically reflects the perfect control of the Holy Spirit to the church's activities, any action towards the church are actions directing to God. Every iota of misconduct and inefficiency in the church irritates the Spirit of God. This should never be casually dismissed or ignored. The Holy Spirit should have its place in the church.

4. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to the church as to equip and build up the work of the ministry. This should be sounded clear to enable those who are endowed with the gifts not abuse them. It is for the common God of the church and the pastor for effective ministry in the church and outside the church. They are for the strengthening of the church and maturing of the body of Christ. Every believer's gift cost greater price in value, is Christ-centered and has both personal and eternal

⁴Jan H. Boer, ed., *Pentecostal Challenge* (Takum: Haskeda Gaskiya Publication, 1996), 83.

⁵"Holy Spirit," *Shepherding the Flock: A Collection of Resources for Pastors* (Grand Rapids: RBC Ministries, n.d.), 11.

purposes and to give a true picture of the church. There should be no showroom or pride but openness and humility.

The need to intensify that there is difference between the fruits of the Holy Spirit which are national and gifts given at the conversion, should be made clear to every member. The fruit is eternal, but the gifts are temporal.⁶ It cannot come either from strong self achievement or from satanic help. No one has them all, no one has any choice about which gifts are to be received but the Holy Spirit decides (1 Cor 12:11,29-30). Each has the responsibility to discover, develop, and use the spiritual gifts one has. It is because of ignorance and being afraid that can make one not to discover his/her own gift(s).

The gifts should be used to enhance the various aspects of church ministry and consider it as an opportunity to be motivated and ready to learn and improve oneself in other ministries of the church.

5. Avoid Imitation and Learning of Gifts: To every believe it is expedient to be self in whatever the Holy Spirit has endowed on a person. The moment one tries to imitate or copy that is the beginning of shifting focus from the reality and it can lead to frustration and abandonment. For instance, the pastor who was frustrated by his members because he could not speak in tongues. Everyone should know that one cannot have all the gifts or manifest all gifts.⁷ There is no gain in learning or practicing the gift (s) of others as to show self as one with gifts.

⁶Kendell. H. Easley, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," *Bible illustrator*, Fall 1991,162.

