**Spirit-Empowered Leader**

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In this article I will give a brief overview of the characteristics of the spirit-empowered life of an effective leader.. Let me comment briefly on seven of them:

 1. Receiving the Holy Spirit (“seal”) at conversion.

 2. Filling (“control”) of the Holy Spirit for life transformation (“sanctification”).

 3. Empowering for impacting/equipping others through gift mix (spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and acquired skills).

 4. Revelation (“voice of God”) for personal and leadership focus and intentionality.

 5. Vision for leadership effectiveness (“fruit” and “much fruit”).

 6. Resources (“abiding”) to finish well in life and leadership.

 7. Eternal impact through fulfillment of ultimate contributions.

First, **we receive the Holy Spirit (“seal”) at conversion**. The primary Bible passage that relates to this is Ephesians 1: 13. Seal (*sphragis*), in this passage, is a verb connected to the word believed (*pisteuo*) and literally means “believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.” With the act of believing comes this “seal” deal. They are connected. So, what does seal mean?

With the “seal” of the Holy Spirit, we have available to us all the resources that we need to become spirit-empowered leaders. We lack nothing in terms of resources. Where we struggle is in application. We have to learn how to activate the resources available through the Holy Spirit for transformation and effectiveness in life and leadership.

Second, **we need to learn how to be filling (“control”) with the Holy Spirit for life transformation (“sanctification”)**. Sanctification (*qadesh* in the Hebrew and *hagiazo* in the Greek) means “to be separate, set apart” (Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, p. 834). An overview of what the Bible teaches about sanctification includes:

1. Sanctification involves a “separation” to God from sin, the fallen world system, and the influences of the devil;
2. Sanctification involves the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming the believer from the inside out; and
3. Sanctification involves obedience to the Word and the leading of the Spirit in the individual life choices of the believer.

The good news is that God has given us the power resources we need to gain victory in all of these arenas of life and ministry. The Bible states that we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8: 37, NIV). Sanctification is a process that begins at salvation, increases throughout life, is completed at death/the return of Christ, and is never fully completed in this life (Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, chapter 23: Sanctification). BUT significant progress is possible! We are no longer slaves to sin! We are “new creations” in Christ (II Corinthians 5: 17). We no longer have to be defined by our self-centeredness!

Third, **we** **need to discover how to be empowering for impacting/equipping others through our gift mix**. Our gift mix is comprised of:

* Spiritual Gifts
* Natural abilities
* Acquired Skills

*Spiritual Gifts* - Clinton (*The Making of a* Leader, p. 255) defines a spiritual gift as “a God-given unique capacity imparted to each believer for the purpose of releasing a Holy Spirit empowered ministry via that believer.” The Bible describes spiritual gifts (*charisma*) in Romans 12: 3-8; I Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4: 11-13; and I Peter 4: 8-11. It is important to note that in all of these passages, the authors state or infer that spiritual gifts must be exercised in love in order to be effective and impacting.

*Natural Abilities* - Let’s now move on to the second aspect of gift mix: natural abilities. I will not go into this very much except to say that we all have abilities that we discover and develop over time. Natural abilities might include athleticism, artistic skills, language abilities, math and science orientations, being a people person, and multiple others. Have you ever heard someone say, “You’re a natural at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” (fill in the blank). That is an example of a natural ability. We all have them. Some are more aware of them than others, but we all have them (and they are part of who we are and our destiny). There is overlap between natural abilities and acquired skills. It is hard to know which is which, so I will cover competencies that are important for effective and impacting leadership in the next section on acquired skills.

*Acquired* Skills - This leads us to our final aspect of gift mix: acquired skills. The distinction between natural abilities is subtle. Natural abilities are already part of us and need to be discovered and developed, while acquires skills are something that we have to learn along the way. Either way, we need them and can develop them over time.

Fourth, **we need revelation (“voice of God”) for personal and leadership focus and intentionality**.

Learning to know God and hear his voice involves communication and communication involves the accurate sending and receiving of information between people. Most of us have little difficulty with the sending part of communication. It is easy for us to make our needs know to others and/or to God. Where most of us have difficulty is in the receiving part of communication. We have a hard time listening to others and/or God. God has given us His Word, His Son, and His Spirit as sources to know Him and know His will. But most of us have a difficult time knowing how to use these resources in our daily lives.

Fifth, **we need Godly vision for leadership effectiveness**. Vision comes from Christ-like character and learning to hear God’s voice. Vision is critical for our effectiveness as Christian leaders. Barna (*Leaders on Leadership*) defines vision as a “mental portrait” of God’s “preferable future” or “a view of the kind of world God wants us to live in” (p. 47-48). Often, the vision is just the beginning of a faith process that may bring us to the end of our own recourses before God comes through to fulfill his purposes through our vision.

Godly vision will take God to fulfill it. We have a role to play. We will have responsibilities to fulfill. And there will be rewards along the way and at the finish line. BUT we will not be able to complete God’s vision without God’s resources.

Sixth, **we** **have** **the resources (“abiding”) of the Holy Spirit to finish well in life and leadership**. Clinton (in *Leaders on Leadership*, Barna (editor), p. 152) defines finishing well as, “At the end of a person’s life, they have a vibrant, growing relationship with Christ, and they have essentially fulfilled their calling and left behind a legacy of righteousness [for generations to come].”

Not all the leaders who finished well had all of these components fully developed in their lives, but they all had many or most of them. They learned over the long haul how to depend on God to provide the strength to run the race with endurance.

Last, **we can have eternal impact through fulfillment of ultimate contributions.** According to Clinton (*Clinton’s Biblical Leadership Commentary*), an ultimate contribution is “a lasting legacy of a Christian worker for which he or she is remembered and which furthers the cause of [Christ]…” (p. 404-405).

I trust that this brief overview of what it means to be a spirit-empowered leader who does the “greater works” that Jesus talked about will help spur you on to becoming all that God intends for you to be. There is no greater joy in life than to learn “to give up what we cannot have in order to gain what we cannot loose” (Jim Elliot). This is the promise and potential of learning how to be a spirit-empowered leader!