

What An Amazing Gift . . . What An Awesome Responsibility!

Good morning girls. I hope you'll excuse me while I open this little gift. You see, I've been waiting to open this gift for such a long time. My friends at home and I have been working through a Bible study on spiritual gifts for the last few months. We recently completed a very detailed survey used to help us determine what our spiritual gift might be. I just can't wait to open this to see what God's given me.

(Begins opening gift and stops.)

Are you a "shaker?" *(Shakes gift & listens.)* Have you ever received a gift and were pretty sure what was inside? Well . . . I already **know** what's inside. I've known virtually from the beginning of our study what wonderful gift God has for me. I know it was probably supposed to be a secret, but it was **soooo** obvious! Reminds me of my kids long ago . . . they'd have a gift for me and inevitably they'd tell me what it was before I had a chance to open it.

Well . . . please give me just a moment to confirm what I already know. *(Opens gift.)* Oh I'm so excited. I've waited so long . . . *(Looks puzzled)* What's this? There must be some mistake. Maybe I've picked up someone else's gift. *(Looks at gift tag.)* No . . . it says "To: Suzi, From: God". *(Continues to look confused.)* I don't understand! I know what my gift is. I know what I'm good at. I know how I can best serve God. This gift can't be mine! It's not like me! It won't fit! Could God have made a mistake? What in the world will I do with this? I can't use this! Maybe I can exchange it . . . Noo, nooo, that might hurt God's feelings. I don't know what to do. Well, maybe it'll look alright sitting on the mantel. Do you think God would notice?

This is mostly a true story. Years ago our CPW (remember that name?) decided to work together on a bible study to learn about spiritual gifts and to learn what our gift was. Well, when it came toward to end of our study we completed a quite long and comprehensive survey that was supposed to be used to reveal our gift. After we started to tally our answers and began to realize what our gift was, everyone became very excited and began to share what they had learned. . . . But not me! I was stunned with what I learned. My honest to goodness first reaction was "But that's not me!" I just couldn't get my brain around it. I sat very quietly (and for those who know me, know that was very unusual). Well, I never shared what my gift was with the group that night. And to be honest . . . have only shared it with just a handful of people since.

You see . . . I do believe that God give us all a special gift to use for Him. I just still have trouble believing that God would gift me in such a way! I know it's true though because it's been confirmed time and time again by others around me in what you might call "general" conversation. Oh my. . . what an amazing gift . . . what an awesome responsibility!

I was reminded of that experience from long ago as I read our theme scripture found in **1 Peter 4:10-11**:

God's gifts of grace come in many forms. Each of you has received a gift in order to serve others. You should use it faithfully. If you speak, you should do it like one speaking God's very words. If you serve, you should do it with the strength God provides. Then in all things God will be praised through Jesus Christ. Give Him the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Wow! There's a lot there! We're told that God gave us His gift *to use* . . . not put it up on a shelf somewhere. Spiritually mature Christians exercise their gifts. Specifically, by serving others. We have to be careful not use our gift for our own pleasure or to serve ourselves. We are to serve others in a way that will bring praise and glory to our awesome God! Are we actively looking for opportunities to share our gift with someone else?

Another phrase that caused me to pause and think . . . when we are speaking, we should do it as one speaking God's very words. What a frightening thought! Whether we are aware of it or not . . . most every time we open our mouths, we are exercising the power of influence. At its best it teaches, encourages, and shows love for others. At its worst it can cause pain, confusion, and division. We can be sure that if our GOAL is to speak God's very words our power of influence will have only the best results. When we hold positions of leadership we must be careful to seek God's guidance that our words might be as if they were His very own. Do you . . . like me tremble at the thought!

We are also told we're to use whatever gift God has so graciously and generously given us. You see . . . this is God's gift. He gets to decide what He's going to give. Is His gift ever a mistake? No . . . not ever (even when we think we know what God should have given us). God knows us better than we know even ourselves. He knows how I can best serve Him. At the same time, he knows how best Pam, and JoAnn, and Mary Lyn, and Patricia, and Beverly can serve Him. You see . . . we've got to remember that not everyone has the same gift. We've got to be thankful for people whose gifts are completely different from ours. . . because we can't do the work of the church all alone. God has planned it in such a miraculous way . . . our strengths will balance others weaknesses and their abilities will make up for our deficiencies.

And another thing about our awesome God . . . He not only gives us a wonderful gift, but he prepares and strengthens us to use this gift. In **Isaiah 41:10** God says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Right here in His Word He promises that . . . He is with us. . . He is our God. . . He will strengthen us. So you see . . . I didn't have to worry about the gift he gave me. I didn't have anything to fear. He will provide the strength deep down within me to bear the load He has planned for me. Each time He asks me to use this wonderful gift He's given me, He will be standing beside me. . . **as my God**. . . providing me the strength to serve others. What a wonderful promise!

So, as we work together to build up Christ's church through Women's Ministry let's use the gift God has given us AND appreciate the gift He's given to those around us. Then we can truly work **As Partners In Christ's Service**.

---written by Suzi Middleton, 2009 Convention Secretary