

**The Role of the Spiritual Gift of Teaching  
in Regard to Christian Business Educators**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to objectively examine the role of the spiritual gift of teaching in Christian business education. Specifically, the author will examine if, and to what degree, a Christian, with the spiritual gift of teaching, can utilize his/her God-given gift in teaching a business course in higher education. It is the author's intent that we not only examine several areas of the spiritual gift of teaching, but also provide practical application for Christian business educators.

This research paper is divided into three parts: Part I—Exploring the role and impact of the spiritual gift of teaching; Part II—Examining the possibilities, limitations and degree to which a Christian business educator can utilize his/her spiritual gift; and Part III—Personal application and spiritual ramifications.

## **Part I—Exploring the Role and Impact of the Spiritual Gift of Teaching**

*What is the gift of teaching?*

Although controversy remains as to whether apostles and prophets were foundational gifts that are no longer required in the churches, it is somewhat of a relief to find that few question the continuing necessity of teachers (Griffiths, 39). The first step in determining the role of the spiritual gift of teaching in Christian business education is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the gift itself.

The spiritual gift of teaching is a gift that is modeled after Jesus Christ Himself, the master teacher. “The concept of the *didaskalos* (teacher) is a common word in that it occurs fifty-eight times, forty-eight of which are in the Gospels. And of those usages in the Gospels, forty-one times the word refers to Jesus and only seven to others...as well as many other references to the process of teaching” (Gangel, 71). Furthermore, “Just as the gift of pasturing reminds us of the earthly shepherding ministry of the Lord Jesus, so an appreciation of the gift of teaching should lead us to think about Jesus as the master Teacher” (Gangel, 690).

One definition of the gift of teaching is: “the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the Body and its

members in such a way that others will learn” (Wagner, 127). Roy Zuck, author of *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*, states, “The gift of teaching is a supernatural Spirit-endowed ability to expound (explain and apply) the truth of God (Zuck, 65).” Both of these definitions affirm the fact that what precise gifts are given, and to whom, is solely a decision of God to be used for His glory.

*What are the primary purposes of the spiritual gift of teaching?*

First and foremost, the purpose of the spiritual gift of teaching is to glorify God. Zuck believes the nature of Christian teaching is a divine calling, not simply a secular vocation. It is a ministry *divinely* ordained of God for the purpose of using *divinely* appointed persons to communicate truths of a *divinely* inspired Book, in order to help pupils lead divine lives (Zuck, 8). God works through human instruments without the loss of the individual personality on the part of the teacher. Loise E. LeBar, in *Education That is Christian*, writes, “It is our talent that the Spirit uses, our insights, our enthusiasm, our hands—but it is His use of them that makes all the difference between wasted blight and jumbo harvest” (Zuck, 77).

A second purpose of gifts is to generate contribution and thus a unity of Spirit among believers (Yohn, 145). The Holy Spirit has not given gifts to create competition; something that has a greater potential to occur among professional teachers in Christian education. The spiritual gift of teaching is like all other spiritual gifts in that it is given for a specific purpose of serving the church body. As described in 1 Corinthians, “But to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good...So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church....Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 12:7, 14:12, 26). Further, “Gifts are not for one’s private use. They are to be shared, not hoarded” (Yohn, 145). In 1 Peter we learn, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

*Why does the church body need the gift of teaching?*

The Holy Spirit instructs, reminds, guides, declares and reveals (Zuck 25-34). Therefore, as teachers discussing spiritual matters, we are in desperate need of the Spirit's wisdom and direction. Gangel writes, "Only by the Holy Spirit can teachers be guided and enabled to teach the Bible and related subjects effectively. A spiritual task—involving spiritual truths to meet spiritual needs—requires spiritual power" (Gangel, 32). The fact that God has given men the gift of teaching and has given such gifted men to the Church is evidence that He uses human instruments to communicate His truth, cf. Rom. 12:6, 7; 1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11 (Zuck, 54).

*What does the spiritual gift of teaching look like in a teaching situation?*

A Christian teacher with the gift of teaching does not necessarily know more about the Word of God than others, but that gift does enable him to impart more effectively that which he does know (Zuck, 65). "As the Holy Spirit teaches, He does more than add a halo or an appendix to what has been taught...the Spirit teaches pupils before and during classroom situations, as well as afterward...the divine Teacher and human teachers are to work together as a team, simultaneously" (Zuck, 57).

Wagner illustrates, "Those with the gift (teaching), love to spend large amounts of time studying the lesson. They work hard with details, they organize and reorganize. They search for illustrations that will make the material more meaningful" (Wagner, 129-130). The Holy Spirit grants Christian teachers the insight during lesson preparation to make them aware of student needs, and the insight during the lesson presentation to help them make the students aware of their own needs (Zuck, 124).

We see that "Human teachers, as instruments of the Holy Spirit, can stimulate and challenge students, guiding them into a proper understanding and application of God's Word" (Gangel, 33-34). Further, "Being lovingly sensitive to their needs and interests enables him to cooperate more effectively with the Holy Spirit in the teaching process. As he prepares his lessons, an awareness of their needs helps him be directed by the Spirit in seeking to relate the truth to those needs" (Gangel, 40). "Such a privilege behooves Christian teachers to be filled by the Spirit of God. This adds divine dynamic and spiritual

power to the ministry of Christian teaching. Without the spiritual impact of a yielded life, the Christian teacher's efforts are relatively futile. With it, his efforts become marvelously fruitful" (Zuck, 77). To this we can say, Amen.

## **Part II—Examining the Possibilities, Limitations and Degree to Which a Christian Business Educator Can Utilize His/Her Spiritual Gift**

Before we examine the possibilities, limitations and degree to which a Christian business educator can utilize his/her spiritual gift of teaching in a business course, it is important to first ask the question, "Is utilizing the gift of teaching in Christian business education an important issue to even explore?" I believe that the answer to this question is a very strong yes! "Corporate America" has been described as one of most significant, and yet underutilized, mission fields in the world. Many Christian business students will be graduating and going directly into this precise mission field and therefore deserve to have the best in teaching, in both business and Biblical truth. Therefore, the Christian business community—students and professionals—are in considerable need of God's truth and how to apply it in their lives professionally and spiritually. As Christian business teachers, we would want to use all of our abilities to the glory of God. Therefore, if we have the spiritual gift of teaching at Sunday school, it is important and relevant to determine if this supernatural gift from God Almighty can be used the rest of the week in equipping the saints for work in the business world.

One of the results of research on debatable subjects like this, is that it often leads to more questions rather than answers. Therefore, in keeping with the objective of this paper, I've chosen to present the findings and implications of this portion of the paper in the following format: (1) a stated specific *question* of interest surrounding this subject, (2) reporting of initial *findings* from Biblical research as well as a thorough secondary research review; (3) presentation of various *implications* specific to the Christian business educator with regard to the respective area in question.

*Question #1 What is the goal of teaching for the Christian business educator?*

**Findings:** (1) “The English word *educate* can be traced back to the Latin word *educere*, ‘to lead out.’ This etymology reminds us that education is the process of leading students from where they are to a place where they can see the world—including the spiritual and the natural dimensions in a more accurate way” (Wilhoit, 13). (2) The Apostle Paul expressed the goal of teaching this way, “Admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect (mature) in Christ” (Col: 1:28). (3) “This spiritual maturity (goal of developing character) means knowing God personally (not simply knowing about Him) and loving Him (not simply learning of Him) with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)” (Zuck, 116). (4) Zuck also stated, “All Christian teaching should be directed to the one final aim of upbuilding those taught so that they develop in character” (Zuck, 116).

**Implication(s):** (1) “Our teaching must be geared to helping students experience God’s truth, not just know information about it” (Richards, 64). Christian business teachers should relate every subject they teach from a Christian perspective—and to do this, they must possess and exercise the spiritual gift of teaching. To teach biology (or business) from a Christian perspective is to teach, in a sense, a spiritual (or God’s) truth (Zuck, 68-69). In other words, it is not just business that we are teaching, but a more intentional, holistic approach about living a God-glorifying life. (2) Furthermore, teaching is more than “dispensing the truth...the goal is to help students come to know God and love Him, not just know about Him. It involves helping them walk in accord with His will, growing in spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness—and that requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit” (Gangel, 33). We should encourage discussion on life issues and applications that will allow us to utilize our spiritual gift instead of one-way communication strictly on business content.

*Question #2 In order to utilize the spiritual gift of teaching, must the “teacher” be a believer? Findings:*

Simply put, yes. (1) Only teachers who are regenerated by the Spirit of God (Titus 3:5) and are thus born into God’s family begin to qualify for Christian teaching (Zuck, 7). (2) “Christian education demands the Word of God and born-again instructors, but even these do not guarantee that Christian teaching will be

spiritually effective” (Zuck, 9). **Implication(s):** Although a non-believer can be an excellent, and perceived gifted communicator of Biblical and/or business knowledge, he/she clearly does not have the *spiritual* gift of teaching.

*Question #3 In order to “receive” the spiritual gift of teaching, must the “student” be a believer?*

**Findings:** Again, yes. An unregenerate person cannot receive the things of God. Since he is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), spiritual truths are foolishness to him (Gangel, 37). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14). **Implication(s):** This question is directed towards those Christian business teachers that may have the spiritual gift of teaching, but are teaching in a college setting to non-believing students. Perhaps the business-related material still can be learned, but not God’s truths on living from a Biblical perspective.

*Question #4 Does every Christian business educator automatically have the spiritual gift of teaching?*

**Findings:** No. According to Scripture, God has given the gift of teaching to some believers (Rom. 12:6-7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph.4:11) (Gangel, 33). **Implication(s):** There is a very good possibility that we have many Christian business educators that do not have the spiritual gift of teaching.

*Question #5 Does the spiritual gift of teaching have any application to non-church settings? Findings:*

Yes. (1) “Spiritual gifts are given to persons, not to occasions. Believers who have received the spiritual gift of teaching are to exercise it, not merely on some teaching occasions but in teaching any truth” (Zuck, 68). (2) Christian teachers should utilize every teaching opportunity to orient students in their study of the “secular” to a Christian worldview (Zuck, 68). If in addition to communicating about business, we are also speaking of God’s truths applied in our lives, then why would God take back a gift if it is being used to glorify Him? (3) Furthermore, the spiritual gift of teaching is not to be limited to a classroom, it can be used on a continual basis for those that have the gift. For example, you can utilize your gift in preparing for teaching, in one-on-one teaching in your office, teaching workshops, home Bible studies, etc.

**Implication(s):** The spiritual gift of teaching is not limited to the local church. Therefore, those with the spiritual gift of teaching can be confident that they are exercising their gift when communicating God's truth regardless of the setting, assuming that the audience receiving the message contains believers (see Question #3 above).

*Question #6 In order to utilize the spiritual gift of teaching—must the teaching be only from the Bible? In other words, can a Christian business educator with the spiritual gift of teaching use his/her gift in communicating business knowledge, e.g., financial management?* **Findings:** Yes and No. (1) “Changed lives, a primary goal of Christian teaching, require both the Word and the Spirit. And since Christian education focuses on bringing about spiritually transformed lives, the teaching/learning process requires both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. One without the other is inadequate” (Gangel, 33). (2) However, this does not mean that the sole purpose of the teaching must be communicating Biblical knowledge. The Bible is not taught only for the purpose of knowledge, but is always taught for action, as we are drawn to develop a more Christ-like character. **Implication(s):** (1) From the literature on the subject of teaching as a spiritual gift, it is suggested that the gift is utilized only in the teaching of God's truth. However, this is not limited to just the reading of the Word of God. In other words, a business teacher can be “teaching” about the Word of God without directly teaching from the Bible. (2) The reality is that teaching and incorporating God's Word is a tremendous advantage in regard to the spiritual gift of teaching. However, teaching the Word of God is clearly a goal but not the only goal. The goal of teaching is also to change the life of the student, to draw him/her closer to God. Therefore, a Christian business educator can use his/her Spiritual gift of teaching while teaching God's truth with the goal of a changed life. (3) Clearly, an introductory financial management textbook will not by itself allow for the work of the spiritual gift of teaching. However, if a teacher with the gift of teaching communicates about God's truth in making financial decisions then I find no Biblical reason why the spiritual gift would be “shut down.” That is, if we want to exercise the spiritual gift of teaching, then our goal needs to be based on relevant truths of God. “It would appear that Christian teachers must be just as divinely enabled for

teaching history [or business] or music, as for teaching the Bible—provided [this is the key] they are interested in teaching these truths from a Christian frame of reference. In fact, the difficult task of integrating some so-called “secular” subjects into a Christian framework may demand even more divine ability than the task of expounding the Bible” (Zuck, 68). Christ must be the center of teaching, not the business material; “in all thy ways acknowledge Him” (Prov. 3:6).

*Question #7 As a Christian business educator, how do I know if I have the gift of teaching?* **Findings:** (1)

One would need only to attend an educators conference to know that all teachers do not have the gift of teaching! (2) If you think you have a spiritual gift of teaching and are trying to exercise it, but no one else in the church body thinks you have it, you probably don't. If you do have it, expect confirmation from the church body (Wagner, 131). Furthermore, “Feelings are important, but they are far from infallible. You may have a deep desire to help other people, but not have the gift of teaching” (Wagner, 131). However, it is absolutely of equal importance to know both what your gifts are, and what your gifts are not! The focus is outward, to equip the body, it is not about you as the teacher, it is about God using you the teacher in the way He desires. **Implications:** We are not to covet the gift of teaching—but we are to know our gift. Furthermore, if we are ultimately accountable for using a particular spiritual gift to the glory of God, we can presume that knowledge of the gift would be crucial. Unfortunately, we often find professional educators serving in areas (e.g., teaching or administration) that are clearly not their spiritual gifts. However, because of convenience, pride, fear of change, etc., the individual continues on in the same position without perhaps considering what is more important—the needs of the Body.

*Question #8 As a Christian business educator, if you know you have the gift of teaching, what should you do?* **Findings:** “When one does recognize that he/she has the gift [teaching] in himself, he/she has the

responsibility for thanking God for it, seeking to develop it, and using it for the edification of the body” (Gangel, 73). Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do not neglect your gift” (1 Tim. 4:14)...and fan into flame the gift of God” (2 Tim. 1:6). A spiritual gift is fanned into the flame (*anazopyrein*) when it is exercised or used.

To let it lie dormant or unused signals a shortcoming in good stewardship (Gangel, 40). **Implication(s):** Too often Christian teachers fail to allow for the Spirit's guidance, enablement and enlightenment as they prepare and as they teach. Thus they are hardly different from unsaved teachers that have no spiritual resources; Christian teachers have spiritual resources but often fail to use them (Zuck 10). Don't neglect the gift! Search for opportunities to use your gift for the benefit of the body, not just at your own school.

*Question #9 As a Christian business educator, if you do not believe that you have the gift of teaching, what should you do? Can the teaching, without the gift, still be "fruitful"?* **Findings:** Yes and No. (1) The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 illustrates the importance, in God's sight, of effectively using what God has entrusted. The passage also serves as a good illustration of how God chooses to give His beloved various degrees of abilities and skills...i.e., gifts. Perhaps a teacher may actually have the gift of teaching, but in a greater or lesser "degree" of effectiveness than another. For example, the teacher is clearly more effective with the gift of teaching in some teaching situations more than others. (2) Teaching is a divine-human process; the teacher and the Spirit are involved together in the teaching process. To the extent that the teacher is inefficient, the process becomes ineffective and learning is hampered (Zuck, 56). "If the Holy Spirit is not at work through the teacher and through the written Word of God, then Christian education remains virtually ineffective and is little different from secular teaching" (Zuck, 9). If the Holy Spirit has not given has not given the gift of teaching to the one who is teaching, he will never be an effective teacher (Zuck, 74). Although this last situation is harsh, I believe there is merit and yet hope for the teacher. **Implication(s):** (1) One might ask, is God more concerned that we should have "His love overflowing in our lives" (Richards, 63) more than our ability to explain fundamental business strategy? Furthermore, I must ask, do I still have the fruit of the Spirit? Yes. Can I love and serve students? Yes. Can I seek out the unlovely in my class and minister to them? Yes. Can I be relevant? Yes. But, do I choose to? (2) If it is appropriate/acceptable at the place where you teach, demonstrate God's Word through direct Scripture and narratives. Nothing is stronger and more effective with the gift of teaching! (3) Change your goals from a majority of content to an intentional focus on both character and content. In

regard to character, be open and transparent as God has placed you as a divine appointment and it is your job to share your unique life, struggles, victories, etc. Discuss how God, and only God, has impacted your life—holistic life—and discussions will grow from this. (4) Remember that as a Christian business educator you are not trying to fit Jesus into business, but position business in light of who Jesus Christ is in your life and the lives of your students. (5) Furthermore, something definitely unacceptable, and yet ever so common, is for teachers without the gift of teaching to continually complain about student response and take minimal responsibility. Perhaps it is not the students' problem as much as it is the teacher's. What a great example to realize your own gifts, strengths and weaknesses and direct your efforts accordingly. (6) In regard to various degrees of effectiveness, actively pursue different teaching deliveries such as one-on-one, small groups, etc. as well as different age groups to see if perhaps you actually do indeed have the gift of teaching, even if the college classroom is not the most effective place for you to exercise your gift.

### **Part III—Personal Application and Spiritual Ramifications**

#### *The role of love in the spiritual gift of teaching.*

Love is always focused on others and “teaching is an invitation to love...teaching points to the quality of knowledge, not the quantity—not more knowledge, as exciting as it is, but broader, deeper, and relevant knowledge that speaks to the students needs in this day and age” (Merjanian, 10). As I have heard it said, students don't care what you know until they know that you care. With the spiritual gift of teaching comes a supernatural desire to care for the needs of my students. I don't have this type of unmerited love in most situations, but in teaching it is so natural, and I am thankful for that and give God the glory.

“One of the ways in which a teacher's relationship with the Holy Spirit is to be manifested is in his love for his students” (Gangel, 40). Biola University President Dr. Clyde Cook asked me a very important question in my interview to join the faculty there. He said, “How will your students know that you love them?” I don't recall my exact answer, but I know now it would include the power and love of

the Holy Spirit that has been gifted to me for teaching. As Yohn writes, “Gifts of the Holy Spirit aren’t an end in themselves. They are vehicles through which we express love to one another” (Yohn, 152).

“The body builds itself up when its gifts are exercised in love. Thus the fruit of the Spirit (‘love’ Gal. 5:22) should be distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit, but ought never to be absent in their exercise. For without love, and the humility which accompanies it (Rom. 12:3, 1 Cor. 4:7), the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit is thwarted (1 Cor. 13:1-3)” (Ferguson, 209). Furthermore, since spiritual gifts are given for edification and unity, what more powerful way than for love to be expressed through the spiritual gift of teaching.

Ogilvie says, “St. Augustine was on target when he portrayed the entire Christian enterprise as that in which one loving heart sets another on fire. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of fire—illumination, warmth, dynamic power for the communication of love to others” (Ogilvie, 169). I love that statement, and often do not see that “fire” in those that I don’t perceive have the spiritual gift of teaching. This is where personal application really needs to greatly improve for me in that I get easily frustrated with teachers who have very low teaching evaluations nearly every semester and simply do not demonstrate by evidence of change, a great desire to improve their approach to teaching. I have usually focused my dissatisfaction with them personally and not really considered the fact that they may simply not have the spiritual gift of teaching and therefore, I cannot expect them to have the same enthusiasm and effectiveness that I may have with the gift. Although that may sound prideful, I should expect to be more effective teacher because of the gift and I believe I am accountable to God to be more effective due to the fact that I have been given a special gift to exercise that not everyone has been given.

#### *The role of desire in the spiritual gift of teaching.*

Jim Wilhoit in a discussion on Spirit and the teacher, stated that “Through inborn endowments or direct intervention, the Holy Spirit has equipped certain Christians with the ability and desire to teach others. This gift includes spiritual insight (1 Cor. 12:8, 10), motivation to minister (2 Tim. 1:6-7), and the ability to communicate effectively (2 Tim. 2:24)” (Wilhoit, 53). I can spend hour upon hour preparing for

classes and enjoy it thoroughly. I have often wondered why I am like this and feel somewhat reassured from the research that along with my other personality characteristics, the gift of teaching does provide a great deal of “desire” to want to do my best and to continually improve. Furthermore, this also reminds me that the spiritual gift of teaching is not reserved just for the beginning of class, but the gift is also at work in the preparation and follow-up labor of teaching.

*The dangers of pride in the spiritual gift of teaching.*

“Gifts are not for the outward display of one’s abilities” (Gangel, 38). The spiritual gift of teaching is unique in that all professional teachers probably covet this gift more than any other; yet it is only given to some. This opens the door for those that have the spiritual gift of teaching to think higher of themselves than those teachers that don’t have the gift. Nothing can destroy ministry more than pride. Paul’s thorn in his side was given to him so that he would not let pride enter and destroy his ministry (2 Cor. 12:7).

If one does not have the gift of teaching, pride needs to be set aside, and a teacher needs to use the other gifts that she does have for the purpose of ministry. Clearly this takes a spirit of humility, yet our students deserve to have the most effective teachers teaching. What we need to do is to have the proper attitude (especially humility, cf. Rom. 12:3) that makes a gift usable, and then get busy in serving others. In this activity of serving and loving others, the gifts that God has given will become manifest through the edification given to others and the joyful satisfaction experienced by the individual” (Saucy in Grudem (ed.), 138).

Furthermore, speaking to business teachers, how many times have we pointed to examples in the business world where “pride” among managers has destroyed organizations, and yet, we as teachers are unwilling to change our approach and/or move to an a more effective utilization of gifts and let another bless the class. What a great life example to provide our students: to move to those areas in education where we can best use our particular gifts. For example, Christian business students should be addressed

by the best teachers (those with gift of teaching), the best advisors (those with the gift of exhortation), the best secretaries (those with the gift of administration) etc. Why would we give our students anything less?

*The pleasure and privilege of the gift of teaching.*

“What a privilege to be instruments of and yet co-laborers with, God the Holy Spirit! Christian teachers ought to thrill at the thought of having a part in God’s work” (Zuck, 77.). Amen. One of my heroes of the faith is the Old Testament teacher and man of God, Ezra. In Ezra 7, we find Ezra devoting himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and *to teaching* its decrees and laws in Israel (Ezra 7:10). However, in verse 9, we are shown the motivation that sustains him to teach and it is nothing less than the supernatural gracious hand of God that was upon him (7:9). Later in the chapter, we see that he then had the courage to lead men for the glory of God (7:28). There is an incredible joy and privilege in indeed knowing which gift God has divinely given to you. It does much to remove fear and insecurity that every teacher faces from time to time. And yet there is even a greater joy, His joy and His pleasure from within, when we actually exercise that gift to His Glory. In the words of Eric Liddell (in the movie *Chariots of Fire*), “when I run, I feel His pleasure;” can I not then say, *when I teach, I feel His pleasure?*

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