Understanding Spiritual Gifts and Callings to Ministry

Dr. Nathaniel J. Stampley Sr., D. Min.
Acknowledgments

I would be remised if I did not pause to recognize several individuals who have influenced my life immensely along the way and serve as a constant reminder of what it means to display faithfulness and excellence. My parents, Pastor James and Luetilda Stampley were trailblazers in the Church of God in Christ in the state of Louisiana. They exemplified a life of holiness and taught my 13 siblings and me a sense of belonging to God, family and the community. In addition, they profoundly taught us the value of faith, prayer, compassion and patience.

Dr. Arenia C. Mallory was a distinguished educator and champion for the underprivileged children in Mississippi at the height of segregation during the last century. She taught us to, Walk in dignity. Talk in dignity. Live in dignity. Aside from my parents she had the most influence in helping shape my character during the foundational years of my life as a teen and young adult.

Dr. Howard Thurman’s calling and character distinguished him as a mystic, philosopher, educator, theologian and pastor. He was keenly aware of the Spirit of Truth and refused to be restricted by labels and traditions.

Dr. James Powell clearly understands what it means to be a pastor, educator, husband, father and missionary. His passion for helping the disinherited domestically and internationally is remarkable. We share a common vision and that is why since 1969, he has truly been my best friend.
Valerie Davis has been my friend for nearly 40 years. She willingly accepted the task of editing and proof reading this manuscript. Without her sacrifice I would not have been able to submit this publication in a timely manner. Thank you for your labor of love.

Lastly, I want to salute my lovely wife, Carolyn, an educator since 1972. Her patience and sense of purpose is simply amazing. I have watched her bring balance, grace and beauty to our marriage (36 years), congregation where she serves along-side me in Pastoral Ministry and Music ministry. In addition, she serves as a teacher in the Milwaukee Public School. Her talent and passion for the fine arts is being carried out through our children on Broadway, and other venue across America. I admire her tenacity and resolute spirit even when I know she is facing awkward moments. I cannot imagine my life without the gift God has given me; this adorable saint, Carolyn. As you can see, gifts and callings are designed to be lived and experienced and not viewed as novelty on the shelf.
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Introduction

I pondered over what would be the best way to present these lessons, so one day while sitting in a Sunday School class, the following verse from the Epistle of James stood out as the basis and inspiration for what I am about to share. “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17). In other words, we must acknowledge the Most High God as the source and distributor of everything that has eternal value and noteworthy recognition in this world.

God is the ultimate source for spiritual gifts and callings, even though the spirit of disobedience and rebellion will always be present to disrupt a harmonious relationship with God and each other. The following scripture gives us a clear understanding about the seriousness and permanent nature God has disbursed gifts and callings, “For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” Romans 11:29.

From a child I have always understood this scripture meant there are talented and gifted persons who may not necessarily adhere to a holy lifestyle, due to using their gifts for Satan. However, there is a deeper revelation or another perspective regarding this verse.
For example, the calling of Abraham and election of the Children of Israel in the Old Testament are both mysterious and revealing. What did they do to merit grace, mercy and a favorite status among the nations? Perhaps their role as nomads or the underdog in the midst of well established nations captured the attention of God to catapult them into becoming a people unto himself. Nonetheless this divine intervention by Yahweh served as a watershed in Biblical History, while at the same time it is irrevocable or cannot be undone. Yahweh’s relationship with Israel and Jesus Christ relationship with the Church is phenomenal and perpetual.

In other words the true nature and essence of God is holy and He has too much invested in those He called into righteousness to reverse the heavenly places embedded in earthen vessels. Simply stated, He cannot repent or change His mind, despite the rebellious and disobedience displayed from time to time on the part of those who know better within the covenant community.

Therefore, when we observe the community of faith empowered and displaying faithfulness toward their spiritual gifts or callings to ministry we are actually seeing a glimpse of wholesome living.

We have already established the nature of God is holy. Alternatively, the motivational principle of God is love. However, love must be exemplified in sacrifice and action.
From a child I have always been fascinated with gifted and talented individuals, while at the same time, sensed there were gifts and a divine calling waiting for me to discover and embrace. For me this spiritual awakening and personal journey began June 1967, when I accepted my call to ministry. However, it took rebellion, apprehension, ignorance and an array of positive and negative experiences to make me feel comfortable and convinced that I had a spiritual mandate to fulfill within the Kingdom of God.

Every day, I see individuals struggling, rebelling and ignoring their gifts and callings due to lack of knowledge or spiritual awareness. I firmly believe everyone has a gift or calling waiting to be discovered, because these gifts and calling are designed to make a qualitative difference in the environment God has strategically assigned us.

Therefore, I have been inspired to share these revealing lessons surrounding the spiritual and social aspects of life, so that it might help bring clarity for the novice and matured believer, as well as the laity and clergy in the Church. In addition, I firmly believe there are those amongst us who will come to realize they are multi-talented.

No one owns spiritual gifts and callings and no one can manipulate the way God sees fit to utilize individuals in ministry. The sole purpose of these spiritual gifts and callings permeate around edifying the Body of Christ (Church), while at the same time; bring glory to Christ, who is the head of the Church. It is
imperative for persons whom God singles out to exemplify a life above reproach. In other words they must come to appreciate and adhere to a life of holiness.

Simply stated, no one should get the big head, but rather all of us should always display a spirit of thanksgiving and humility. I firmly believe for the most part we long to connect with our purpose on earth, and perhaps this Chinese Proverb will help you understand how important it is to be opened to what you are suppose to do. The proverb says, “Tell me something and I will forget. Show me something and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand.” Your gifts and calling are profound examples of trying to get everyone involved spiritually and socially, so that we might experience a wholesome environment.

I hope you are as inspired and blessed as I have been during the research, compilation and sharing of this pertinent information. This book can be studied personally or collectively as well as a study guide, manual, course and teaching tool. “Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity,” (Anonymous). It is my prayer you will soon find out God’s amazing and profound methods of selection and the wide array of persons He utilizes.

By and large, I have selected the Revised Standard Version for all scriptural references. In addition, I will utilize Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, by W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. regarding definition and explanation of Biblical terms and phrases.
Course Outline

I. What is a gift?
II. What is a calling?
III. What is the anointing?
IV. Mission of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church
V. Spiritual Gifts in the life of the Church
   1. Administrative Gifts (Ephesians 4:11)
      a. Apostles
      b. Prophets
      c. Evangelists
      d. Pastors
      e. Teachers
   2. Supportive or Motivational Gifts (Romans 12:3-8)
      a. Prophecy
      b. Service
      c. Teaching
      d. Exhortation
      e. Giving
      f. Administration
      g. Mercy
   3. Extraordinary Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
      a. Word of Wisdom
      b. Word of Knowledge
      c. Gift of Faith
d. Gift of Healing  
e. Working of Miracles  
f. Prophesy  
g. Discernment of Spirits  
h. Unknown Tongues  
i. Interpretation of Tongues

4. Church Leadership (1 Corinthians 12:28)  
   a. Apostles  
   b. Prophets  
   c. Teachers  
   d. Workers of Miracles  
   e. Healers  
   f. Helpers  
   g. Administrators  
   h. Speakers in various kinds of tongues

VI. Examples of Biblical characters cooperating and resisting their calling
1. Adam  
2. Noah  
3. Joseph  
4. Abraham  
5. Moses  
6. Gideon  
7. Deborah  
8. Elijah