

## 20 Characteristics of Evangelism & Prophecy (Perceiver)

We have chosen to call this first gift of the Romans 12 list the gift of perception. The King James Version uses the word "prophecy". But since the same root word is used in the other two lists in the New Testament, it would be easy to confuse it with either the manifestation gift of prophecy or the ministry gift to the Church, the prophet.

Also, the word "prophecy" in our current vocabulary has a variety of connotations, both positive and negative. It seemed to us that a fresh new word would eliminate confusion.

The Greek word for "prophecy" in verse six is *propheteia*, related to prophets, which means, according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, "an inspired speaker:' One of its root words is *phemi*, meaning "to show or make known one's thoughts; to speak, say or affirm.

According to biblical scholars, the prominent idea of prophecy in the New Testament is not prediction, but "the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging and making manifest the secrets of the heart.

In the specific context of motivational gifts, we see that the word refers to one who is especially sensitive to perceiving the will of God and then proclaiming it- or, depending upon the Lord's direction, praying for it to be accomplished.

The perceiver, then, is one who readily perceives, prays about, proclaims and promotes the will of God.

In this chapter we will examine each of twenty characteristics of the perceiver in detail, giving examples from the experience of those with this primary motivational gift.

\*As you read these characteristics be reminded that it isn't on all in or all out scenario. You may find yourself on a spectrum of each of these characteristics.

### **1. Quickly and accurately identifies good and evil, and hates evil.**

The perceiver views people or situations as either in the will of God or out of the will of God. There is no such thing as sort of in the will of God or partly in the will of God, for in his or her understanding to be not perfectly in God's will is to be out of God's will. Perceivers see life as a matter of choices. They view the option to choose right as imperative: not to choose right is by default choosing wrong. Compromise is not an option.

They have intense hatred for evil. They want to see evil overcome and eliminated and the Kingdom of God evidenced here on this earth.

A biblical figure with the gift of perception is John the Baptist. From the beginning of his public ministry he exposed evil, identifying with and expressing God's hatred of it. He publicly denounced Herod's adulterous relationship with his brother's wife, even when it meant prison and death.

Spokesmen for righteousness and just causes are frequently perceivers. Their giftedness equips them to be bold and outspoken without regard for either public esteem or their own advantage.

## **2. Sees everything as either black or white; no gray or indefinite areas.**

Perceivers make decisions easily. They form quick evaluations. They see things as right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, true or false. They don't see how there can be anything in between. They tend to answer yes or no. They seldom say maybe. They are people of extremes in feelings, words and actions.

Most of us think in terms of a scale from black through many shades of gray to white. We could say, "I'm not doing as well as I might, but at least I'm doing better than I did yesterday." Not so the perceiver. No halfway measures.

## **3. Easily perceives the character of individuals and groups.**

It's easy for perceivers to "get the feel" of individuals and groups-not by any outward analysis, but by the intuitive perception that is their gift.

John the Baptist did not need to ask questions of the group of Pharisees that came out to watch him baptize. "You brood of vipers!" he accosted them (Matthew 3:7, NASS). John knew that the Pharisees had not come to repent but rather to judge, criticize and condemn.

A perceiver can go into a church, a prayer group, a healing service or any group for that matter, and soon tell how spiritual it really is. He or she also has keen sensitivity to what is going on in an individual's life.

It's not that perceivers know everything about a person; God shows them only what He wants them to see-and always for a purpose, usually so that the perceiver can effectively pray for that person.

## **4. Encourages repentance that produces a change of heart.**

After challenging the spirituality of the Pharisees and Sadducees, John the Baptist went on to say, "Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]" (Matthew 3:8). John was well aware of these "religious" individuals' claims to be spiritual leaders, but he was also aware of their hypocrisy. John knew that

only a genuine and evident change in their behavior would prove the inward condition of a repentant heart.

We do a lot of personal counseling and have learned to observe the fruit in a person's life in order to help diagnose underlying problems. Evidence of bad fruit means bad roots. We pray for the exposure of the cause of those bad roots, help the person identify all of the hatred and judgment against the one who hurt him or her and then help the person repent of it. If there is genuine repentance there is a change of heart, and his or her life begins to bear good fruit.

### **5. Believes accepting difficulties can produce positive personal growth.**

Most of us avoid problems. We do not view trials as friends or see trauma and tragedy as stepping-stones to maturity. Not so the perceivers! They rejoice in negative events as being the greatest opportunities to work brokenness and consequent maturity into their lives.

By brokenness we mean that experience of once again coming to the end of ourselves, where we say, "God, I can't handle this. I can't do anything without You. Help, Lord!" Then we are ready to receive His help and grow.

Perceiver, prophet and author John Sandford says that two-word cry is the most spiritual prayer a person can utter.

Perceivers welcome the difficulties that press a person into brokenness because they feel it to mean God loves them enough to deal with another area of their lives. It seems God sifts and sifts the perceivers. He wants to do a thorough and deep work in them so they will be tools well-fitted for accomplishing His purposes here on earth. Perceivers also rejoice to see evidence of brokenness and growth in others. Have you ever shared a difficult thing you were going through with a perceiver only to have him exclaim, "Praise the Lord! I know God's going to bring forth some great things in your life through this."

And you say, "Thanks a lot!" That was not what you wanted to hear; you wanted some sympathy. You won't get it from a perceiver! These people know that difficulties and brokenness not only do them good- they do you good, too.

### **6. Has only a few or no close friendships.**

Often perceivers go through childhood with only one or two good friends-or none at all. Some worry about this, wondering why they don't want to reach out more to kids their own age. Others instinctively know that it's okay-that God made them this way. They feel comfort- able in their aloneness.

Most often it's the parents of the perceiver who get overly concerned, feeling that the child should be friendlier and more involved with others.

Just as the Levites were uniquely set apart from the rest of the twelve tribes of Israel to minister to the Lord in the Temple, so, we believe, perceivers have been called apart to spend much time in prayer, to bring God's Word to the Body of Christ and to uphold God's highest standards. They will not have the luxury of broad friendships for several reasons:

- Time for friendships is limited since their call to a ministry of prayer requires a significant time commitment.
- Broad friendships require a degree of tolerance for people with differing standards and beliefs. Perceivers do not want to compromise.
- God's gifting draws the perceivers to enjoy being "alone with Him:"

## **7. Views the Bible as the basis for truth, belief, action and authority.**

Perceivers are in the Word a lot. They love to study the Bible and find that God often speaks to them through specific Scriptures. They believe there isn't any other dependable basis for truth but the Bible.

John the Baptist's call was based on the Word of God. He knew Isaiah 40:3 well, and that his was the long-awaited voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Desiring to assure John that He was indeed the Christ, Jesus said to the Baptist's disciples, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news (the Gospel) preached to them" (Luke 7:22).

John saw the scriptural evidence in that answer, since he knew the prophecies about the Messiah and what he would do.

Perceivers also depend on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word.

## **8. Boldly operates on spiritual principles.**

From the Bible, perceivers are able to extract principles that they apply to daily life. In fact, they are often very demanding of themselves about this. Children who have this gift are incredibly strict with themselves. They usually develop into the kind of teenagers who don't have to have parental restrictions imposed on them because they are already setting their own high standards.

The perceiver is a person of principle in all aspects of life: the way he runs his home, business and personal relationships. Perceivers are truly the standard-bearers of

Christianity. They are the ones who hold up God 's righteousness and say, "This is what we ought to aim for!" If there weren't any perceivers many of us would settle for less. We need these people in the Body of Christ.

### **9. Is frank, outspoken and doesn't mince words.**

This characteristic sometimes gets perceivers into trouble. One woman who came to work at the Aglow International office had this gift but didn't know it. She was a fairly new Christian who was always criticizing people and telling them what she thought. It wasn't long before most of the people at the Aglow office were upset with her-as her schoolmates and associates had been, all her life.

I started teaching the motivational gift seminar during Carol's third week there. She came up after the very first session and said, "Katie, I know my gift already! For the first time ever I feel I can begin to understand and accept myself", she added, brushing away the tears.

I shared with Carol how perceivers are allowed to see many things that are out of God's will, but that God's plan for them is usually to pray about it, not to talk about it or confront it.

I saw Carol change into an increasingly sensitive Christian. She has learned how to mitigate her frankness.

We have found that a mature perceiver is the most exciting person in the world to be around. You can count on his or her being honest, upfront and candid-yet guided by wisdom and love. They are so transparent. They never beat around the bush.

John the Baptist is again a good example. He warned of judgment. He told selfish people to share. He told tax collectors to be honest and soldiers not to misuse authority. And so electrifying were his words that thousands flocked to the wilderness to hear him.

### **10. Is a very persuasive speaker.**

Perceivers' persuasiveness stems from the fact that they have such strong convictions about everything. Things are either right or wrong and they will speak out accordingly.

### **11. Grieves deeply over the sins of others**

These are people who will (inwardly and even outwardly) weep when they see someone involved in serious sin. They know that sin carries within itself the seeds of destruction. They are feeling the heart of God- would spare the person the inevitable consequences of such sowing, but they also know that it is only through repentance that it can be so.

Thus, they pray for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to bring the person to repentance.

## **12. Is eager to see his or her own blind spots and to help others see theirs, too.**

All of us have blind spots. That's what Jesus was talking about when He asked: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye;' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?" (Luke 6:41- 42, NIV)

That plank is our blind spot. When we are ready for God to deal with us in the area of our blind spots, we can do nothing better than find a friend with the gift of perception and request his or her discernment.

## **13. Desires above all else to see God's plan worked out in all situations.**

Perceivers discern God's plan and will never let personal desires get in the way of that plan for themselves or others. When a perceiver counsels another person, a characteristic phrase is: "You need to let go of your plans and discover what God's plan is for your life."

When working with an organization, the perceiver will encourage the individuals in it to sacrifice their own ideas and desires for the good of God's plan for the group.

Often, perceivers are given insights, visions and revelations so that they will know God's will on a matter. Simeon was a devout man, rigorously observing the Law while he waited for the Messiah. The Holy Spirit revealed to this perceiver that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Anointed.

How excited Simeon must have been to be let into the very heart of God's plan!

## **14. strongly promotes the spiritual growth of groups and individuals.**

Perceivers want to see spiritual growth. They view themselves as ever growing and are eager to help others grow, too.

A perceiver/evangelist ministering in Africa trains young men for mature ministry of their own. As he puts it, "It's the way to multiply the ministry. As I help them grow, the Gospel is spread more widely and effectively."

Perceivers view the spiritual growth of groups as the product of positive changes in individuals. Just as the weakest link in a chain determines the strength of that chain, so

they see that in a group the person who is weakest spiritually limits the whole group's effectiveness.

Therefore, the perceiver realizes that he or she has to work on a one- on-one basis, helping individual members in order to see the whole group become stronger.

### **15. Is called to intercession.**

This is perhaps the most important characteristic of the perceiver. We have yet to find an adult Christian with the gift of perception who has not been called to intercession. We have found a few who have not yet taken the time to listen to discover if they are so called. But the call is there-it's just a matter of tuning in to hear it.

Most perceivers are aware of the importance of intercession. They have an innate sense that it is the most important aspect of their life and ministry. They realize that "mountains are moved" and more can be accomplished through prayer than any other way.

Perceivers "see" many things that are not in God's will. They may be given revelations about other people's problems and needs. If they don't take it to prayer they can become negative critics or obnoxious meddlers. God's purpose in giving them insight is so that they can intercede effectively.

Perceivers are key people in prayer groups. They motivate others to pray. They have the most powerful prayer ministries of all seven gifts. (The giver and the person of compassion are also especially effective in this area-but with different emphases.) Perceivers often fast along with their ministry of intercession.

### **16. Feels the need to verbalize or dramatize what he or she "sees."**

Hosea is a biblical example. Remember how he took a harlot for his wife, to demonstrate Israel's faithlessness? Hosea heard the Lord say, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of [her] harlotry, for the land commits great whoredom by departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2).

It was a pretty dramatic move but it got the nation's attention. And when his wife, Gomer, left him to return to prostitution, Hosea sought after her, to demonstrate how God will go out of His way to seek those who have turned their backs on Him.

Sometimes perceivers will use the stage as a vehicle for getting across the message of God. We find that these people are often drawn into the field of drama. It enables people with this giftedness to graphically present what God wants communicated.

The perceiver may have a dramatic flair for illustrating God's truth when teaching, preaching or just talking.

Many Old Testament prophets also had a dramatic flair. Some dressed in sackcloth and ashes when they wanted people to repent. Elisha told leprous Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River. Elijah called down fire from heaven. Nathan used a dramatic story of a poor man with only one lamb to touch David's conscience.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist dressed in rough garments of camel's hair and ate insects and wild honey. A prophet named Agabus warned Paul of impending imprisonment by taking off Paul's belt, binding his own hands and feet, and saying, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:11, NIV). Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem in an enactment of ancient prophecy.

### **17. Tends to be introspective.**

Perceivers know the meaning of the Scripture "Search me [thoroughly], o God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way ever- lasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Getting rid of imperfections is a top priority for perceivers. They want God to bring forth that pure gold in their lives, to refine them and make them what He wants them to be. Therefore, they are not afraid to look within and identify those things with which they need to deal. They know the importance of pure motives prompted by the Holy Spirit and not the desires of the flesh.

### **18. Has strong opinions and convictions.**

Perceivers have an opinion on just about everything. And if you happen to bring up a subject they have never thought about-guess what? They form an opinion on the spot! Fortunately, perceivers usually seek God's help in forming their convictions; thus the perceiver's opinion often carries with it the ring of truth.

But perceivers don't necessarily present their opinions gently. They can be the proverbial "bull in the china shop" and leave a trail of destruction behind them.

### **19. Has strict personal standards.**

Perceivers are never satisfied with less than their best effort. Unless they are out of fellowship with God, they have impeccable morals. Even teenagers with this gift will seldom compromise their standards. In fact, they are usually more strict with themselves than their parents are with them. Perceivers are honest. Integrity is their word.

### **20. Desires to be obedient to God at all costs.**

Perceivers recognize the importance of obedience. The opposite, in their estimation, is rebellion a sin described in the Old Testament "as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23, KJV).

One perceiver did a study of obedience in the Bible. In her words,

*I became aware that being obedient to God (1 Peter 1:14) also meant that I was to be respectful to and obedient to others. Starting with Jesus, I am not only to obey Him in everything He tells me to do (James 1:22), I must also bring every thought into obedience to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5). Then I saw that I must be obedient to secular rulers (Titus 3:1), to leaders (2 Corinthians 2:9), to my parents (Colossians 3:20), to my husband (Ephesians 5:22) and even to my employer (Ephesians 6:5-8). It's a big order, but with His strength I can do it. Jesus is my pattern. He was obedient to God in all things, even to His death on the cross.*

## **Problems of Evangelism & Prophecy (Perceiver)**

Each one of the seven motivational gifts has its own set of problems.

We have found it helpful for people to know that their gifts will bring specific challenges. One woman said to us, "It's a relief to know that my problems are typical for my gift. I thought I was the only one in the world wrestling with these things. Now I have hope and direction."

Without problems there would be no opportunity for spiritual growth! As you take an honest look at the problem areas:

- You will be relieved that you are not alone.
- Your identification of the problems will assist you in discovering specific solutions.
- You will know better how to pray for God's help and grace in overcoming the problems.

Here are the five typical problem areas of the perceiver:

### **1. Tends to be judgmental and blunt.**

Perceivers have what one of them calls "a severe case of foot-in-the-mouth disease." Jonah is the biblical example here. God told Jonah to go preach repentance to Nineveh. Jonah didn't like the assignment because he knew they were wicked, and he couldn't imagine how God could forgive them. So, he took off in the opposite direction.

You know the story. God appointed special transportation to get him to the right beach at the right time. Jonah decided he'd better get on to Nineveh, where he did preach on the need for repentance. And the people repented.

Well, Jonah hadn't counted on that. He had already judged these people in his own heart and decided they deserved God's punishment. You see, he had a critical spirit. He never got around to praying for Nineveh. Instead, he went up on the hillside and waited for judgment to fall. When it didn't, he got angry, and God had to deal with Jonah's judgmental attitude.

Perceivers will find that God will deal firmly, even sternly, in their lives if they don't learn to pray more and criticize less. Prayer is the safeguard that prevents a perceiver from developing a critical attitude. Perceivers are called to intercessory prayer. There are no exceptions!

While in the natural world the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, that's not true in the spiritual world. The shortest distance between you and another person (especially a problem person) is a line of prayer straight up to God, trusting God to deal with the person and the situation and to work out the solution to the problem. You see, no one likes to be told by someone else that he or she should change. But when you give the problem to God, He can speak directly to the person's heart. He can surmount walls of resistance that we can't get past.

The only time a perceiver should confront someone is after praying about it, giving it to God and receiving a direct instruction to do so. Even then, unless God first softens the person's heart, the confrontation may not be well received. But the perceiver's job is not to change others; he or she is only to deliver the message. It's the Holy Spirit's job to do the convicting and changing.

## **2. Forgets to praise partial progress due to goal consciousness.**

The perceivers' desire is always to get themselves and others to that place of perfectly following the will of God. They focus on the fact that Jesus said we are to "be perfect."

When counseling, for instance, the perceiver may be so eager for the counselee to come to perfection in Christ that expectations are too high. He or she pressures the person to change-faster than is possible.

The perceiver needs to learn how to look at a step of progress as being valid in itself. He or she needs to be able to say, "Hey, I'm really glad that you took this step this week. That's good! Now, let's work on the next step."

## **3. Is pushy in trying to get others and groups to grow spiritually.**

There's nothing wrong with wanting people to grow spiritually; the problem is the pushiness.

Jill was thrilled when her husband finally committed his life to Jesus. But a polluted perceiver gift caused her to try to push him into spiritual growth. She would insist that he be at church every time the doors opened. She laid out "the right books" for him to read. And she let him know every time he did something that wasn't "Christian."

Of course, it backfired. He dug in his heels and refused to have anything more to do with "that religious stuff."

#### **4. Is intolerant of opinions and views that differ from his/her own**

Perceivers are always convinced that their views are right - and most often they are. But sometimes truth has various facets to it. The perceiver may see one facet of a truth while those with different motivational gifts see other facets. Get all the facets together and you see the whole. Perceivers need to learn to value an encompassing perspective.

#### **5. Struggles with self-image problems.**

Since perceivers have such an inner drive to do what is right, and since they are introspective and readily aware of their own shortcomings, they are quick to judge themselves as inadequate.

Of all the motivational gifts, these people seem most relieved when they discover that the things they've wrestled with internally are indicative of divinely ordained giftedness rather than a testimony to shortcomings and failures. It is not at all unusual for perceivers to come to us at the close of a seminar to tell us how thrilled they are to know that who and what they are is part of God's plan.

So many are bound up in self-condemnation and self-rejection because they don't understand their giftedness. If you know any perceivers, please share this good news with them!