



BEYOND THE WALLS

Prepared by God to S.E.R.V.E.

Leaders know who they are in Christ Jesus. They know how God molded and gifted them for His use. They trust that God can use every experience to prepare them for ministry. They trust that God has prepared them to serve for His glory, not their gain.

God has prepared you for His purposes to bring honor to Him. The Bible says to use the spiritual gifts God gave you to serve others.

According to 1 Peter 4:10, the goal of all God's gifts is service to others. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

Servant leaders are leaders who serve. The acronym S.E.R.V.E. is an outline for how God has prepared you for His purposes.

Spiritual gifts.—Those gifts God gives through His Holy Spirit to empower you for service

Experiences.—Those events God allows that mold you into a servant leader

Relational style.—Behavioral traits God uses to give you a leadership style

Vocational skills.—Those abilities you have gained through training and experience that you can use in service to God

Enthusiasm.—That passion God has put in your heart for a certain ministry to others

Your relationship with Christ as well as those five areas—spiritual gifts, experiences, relational style, vocational skills, and enthusiasm—become the raw materials God uses to mold you into a servant leader.

Spiritual Gifts

Leaders know how God has gifted them for service in the body of Christ, the church. Leaders serve out of their spiritual giftedness. They seek to lead from their God-given place in the body of Christ. The church works best when its members know how God has gifted them spiritually and when all members, empowered by

their spiritual gifts, are in places of service. Spiritual gifts are the key to understanding how God intends the church to function.

A spiritual gift is a "manifestation of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:7). It is not a special ability that you develop on your own; that is a skill or talent. You do not seek a spiritual gift. Even so, you should prayerfully seek to understand how God already has gifted you for His purposes.

God gives you your spiritual gifts for a special purpose in the church when He graces you with salvation through Christ. Understanding spiritual gifts begins with knowing the biblical nature of the church.

Both 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Ephesians 4:12 help us to understand why God gives gifts to the church. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). Ephesians 4:12 further describes this purpose: "To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Spiritual gifts are for the common good of the church. God gifts members of the church to equip and build up the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are not for pride but for service. Servant leaders allow God's spiritual gifts to motivate them to serve.

Important to any study of spiritual gifts is God's work in the life of the believer and the church. You do not decide you want a certain gift and then go get it. God gives the gifts "just as he determines" (1 Cor. 12:11). Spiritual gifts are part of God's design for a person's life and for the life of the church. The Bible says that "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Cor. 12:18).

Your goals as a servant leader are to discover how God in His grace has gifted you for service and to lead others in the same joy of discovery.

A spiritual gift can be defined as "an individual manifestation of grace from the Father that enables you to serve Him and thus play a vital role in His plan for the

redemption of the world."¹ For this study, we will use this definition: A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers that empowers them to serve the body of Christ, the church.

Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10,28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:9-11 contain representative lists of gifts and roles that God has given to the church. A definition of those gifts follows. Check two or three gifts that seem to fit how God has made you.

- *Leadership*—Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).
- *Administration*—Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long-term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).
- *Teaching*—Teaching is instructing people in the truths and doctrines of God’s Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11).
- *Knowledge*—The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God’s Word. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth (1 Cor. 12:28).
- *Wisdom*—Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).
- *Prophecy*—The gift of prophecy is that of proclaiming the Word of God boldly. It builds up the body and leads to conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6).
- *Discernment*—Discernment aids the body by recognizing the true intentions of those within or related to the body. Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and well-being of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).
- *Exhortation*—Possessors of this gift encourage members to be involved in, and enthusiastic about, the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).
- *Shepherding*—The gift of shepherding is manifested in persons who look out for the spiritual wel-

fare of others. Although pastors, like shepherds, do care for members of the church, this gift is not limited to a pastor or staff member (Eph. 4:11).

- *Faith*—Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).
- *Evangelism*—God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. This gift builds up the body by adding new members to its fellowship (Eph. 4:11).
- *Apostleship*—The church sends apostles from the body to plant churches or be missionaries. Apostles motivate the body to look beyond its walls to carry out the Great Commission (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).
- *Service and Helps*—Those with the gift of service and helps recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully give assistance to meeting those needs. Christians with this gift do not mind working behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).
- *Mercy*—Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by empathizing with hurting members. They keep the body healthy and unified by keeping others aware of the needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).
- *Giving*—Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and liberality are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).
- *Hospitality*—Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They sometimes use their homes to entertain guests. Persons with this gift integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).

List here the gifts you have begun to discover in your life:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

God has gifted you with an expression of His Holy Spirit to support His vision and mission of the church. It is a worldwide vision to reach all people with the gospel of Christ. As a servant leader, God desires that you

know how He has gifted you. That will lead you to where He would have you serve as part of His vision and mission for the church.

God has gifted you for service in Christ's body, the church (1 Cor. 12:7). His goal is for you to prepare others for service in the church (Eph. 4:12). As a servant leader, you are to use your spiritual gifts for the common good of the body. God gifted you for His glory, not your gain. God gifted you to build up His church, not your ego.

After prayer and worship, I am beginning to sense that God wants me to use my spiritual gifts to serve Christ's body by . . .

I am not sure yet how God wants me to use my gifts to serve others. But I am committed to prayer and worship, seeking wisdom and opportunities to use the gifts I have received from God.

Experiences

Leaders trust that God works in their lives to bring about His plan for their lives. Experiences become God's crucible to mold you into His image. Servant leaders are confident that events happening to them and around them are part of God's sovereign work in creation.

God can take what already has happened in your life to help accomplish His will. God can mold and make you into a tool of His grace. God can break into your life to make you a new creation for His purposes.

Henry Blackaby calls events like Paul's conversion "spiritual markers." He says that a spiritual marker "identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction when I clearly know that God has guided me."² Spiritual markers remind you that God is at work in your history. Remembering them helps you to see God's work in your life and how He is unfolding His plan for your life.

You have events in your life when God has made His will clear to you. God broke into history, and you know God spoke to you. He may have confirmed a decision you made. He may have revealed something new about who He is.

Take a moment to describe briefly in the space below some of your most important encounters with God. Write as if you are telling a friend about those life-

changing moments. Start with your salvation experience. Don't worry if you do not have a dramatic story. God works in everyday events to shape you into His likeness. Spiritual markers can be any life experience, from a burning bush to a child's gentle touch.

Let me tell you about my most important encounters with God . . .

Relational Style

Every person has a natural style of how he or she relates to others. Every style has its strengths and weaknesses. God can use any relational style that is submitted to His will to serve His purposes.

How you relate to others is basic to how you serve as a leader. To know your relational style is to know how God has molded you to serve people through your relationships with them. Servant leaders know how they naturally relate to others and how others relate to them.

Because leadership involves influencing others for the common good, knowing how God has molded your temperament is key to knowing your leadership style. Knowing the style of others allows you to meet their relational needs. Moreover, understanding the relational needs of other people helps you to communicate with them and to lead them more effectively.

God will help you to understand your role as a servant leader as you assess the strengths and weaknesses of your relational style. A four-category model has been proved over time and has strong scientific support. The primary source for understanding this model is Ken Voges, an author of *Understanding How Others Misunderstand You*. Voges uses the letters DISC to represent the four primary relational styles.³

- **D** stands for the "dominance" style—Works toward achieving goals and results; functions best in active, challenging environments.
- **I** stands for the "influencing" style—Works toward relating to people through verbal persuasion; functions best in friendly, favorable environments.
- **S** is the "steadiness" style—Works toward supporting and cooperating with others; functions best in supportive, harmonious environments.
- **C** represents the "conscientious" style—Works toward doing things right and focuses on details; functions best in structured, orderly environments.

Using the descriptions above that best describe you, personalize your DISC style by completing the following statements:

Because of my special, God-given style of relating to others, I tend to work toward . . .

and I function best in . . .

But I also see these additional qualities of my God-given personality:

The most important part of the above written activity is to reflect on these questions: How does my relational style relate to servant leadership? How can my own God-given temperament be used by God to make a difference in my church and community?

As you think about those questions, note the chart below that summarizes possible strengths and weaknesses of each leadership style.

Note that each style has both strengths and weaknesses. No single style can meet every need. God intentionally created a variety of styles, none being more important or more needed than another. All gifts and strengths are important to the overall servant ministry of a church. At the same time, each strength, when out of control, can become a weakness. And weaknesses should not become excuses for failure. A person and a church constantly must strive to accomplish without excuse the ministries received from God.

Such diversity of styles within the church may at times produce conflict, but it provides the important balance needed to accomplish what God gives the church to do. It reminds us of the important lesson that God needs each one of us and that we need each other.

Churches function best when members accept the relational styles of others and seek to meet the needs of those persons, never compromising the message of Christ. Relationships remain strong when members follow God's pattern for living together as His body with all its diversity (1 Cor. 12:14-26).

God's Word offers clear teaching on how we are to serve one another in love. Colossians 3:12-14 says, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Remember that your natural relational style is not an excuse to sin. God's indwelling Spirit balances your natural tendencies with God's temperament. Regardless of your style, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is always a vital part of a servant leader's relationships. God's Spirit molds your temperament for His glory.

Vocational Skills

Our English word *vocation* comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means "to call." A vocation, then, is what one feels called to do with his or her life. In previous generations, a sense of divine calling was part of a person's place in the world. A vocation was part of God's plan for a person's life. God called and you responded by gaining the skills necessary to live out that calling.

Vocation has come to mean any profession or occupation. A vocational skill is any ability you have learned that enhances your calling in life. In today's secular world, people often prefer to use the word *career*. A career is your choice. Instead of looking for God's plan, the world teaches you to choose what you want to do and

Dominant		Influencing	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Direct	Too controlling	Gregarious	Forgets the goal
Active	Hates routine	Enthusiastic	Poor follow-through
Decisive	Hates details	Extremely flexible	Overlooks details
Steadiness		Conscientious	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Cooperative	Fails to confront	Detailed	Inflexible
Deliberate	Dislikes change	Conscientious	Rigid
Supportive	Too compromising	Cautious	Indecisive

then to plot a course of training to accomplish your career choice. A career, then, is what you choose for yourself.

In the New Testament, Paul encouraged the Christians in Ephesus to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph. 4:1). He was not talking about their jobs. He encouraged them to adopt a lifestyle consistent with who they were in Christ. Calling, as presented in the Bible, is one's position in Christ, not one's position in the world.

Whatever your vocation, your calling is to live worthy of the salvation God gives you in Christ Jesus. In Colossians, Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-24). Whatever you do, God calls you to live as a child of God and to bring honor to God through your actions. It matters less what you do in life than it does what you do with your life.

For the sake of this study, let us define vocation as what you do to provide for your needs in society, recognizing God's work in your life to lead you to that choice. Calling is God's call to salvation in Christ Jesus and to a special mission in your life for His purposes.

Vocational skills are those skills you have acquired to do your career or hobbies. Make an inventory of your skills. Use the following table to create your skill inventory:

Name of Skill	How I Use This Skill in My Vocation
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	

God enabled Paul to use his vocational skills for his life's calling. God can do the same for you. Take time to imagine how God can use the skills you listed above for His work of spreading the gospel. For example, if one of your skills is carpentry, you can use that skill to build shelves in your church's preschool rooms or for a local mission or ministry. Be creative as you consider how you can use your skills for the glory of God.

Name of Skill	How God Can Use This Skill in His Mission
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	

Enthusiasm

The word *enthusiasm* comes from a Greek word that literally means "in god." The Greeks believed that a god could enter a person and inspire or enthuse him. Enthusiasm takes on the meaning "God in you." While the Greek word for enthuse is not found in the New Testament, the emphasis on God's presence that energizes the believer is a recurring theme (John 14:20; 20:21-22; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

The Bible is clear that God's Holy Spirit is the source of passion for God's mission within the believer. Paul declared it is "Christ in you" that is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We do not generate hope on our own. God energizes us with His living Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will be the Counselor and "guide you into all truth" (John 16:7,13). He is our counselor and guide as we follow the Lord. Passion and enthusiasm for ministry come from God.

Scripture tells about people who were enthusiastic about what they did. That is not a self-generated thrill. Enthusiasm is a God-given desire to serve Him by meeting the needs of others. Servant leaders have a God-given passion to serve.

A servant leader's joy comes when he sees God at work and he is a part of it. Servant leadership is a God-given passion for the success of God's plan. Servant leaders find joy when God's will is done.

Your God-given enthusiasm is sometimes your only source of joy in ministry. As you lead, you will face obstacles and disappointments. People will criticize you. Sometimes they will question your motives. But the sincere desire to know God's will and the passion God puts in your heart for His work absorb those negative reactions and allow you to move forward with your ministry. Your enthusiasm is the beginning of a fruitful life in Christ.

What has God burned in your heart to do for His mission on earth? Take a moment to consider what that may be. Prayerfully write your responses to the following statements. Complete them with honest, heartfelt statements.

The one thing I do for God that makes my heart beat fast is . . .

If I could do one thing for God, it would be to . . .

My S.E.R.V.E. Profile

Believing God has prepared me for servant leadership. I am discovering that He has molded me in the following areas. (Pull together what you have written on the previous pages to complete the following statements.)

- *God has gifted me with the spiritual gifts of:*

- *God has allowed these experiences to guide me for His purposes:*

- *God has created me to relate most often to others naturally in this way:*

- *God has given me the opportunities to develop these vocational skills that can be used in His service:*

- *God has burned in my heart the enthusiasm to serve in this area of ministry:*

End Notes

“Prepared by God to S.E.R.V.E.” has been adapted from C. Gene Wilkes, Jesus on Leadership: Becoming a Servant Leader (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1996), 31-84. This resource can lead you to apply biblical principles of servant leadership to all areas of ministry and includes more detailed spiritual gifts and relational style surveys.

¹Ken Hemphill, *Serving God: Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts Workbook* (Dallas: The Sampson Company, 1995), p. 22.

²Henry Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1990), p. 104.

³Ken Voges and Ron Braud, *Understanding How Others Misunderstand You* (Chicago: Moody, 1980).