

Living The Christian Life Series:
Lesson 28: Developing the Biblical Techniques and The Crowns That
Accompany Them – Part 11 The Crown of Joy
(Identifying Your Ministry Through Circumstantial Appointments)

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Series Text: Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Applicational Texts:

I Thessalonians 2:19-20

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our LORD Jesus Christ at his coming?

I Corinthians 12:7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal...

Introduction:

In our current study, “Living The Christian Life Series,” we have seen that God has a designed purpose for each of us as Believers. Our Applicational Texts indicate that God has gifted each one of us with Spiritual Gifts and our stewardship of those gifts will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ following the Rapture of the Church, and the Crown of Joy will be awarded based of the effectiveness of our living out that design. We have examined the Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts and have examined the nine spiritual gifts that are said to continue throughout the Church Age; Administrations, Teaching, Ministry, Exhortation, Helps, Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom, Mercy, and Giving. Our study last time was titled, “Understanding Your Ministry Through Your Gifting.” In that study we identified the characteristics and tendencies associated with each of the nine continuing spiritual gifts. You were challenged to identify your spiritual gifting by comparing your characteristics and tendencies with those associated with each gift. Understanding what your gifts are will enable you to better understand what your ministry is to be.

A second means of identifying our ministry is to be sensitive to your circumstances. We have titled today’s study, “Identifying Your Ministry Through Circumstantial Appointments.” We serve a sovereign God. Nothing happens by chance, but

circumstances are the result of cause and effect, therefore we should be alert to circumstances. God is at work in every circumstance we encounter. Therefore He manipulates our ministry opportunities through circumstances.

The lack of teaching concerning spiritual gifts has handicapped the church in its role as the “body of Christ” and left many Christians frustrated without a clear understanding of why they are here or what they are to be doing. God has compensated for that lack of teaching by manipulating our circumstances to place us in situations in which it is natural for us to use our gifts. But further confusion lies in our failure to understand the trichotomy of man. Failure to understand that man was created body, soul, and spirit, contributes to our failure to understand just how to minister to man’s needs and properly live out our design.

Secular society does not recognize the distinction between the soul and the spirit. (Too much of the Christian world does not recognize that distinction either.) Nicodemus did not understand it, and he was the teacher of the Jews (John 3). The Apostle Paul identifies this in his closing comments to the church at Thessalonica.

Thessalonians 5:22-23

Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Trichotomy of Man Dictates Our Ministry as Believers:

In order to effectively live the Christian Life we must understand the distinction between the body, the soul, and the spirit. So, we have frequently pointed out that God created man body, soul, and spirit. The body is the house in which the soul and spirit live. The soul is that part of man that God created for man to be able to relate to human experience. The spirit is that part of man that God created for man to be able to relate to divine experience. God told Adam that the day he ate of the forbidden fruit dying instantly (spiritually), he would eventually die (physically). As a result of Adam’s sin we are born spiritually dead and therefore to understand divine things we must be born again (spiritually) to understand spiritual things.

Understanding this distinction is necessary if we are to understand man’s need and our assigned role in addressing that need. Man has needs related to the body, soul, and spirit and we as believers are appointed to address those needs, therefore we must distinguish between them if we are to be effective in our role and experience the joy God designed us to have. God manipulates circumstances every day in our lives and has gifted us with the characteristics and tendencies to respond to those needs. However we must be able to distinguish from the circumstances and respond according to our gifting to the situation. The fact that we are present in the situation means that we have some role in it, perhaps just as an observer, but more often than not as a function of our spiritual gifting.

“A number of years ago my wife and I were going from Twain Harte, California to Chowchilla, California to conduct a Bible Study which we did once a week for more than five years. That afternoon we saw a car that was quickly stopping on the side of the road. I asked my wife, “Was the passenger beating on the driver?” She said yes, it was a man and he was beating on the driver who is a woman. I slammed on the breaks, made a quick U turn and headed back - Troy to the rescue. As we approached the stopped car the man was chasing the woman around the car. I made another quick U turn next to their car, shoved my car door open with my foot while unzipping and removing the cover from my shiny Nickle plated Smith and Wesson 357 Magnum revolver as he came toward me shouting profanity. When he saw the gun, his eyes widened and he immediately changed his behavior, backing away and saying, “I don’t want any trouble.” I secured the gun in the car and got out; I told him his trouble began when he hit that woman. I grabbed him by the front of his shirt, shoved him up against their car and dared him to try to hit me. I told him any punk could hit a woman but challenged him to try it with a man. He became very docile and apologetic, and I asked the woman what was going on. She called him Troy and explained he had just gotten out of jail, and she was taking him to Sonora. She said he thought she was the one who had turned him in and was beating her because of it. I asked her what she wanted to happen, if she wanted him out of the car. She said Yes, she wanted him out of the car. So I took hold of the front of his shirt again, just to make sure I had his attention, and gave him a short but pointed lecture on proper etiquette with women and then pointed him to the road and told him to start walking. I said Sonora is that way and Merced is that way. But, then I told him, My wife and I are going through Merced and we will give you a ride there, otherwise start walking to Sonora. He began begging the woman to give him a ride. He told her, “This man is going to Merced, let me ride with you and he will be behind us.” She wanted to know if I would follow them. I told her I would follow them but if she was not comfortable with that, he could ride with us. She said she would be comfortable with that if I followed them. I told her, “If he tries anything, you lock up the brakes, put the car in park, turn off the engine, take the keys, and get out of the car. He will be all mine from that point on.” He promised he would behave himself. He hugged and kissed on her all the way to Merced and when we stopped as Merced and talked with them, they thanked us and assured us they would be fine and we could go on.

As we headed on to our Bible Study my wife, said, “You didn’t even invite them to the Bible study.” Ha! Ha! I cited Solomon’s statement that there was, “a time for everything” and this was not the time for that.

Three weeks later I was going to the Taco Bell in Sonora and that same couple turned into the driveway ahead of me. I parked beside them, and when he opened his door I said, “Hey! You been beating on that woman lately?” When he looked up and saw me, he threw up his hands and said, “No! Sir! I haven’t touched her and Thank You for what you did out on the highway, I will never hit her again. I went in and got my order and met him on my way out. He stuck out his hand and

said, "I want to thank you again, you changed my life that day." I handed him one of my Spheres of Grace Ministries business cards and said, Troy, if you two are interested in counseling I am available. He looked at my card and said, "You are a minister? And you pulled a gun on me?" I said, Yes! And I would have used it if it had been necessary. He said, I knew that, but you don't have to worry about that I am a different man now. Then he said, and your name is also Troy, I said yes and you were giving our name a bad reputation. I went on to say, If you two are interested in counseling I am available." He thanked me again and assured me they were going to be fine but would call me if they needed to.

A few months later, Minnie and I were managing an apartment complex in Sonora, and the woman came in to apply for an apartment. After she had completed the application, Minnie said to her, "You don't recognize me do you?" she said, "No, do I know you?" Minnie told her, "My husband is the one that stopped when Troy was beating on you on the road from Merced that day." She said, "Oh, Thank You, your husband turned him into a gentleman. We are doing great." Minnie invited them to a Bible study we were conducting there in Sonora, but we never saw them again.

No! I didn't invite them to the Bible Study the night that incident took place, but God did give me a short follow up with them at Taco Bell a few weeks later and I offered them my services in a totally different application and the spiritual aspect was noted.

The circumstances never developed for us to follow up with what they really needed in the long haul. Perhaps someone else had that blessing, I just had to deal with the circumstances that were there at the time. One plants, another waters, another harvests, but it is God that gives the increase. Body, soul, and spirit must be taken into consideration when interpreting the circumstances. The Spiritual Gifts relate to the whole of man, body, soul, and spirit, but all have a focus and application related to man's spiritual walk. It was a body and soul thing out there on the highway that day. but the real problem was spiritual. I would have welcomed an opportunity to exercise my gifts of teaching and counseling, Word of Knowledge, or Word of Wisdom, but out there on the highway it was my gifting in Administration that came into focus. The circumstances required me to take charge of the situation.

The point of sharing my story is that God sets up divine appointments for us continually, and to illustrate the three-fold aspects of man demanding a proper response to each circumstance. Some spiritual gifts relate to ministering to the body, others to the soul, but they all have a spiritual connection. Some spiritual gifts relate to physical or material needs, needs related to the physical body. The position of deacon in the church is a position of service to the physical needs of people. Some of the spiritual gifts relate to psychological needs, needs related to the soul, but all have a spiritual solution. You don't just attempt to correct the negative behavior of a hungry man without first feeding him. The failure of the "woman abuser" is a spiritual problem but in some instances, you must stop the abuse before you can

address the cause. Our alertness to circumstantial opportunities for using our spiritual gifts requires our understanding the whole man; body, soul, and spirit from a spiritual perspective. Then we must understand how our gifts relate to the circumstances.

II. Spiritual Gifts and Unique Abilities:

Romans Chapter 12 and I Corinthians chapter 12 are the key study passages for Spiritual Gifts and our “Applicational Text” in I Corinthians 12:7 affirms it, *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal...”* The word **man** is used editorially and speaks of men and women collectively. Every believer is given at least one of the following unique abilities which define the ministry of each of us.

A. Gift of Administration: The take charge gift.

The gift of Administration is the unique ability to take charge in a situation providing leadership in circumstantial situations and is characterized by an ability to assume responsibility of authority and delegate responsibility by those who tend to be assertive, or even aggressive in assuming control of a situation. The Holy Spirit arranges the circumstance commensurate with the unique design. (Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28)

B. Gift of Teaching: The Instructional Gift.

The Gift of Teaching is The Instructional Gift. It is the unique ability to communicate effectively in providing instruction. Although this gift is naturally associated with its use in the church congregational assembly, it certainly goes beyond even the formal setting of a classroom. This gift is based on the ability to instruct others. The Holy Spirit determines the degree of ability commensurate with the designed ministry of each individual, from one-on-one instruction to the pulpit and the classroom. This person is characterized by an ability to research and present the findings in an understandable format and tends to go into excessive detail when asked a simple question. They have a tendency to want to communicate everything they have learned. (Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28)

C. Gift of Ministry: The Serving Gift.

This is The Serving Gift and the gift holder has a unique ability to serve others. The Greek word translated “ministry” in the King James Text is “diakonian” which is brought into English by our word deacon. The translators used the word ministry instead of deacon because the focus of the gift is not on the office or position but on the function of service. The office was created in the church to minister to the physical and material needs of the congregation. Its personal or individual function is to provide physical or material to others as God gives both means and opportunity. The person with this gift can detect the practical needs of others and has a tendency to take responsibility to meet those needs.

The Holy Spirit arranges the divine appointment for serving others through the circumstances He creates. (Romans 12:7)

D. Gift of Exhortation: The Encouraging Gift.

Identified as The Encouraging Gift, this spiritual gift is the unique ability to encourage others. The Greek word used here is “parakalohn” which literally means to call someone to come to your position and stimulates the motivation that encourages others to join you. The person with this gift tends to speak out strongly on his or her beliefs, inspire people, and push them to their potential. From the consoler to the evangelist, in the home, or on the job there are those needing encouragement and direction. The Holy Spirit equips some with the unique ability to do that. This gift presupposes that the gifter has a positive outlook in order to encourage others and tends to avoid anything that does not seem to be practical. (Romans 12:8)

E. Gift of Helps: The Assisting Gift.

This spiritual gift is the unique ability to recognize the need of others for assistance and is probably the most prolific of the spiritual gifts. This is the labor force God designed to accomplish the mission of the church. There are only so many positions of leadership in any environment, but it seems there is never enough “workers” to accomplish the tasks. So God has gifted men and women with unique abilities to fill the position of laborer, those who, with their own unique abilities, provide the “grunts” to get the work done. Identified as The Assisting Gift, this gift is exercised in individual-to-individual environments as well as in group projects. These are the “Jacks and Jills of All Trades” within the structure of Christian Ministry who individually use their differing abilities, in an unlimited variety of ways, to live out their designed ministry. Those with The Gift of Helps tend to follow rather than lead but have skills that are vitally needed to assist others in the work of the Lord. Although this gift may seem more mechanical and less spiritual than the leadership gifts it is one of the most prominent gifts given to believers and needs to be understood and applied as a spiritual gift. (I Corinthians 12:28)

F. Gift of Word of Knowledge: The Explanation Gift.

This is The Gift of Explanation. It is the unique ability to comprehend what has been revealed and explain it in a clear and precise manner to others. It can cover the expanse of revelation from simple instructions in ever day life to complicated philosophical revelations. This is a “double-edged” gift of comprehension and communication and is frequently paralleled with the gift of teaching but has an added degree of skill in comprehension along with an ability to organize the material for teaching or communicating it to others. While the gift of teaching focuses on communication, this gift focuses on comprehension. The teacher without this enabling gift of The Word of Knowledge must often rely upon materials organized by the believer with The Gift of The Word of Knowledge for explanation of that which he or she is

teaching. This person has a tendency to want to prove or test all the information to which he is exposed and generally reacts sharply to error. Yes! Those with this Spiritual Gift tend to give you more information than you want when you inquire of them, and they frequently find satisfaction in being questioned or challenged. (I Corinthians 12:8)

G. Gift of Word of Wisdom: The Applicational Gift.

Not to be confused with The Gift of The Word of Knowledge this gift is the unique ability to understand and communicate the application of fact to experience. While The Gift of The Word of Knowledge focuses on the comprehension of what the written or spoken word says, The Gift of The Word of Wisdom focuses on understanding how the written or spoken word applies to one's situation. Though a person may have both, they are separate gifts and having one does not necessarily mean you have both. Knowledge without understanding the application of it may seem senseless, but each of these may be paired with other gifts tailored to God's personal designed ministry for each. The focus of one is on what the text says, while the focus on the other is on how it applies. These two are support gifts for the person with the Gift of Teaching and the Teacher that does not also have these two gifts is dependent upon those who do to provide that information, and he or she simply communicates what the others have revealed. Those with this gift tend to associate various passages of Scripture to circumstances as they develop always looking for application. (I Corinthians 12:8)

H. Gift of Mercy: The Comforting Gift.

The Gift of Mercy is The Comforting Gift. It is a unique and reflexive response of compassion to those in need. This spiritual gift is a unique sensitivity to the needs of others coupled with the ability to provide a sense of comfort. It is one of the most prolific of the spiritual gifts because it is a natural result of the biblical principle of "Gracing Others." Yet, the Holy Spirit has so equipped some with a special sensitivity to the needs of others that many believers never recognize. However, this sensitivity to the needs of others is accompanied by a unique ability to say the right thing, be in the right place, do the right thing – a unique ability to provide comfort to those in need of it. The person with the Gift of Mercy has a tendency to see joy or distress in others and may even experience the same emotions or pain of the person they are attempting to comfort but has the unique ability to provide the comfort that person needs. (Romans 12:8)

I. Gift of Giving: The Provision Gift.

The Gift of Giving, identified as The Provision Gift, is the unique ability to acquire material assets and direct them into the Lord's work through the church or even directly to the circumstances of others. This person tends to look for and provide the material needs in a situation. This is not to be confused with the normal priestly stewardship that is prescribed for all believers in the support of the work of the church, but this is a unique gifting

the Holy Spirit assigns to specific believers giving them the ability to multiply material assets, understand material needs, and channel those assets to meet the need. This person may assume personal responsibility for financial assistance to others and has a tendency to have confidence in meeting financial needs. The Holy Spirit arranges divine appointments for those with this gift to exercise the gift through circumstances. (Romans 12:8)

III. Circumstantial Appointments:

Nothing in this life occurs by chance. Ours is a God of cause and effect. As we have seen in our previous studies, He has a master plan for the human race with a purpose of settling the “Angelic Conflict.” He knew us before we were conceived in the womb, he monitors the number of hairs on our head, and He has a design for each of us every day of our life. His holy angels are appointed to assist us, and the Holy Spirit indwells us to direct us. He has provided for our salvation and designed a unique role for us in the advancement of His kingdom. He has selectively given each of us spiritual gifts, unique abilities, and then through our assigned angels manipulates our day-to-day circumstances to direct us into situations in which we can use those spiritual gifts in the work of the kingdom. Our recognition of those opportunities and conformance to them is the “whole duty of man.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

We err when we attempt to separate our spiritual life from our day-to-day secular activities. Everyday, we are all in fulltime Christian service. Christianity is a way of life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, from the time of our acceptance of Christ until our work assignment is complete and He calls us to be with him. God has left nothing to chance but manipulates our circumstances to give us opportunity to use His special gifting to live out the life He has designed for us. But, we are created in His image and have been given free-will and the choice to follow His direction or to “Do our own thing.”

Think about it! Nothing happens without His knowledge and authorization, and we will give an account to Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ following the Rapture of the Church.

Reflect back over this past week, did you see the Divine Circumstantial Appointments He set up for you to exercise your gifting. Perhaps you didn't see any opportunity to use your gifting, but it was there if it was nothing more than modeling the Christian life, Resting in Faith, Exhibiting a Mature Grace Attitude toward others, abstaining from sin and confessing it to Him when you did deviate from the path. Others are watching us, even the angels, and we are to exhibit the Christian life, recognizing the opportunities for exercising our gift. Was there the opportunity to Take Charge, or

to Instruct Others, or perhaps to Serve, or to Encourage someone, or to Assist someone who needed Help, or to Explain some instruction-maybe even the Scripture, or was there the opportunity to show someone how to Apply what has been revealed, or was there a person who needed Comfort and you had an opportunity to show compassion, or perhaps an opportunity to help a person financially? Huh? Did you see any of those circumstantial situations?

Conclusion:

While it is true than none of us is gifted to minister in all those areas, somewhere in the midst of your encounters this past week, and somewhere in your pending appointments this week, God and His holy angels have arraigned some circumstantial appointments for you or at least an opportunity for you to model the Christian way of life. Don't miss those appointments and miss the Joy that you can experience and an opportunity to embellish The Crown of Joy you are going to receive based on your response to those divine circumstantial appointments. Hopefully it will not be to exercise the Take Charge Gift of Administration and you have to brandish a weapon to control a situation but preferably a different application or a different spiritual gift. Look for those appointments, there will be some.

But it begins at Salvation:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...

With the heart man believes unto righteousness...

But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that
ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,
holy, acceptable unto God, which
is your reasonable service.*

(Romans 12:1)