Excerpts: “Spiritual Gifts”
(not for reprint)

SPIRITUAL WAYPOINTS
Helping Others Navigate The Journey

© by Bob Whitesel

With Interviews and Personal Stories from ...

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“Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious’ by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

- James 1:26-27 (The Message)

TO MY FRIENDS for candidly sharing personal stories about your spiritual journeys. The waypoints you have experienced have illuminated the road for others.

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Action 11.1: Empower Strengths

“S” in the acronym SWOT stands for strengths. These are strengths that each person possesses. Leadership researcher Peter Northouse believes such strengths can be traits, abilities, skills or behaviors.¹ Traits are inherent and natural qualities with which a leader is endowed. Abilities are aptitudes developed by experience. Skills are means and methods for carrying out leadership responsibilities. And behaviors are what people do with the traits, abilities and skills they have been given. Though we will discuss their differences more in the next chapter, for this chapter the reader should keep in mind that a person’s giftings include things they are born with (traits), things they learn through experience (abilities and skills), and the behaviors that result.

There is little doubt that everyone possesses strengths in some traits, abilities, skills and behaviors. Yet the Scriptures indicate that a full unleashing of such gifts awaits a new birth experience that originates in God’s Spirit. Such strengths and gifts testify to the goodness of the divine Giver. Speaking to the Corinthian church, Paul states:

God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

- wise counsel
- clear understanding
- simple trust
- healing the sick
- miraculous acts
- proclamation
- distinguishing between spirits
- tongues
- interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, The Message).

When encountering a wayfarer that has ardously traveled a spiritual journey, churches can easily be put off by the demeanor, appearance, habits and opinions of the traveler at Waypoint 11. Yet, every person has redeeming strengths, and it is the Christian community’s task to nurture what God has planted. Helping travelers at Waypoint 11 means helping them uncover their fledging strengths, to
see these gifts were given by God, and that they still await His full empowerment. The following two actions will assist in that process.

**Action 11.1A:**
Help the traveler recognize the diversity of God’s gifts.

The Scriptures describe a variety of God-given gifts. *Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12* and *Ephesians 4* along with secondary lists in *1 Corinthians 7, 13-14, Ephesians 3* and *1 Peter 4* describe many of the “gifts of the (Holy) Spirit” that God uses to empower people for service and ministry. Here is a brief, yet annotated list:\(^2\)

1. **Administration:** Effective planning and organization (*1 Cor. 2:28; Acts 6:1-7*).
2. **Discernment:** Distinguishing between error and truth (*1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 5:1-11*).
3. **Encouragement:** Ability to comfort, console, encourage and counsel (*Rom. 12:8; Hebrews 10:25; Timothy 4:13*).
4. **Evangelism:** Building relationships that help travelers move toward a personal relationship with Christ (*Luke 19:1-10; 2 Timothy 4:5*).
5. **Faith:** Discerning with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God. (*1 Cor. 12:9, Acts 11:22-24, Hebrews 11, Romans 4:18-21*).
6. **Giving:** Cheerfully giving of resources without remorse (*Romans 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:1-7, 9:2-8; Mark 12:41-44*).
8. **Intercession:** Passionate, extended and effective prayer. (*James 5:14-16, 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12, 4:12-13*).
9. **Knowledge:** To discover, accumulate, analyze and clarify information and ideas which are pertinent to the well being of a Christian community. (*1 Cor. 2:14, 12:8, Acts 5:1-11, Colossians 2:2-3*).\(^3\)
10. **Leadership:** To cast vision, set goals and motivate to cooperatively accomplish God’s purposes (*Luke 9:51; Romans 12:8; Hebrews 13:17*).
11. **Mercy:** To feel authentic empathy and compassion accompanied by action that reflects Christ’s love and alleviates suffering (*Romans 12:8, Matt. 25:34-36; Luke 10:30-37*).
12. **Prophecy:** Providing guidance to others by explaining and proclaiming God’s truth\(^4\) (*1 Cor. 12:10, 28; Eph. 4:11-14, Romans 12:6; Acts 21:9-11*).
13. **Helps:** Investing time and talents in others to increase other’s effectiveness (*1 Cor. 12:28, Rom. 16:1-2, Acts 9:36*).
14. **Service:** A tactical gift that identifies steps and processes in tasks that results in ministry to others (*2 Tim. 1:16-18, Rom. 12:7, Acts 6:1-7*).
15. **Pastor:** Long-term personal responsibility for the welfare of spiritual travelers. (*Eph. 4:1-14, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, John 10:1-18, 1 Peter 5:1-3*).

17. **Wisdom:** To have insight into how to apply knowledge (1 Cor. 2:1-13, 12:8; Acts 6:3; 10; James 1:5-6, 2 Peter 3: 15-16).


19. **Miracles.** To perform compelling acts that are perceived by observers to have altered the ordinary course of nature (1 Cor. 12:10, 28; Acts 9:36-42, 19:11-20, 20:7-12; Rom. 15:18-19, 2 Cor. 12:12).

20. **Healing.** To serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to restore health (1 Cor. 12:9, 28; Acts 3:1-10, 5:12-16, 9:32-35, 28:7-10).

21. **Tongues.** There are various explanations of this gift. For instance it can be to speak (a) to God in a language they have never learned and/or (b) to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to his people. Another option is that this can mean an ability to speak a foreign language and convey concept across cultures (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 14:13-19, Acts 2:1-13, 10:44-46, 19:1-7).

22. **Interpretation:** To make known a message of one who speaks in tongues. And/or it can mean “those who help build bridges across cultural, generational and language divides.” (1 Cor. 12:10, 30, 14:13, 26-28).

23. **Voluntary poverty.** To renounce material comfort and luxury to assist others (1 Cor. 13:1-3, Acts 2:44:45, 4:34-37, 2 Cor. 6:10, 8:9).

24. **Celibacy:** To remain single with joy and not suffer undue sexual temptation (1 Cor. 7:7-8, Matt. 19:10-12).

25. **Martyrdom.** Ability to undergo suffering for the faith even to death, while displaying a victorious attitude that brings glory to God (1 Cor. 13:3).

There is no Biblical reason why some of these gifts are not given in some measure before conversion, awaiting the regenerative experience to unleash them with divine empowerment. Therefore, the Christian community should look for signs of such pre-empowered giftings in travelers at Waypoint 11, and then move to Action B.

**Action 11.1B:**

Explain that new birth will unleash and empower these strengths.

A Christian community can help a traveler grasp that along with new birth will come divine empowerment for good deeds. And, these good deeds will rise from the traveler’s traits, abilities, skills and behaviors. People today often suffer from poor self-esteem, yet God’s intention is that each person has gifts to contribute to the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10). Christian communities should be a place where travelers with such emerging giftings discover that:
1. Gifts, as listed in Scripture (i.e. above), are from God (Romans 12:5-6, 1 Corinthians 12:18, 1 Peter 4:10).
2. These gifts were given so that travelers can serve others (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 18).
3. The full empowerment and release of these gifts occurs following new birth. (1 Peter 4:10).

Footnotes:

1 Peter Northouse, Introduction to Leadership, 2-3.
3 For this gift there are several interpretations, c.f. Donald Gee Concerning Spiritual Gifts (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1972) and Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow.
4 Here again there are several perspectives, c.f. Donald Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts and Kinghorn, Gifts of the Spirit.
5 Varied perspectives exist here as well, c.f. Donald Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, Kinghorn, Gifts of the Spirit, and Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow.
6 For varied interpretations, see Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow and Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts.
8 See Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow, p. 256-257 for the Classical Pentecostal viewpoint.
9 For another viewpoint of this and other gifts see the United Methodist Church’s definitions in “Explore Your Spiritual Gifts,” http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1355371/k.9501/Spiritual_Gifts.htm, 2009.
AFTERWORD:

ARRIVAL ...AND BACK AGAIN

“Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious’ by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

-James 1:26-27 (The Message)

As the reader has noticed, the journey of the Good News never ends, it just leads to more responsibility. Successfully traversing a waypoint only affords the trekker an opportunity to help others navigate that same waypoint. My friends and colleagues have contributed their personal stories for this purpose.

A companion book:

WAYPOINTS: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey
by Bob Whitesel

To provide a clearer map of this route I have written an important companion book titled: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey (The Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010). The companion volume is designed to help the person who is presently struggling with the obstacles, challenges and detours of this spiritual road. This companion book is for non-Christians, new-Christians and Christian-leaders alike. If you know of someone on this journey, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey is the roadmap they have been seeking.

THE WAYPOINTS COURSE
by Bob Whitesel

Additionally, to help people come together and traverse this route, I have written a 17-week course that can be used in Sunday School classes, home groups, Bible studies, small groups, leadership committees and home fellowships. The companion book, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey, provides an agenda for each of the 17-weeks. In this course travelers will share their experiences, help others, make an impact on their community. Weekly agendas of the WAYPOINTS COURSE are included in the companion book: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey.

For more information on either the companion book or the course see:

www.Waypoints-Book.com