

KEY ELEVEN

YOU ARE GIFTED

You have within you everything necessary to achieve the destiny God has laid out for you. You have received something from God that is unique. Everyone one of us is special. We each have something that no one else has—an anointing in a certain area, a talent, ability, gift, a spiritual endowment. God has never created anything that didn't have a gift—not a man, woman, child, or even a plant.

Jesus taught in His parable of the talents that the master “called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.”⁹⁵ He gave his three servants each some talents. “Talents” could mean an amount of money and it could also mean “gifts.” In the same way, God has given *all* of us gifts. *There are no second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.*

“A man's gift makes room for him.”⁹⁶ The gift that God has given you will operate where you are placed. You are gifted so that your gift can be used and make room for you. God's gifts show us our destiny. When you discover the one thing that you can do better than almost anybody else you know, that is a huge indicator of God's plan for your life.

GOD'S GIFTS SHOW US OUR DESTINY.

Way back when I first learned to study God's Word, as I read, I got a gut feeling that God had something else for me in my career. In job after job, I worked my hardest but always dreamed to become and do something significant. It was a minister named Rick Godwin who taught me that ambition is based on a fantasy, but a dream is based on reality. When I heard him preach, I wondered, "*What is my reality?*" Finally, I asked myself a question that became pivotal for my life: "*What is it that I do better than anyone else around me?*"

As I thought about it, I realized that I was a good communicator. If there was one thing I could do, it was talk. So, that's what I did. I left the job where I was working and went into sales. I admit I wasn't that good at first, but as I studied, my talent for sales increased year after year.

This is a pivotal question to ask yourself: "*What is it that I do better than anyone else around me?*" A good way to begin is with a self-inventory. Take a piece of paper and start with these questions and see where they take you:

1. What do I do well?
2. What do I enjoy doing?
3. What do other people say I do well?
4. What do I have opportunities to do now?
5. In what area in my past have I experienced rapid learning?
6. In what areas have I experienced glimpses of excellence?

If we focus on our giftings, rather than our failings, we can achieve a life of excellence. Excellence does *not* mean achieving perfection or being *the best* at something. Excellence is being the best that *you* can be. Over time, I found that I was never going to be the very best in the world at sales. I've hired salespeople who are better than I am and I'm thankful to have found them. I'm just the best that *I* can be.

It's also important to remember not to compare yourself with others.⁹⁷ Don't give up on something you're good at just because you can't be the best in the world.

WE ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

God gives different gifts to different people. God did not make anyone else like us, nor has He gifted us the same. In God's kingdom there is no competing, no comparing, and no complaining. I heard an important truth from my friend Dale Bronner. When we recognize that we do not have to compete with anyone and that we can just be ourselves, it allows us to be everything God wants us to be.

You are a unique, designer original. No one person is just like another. No two humans look exactly alike, walk alike, talk alike, or think alike. No two fingerprints are the same. No two voice prints are the same. No two iris prints are the same. God has never run out of designs. At birth, each child is endowed with his own identity—completely and uniquely his—and with gifts that determine his destiny.

We do not all have the same gifts. If so, we would all be mathematicians or physicists or salespeople. If we all had the same physical gifts, there would never be a winner of a foot race because we would all finish in a tie. If we had the same artistic gifts, we would be equally good in sketching, music, and singing.

Our gifts, abilities, and talents determine our destiny. We were each created equally special, but not equally gifted. In the Apostle Paul's famous analogy of the Body of Christ, he refers to the various parts of the body having different functions, needs, and abilities.⁹⁸ In the parable of the talents, the master leaves talents with his servants to invest while he is out of the country. He proportions the talents according to each one's ability to handle that amount.⁹⁹ "To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one."¹⁰⁰ The faithfulness evidenced in their past determined their opportunities in the future.

THE DECEPTION OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Our gifts and strengths, not our weaknesses, make for excellence. Because we are negative by nature, we tend to focus more on things that we *cannot* do than on the things that

we *can* do. We generally focus on our weaknesses more than on our strengths. For example, if I asked people to list their weaknesses as well as their strengths, most people would list fifteen to twenty weaknesses for every five strengths.

For most of us, this awareness of negative things probably started around the first grade when we brought home our first report card. "Mama, Mama, Mama," we cried, "look at my report card!" There may have been some good grades, some average grades, but maybe one bad grade. Out of all those grades, which one did "Mama" want to talk about the most? The bad grade—the weakness.

When we are in school, improving weaknesses may be appropriate. Once we enter our career path, God wants us to build on our strengths. We have to let go of the thoughts of impressing parents or teachers. We need to excel not at every subject taught in school—we need to excel at our own gifts.

God's destiny for me was built around what I *could* do, not what I *couldn't* do. God's destiny for me had nothing to do with what people said about me in the past or any report cards. God's destiny was tied up in the gifts He'd given me. Period. It's the same for you.

Five deceptions commonly trip people up when exploring their gifts. Think carefully about these and see if they have influenced your thinking. Then rid yourself of any that are holding you back.

GOD'S DESTINY FOR ME WAS BUILT AROUND WHAT I *COULD* DO, NOT WHAT I *COULDN'T* DO.

The Enemy

God has given each of us at least one strength or ability that we can do better than ten thousand other people and He intends for us to use it. Our enemy, Satan, wants to sabotage what God intends. He doesn't want us to recognize our strengths.

He tries to blind us to both

our gift and God's way of handling that gift. This is a major deception and important to remember.

Erroneous Teaching and Thinking

Erroneous teaching and thinking says that by focusing on our weaknesses we will improve and become excellent in every area. That simply is not true. We may improve in the areas of our weaknesses to become average, but with the time and energy we spend on it, we neglect the strengths that could have made us excellent.

We need to focus instead on the special endowment that God placed within us to enable us to do superior things. We need to think on the higher things.¹⁰¹ Again, when we discover the one thing that we can do better than almost anybody else, that becomes God's pattern for our lives.

Taking a Gift for Granted

Instead of developing the gift or ability we have, we can set it aside and take it for granted. We think, "*I can already do that so I will set it aside and develop this weakness or find something else to do.*" We take God's gift for granted and do not develop it. We don't even appreciate it. At that moment, we are deceived. We have wasted an opportunity because we have set aside God's plan and are following our own plan.

Other People

In life and business, we cannot be effective and not be controversial. Nor can we expect everyone to like and support us. There are two kinds of people: (1) people who do things, and (2) people who criticize people who do things. When you rise to the level of your gifting, it will transform you into one of the "people who do things." This transformation requires you to leave behind those who are jealous of your success and who are not happy for you.

Low Self Esteem

God has a destiny for each of us and He has given us the ability to fulfill it. We are unique and must refuse to imitate or compare ourselves to others. When we do, we can fall into low self-esteem. We can believe that we cannot offer the same result or service as another person, and therefore, we have no gift. This, of course, is simply not true. Each of us is chosen by

God for a specific reason. No one else can fulfill His will as completely as we can.

Low self-esteem will curse us with poverty because when self-esteem is low we do not realize we have a contribution to make. Race, social status, education, and what your Mama once said about you has little to do with economic empowerment. We can each refuse to be broke and live in a poverty mindset. We can seize opportunities to excel in our gift.

If we don't realize that God and the people around us depend on us using our gift and making our contribution, we will hide our gift and not seek to multiply it. The ultimate purpose of these five deceptions is to stop you from being who God created you to be and achieving the destiny He has for you.

FOLLOW THE PLAN

The answer to all this deception is to get on with God's plan. Overcome weaknesses by partnering with people who are strong in the areas where you are weak. Once I discovered my gift, I worked hard to focus on it because I was heading for my destiny. I found that I can't do every other little thing—so I don't try to.

Today I own several corporations. I don't like preparing and filing tax returns and quarterly reports any more than I did with the first corporation, but I have an accountant who loves those details. When I dump all those boxes on his desk, he shivers with delight. I walk away shaking my head saying, "Thank God for accountants!"

When my wife calls me at work to say a faucet is leaking, I ask her to call a plumber. Sure, I could probably fix the faucet, but in the same amount of time, I can make much more money by doing what I do best than what that plumber will charge me. When the day is done, I can relax at home with my wife in a sound, non-leaky house.

The Scriptures say that a man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.¹⁰² The one thing we do better than anyone else is to follow God's plan for our destiny. When we find and understand what our gift is, develop it, use it, refine it, and dedicate it to the glory of God, we will fulfill God's plan.

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POINTS TO REMEMBER

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- God did not make anyone else like us, nor has He gifted us the same.
- In God's kingdom, there is no competing, no comparing, and no complaining.
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- Our gifts and strengths, not our weaknesses, make for excellence. Because we are negative by nature, we tend to focus more on things that we *cannot* do than on the things that we can do.
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