

Understanding & Using the Spiritual Gifts

Part 1: The Purpose of the Gifts

A. Gifts in the Body

- **The Holy Spirit is the power behind each of the wide variety of spiritual gifts.**

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (I Corinthians 12:1-6)

- **The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to every believer for the common good.¹**

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (I Corinthians 12:7-11)

- **The Body of Christ is composed of many members and each offers a vital component to the whole.**

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater

¹ If God distributes gifts individually according to His will, it is reasonable to assume that He gives supernatural gifting to one who has a complimentary natural ability (i.e. a teaching gift to one who has speaking abilities, an administrative gift to one who has organizational abilities, etc.).

honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (I Corinthians 12:12-31)

➤ **The spiritual gifts have been given to build up the Body of Christ into full maturity.²**

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

B. Gifts in the Individual

➤ **The spiritual gifts are given by God’s grace and should not be a reason for pride.**

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:3-8)

➤ **While spiritual gifts are empowered by God, the believer must be a good steward and actively exercise his gift.³**

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1Peter 4:10-11)

² Therefore, the spiritual gifts will remain until Christ returns. “Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away” (1Corinthians 13:8-10).

³ See also where Paul instructed Timothy to “not neglect the gift you have” (I Timothy 4:14) and to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you” (II Timothy 1:6).

Part 2: Defining Each Gift⁴

A. Service Gifts

- **Helping:** The gift of helping is the Spirit-filled ability to identify and assist other people in the church so they can live and minister more effectively. (*Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:2-3; Romans 16:1-2; I Corinthians 12:28; II Timothy 1:16-18*)⁵
- **Serving:** The gift of serving is the Spirit-filled ability to identify and accomplish supporting tasks necessary to further the ministry of the church. (*John 12:26; Acts 6:1-7; Romans 12:7; Galatians 6:2, 10; II Timothy 1:16-18; Titus 3:14*)
- **Mercy:** The gift of mercy is the Spirit-filled ability to compassionately identify and meet the needs of someone experience suffering, hardship, or oppression. (*Matthew 20:29-34; 25:34-40; Mark 9:41; Luke 10:33-35; Acts 11:28-30; 16:33-34; Romans 12:8; Jude 22-23*)
- **Giving:** The gift of giving is the Spirit-filled ability to identify and generously contribute out of one's personal finances to further the ministry of the church. (*Matthew 6:2-4; Mark 12:41-44; Romans 12:8; II Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:2-8; Philippians 4:14-19*)
- **Administration:** The gift of administration is the Spirit-filled ability to plan, organize, and coordinate people and programs in the church. (*Luke 14:28-30; Acts 6:1-7; I Corinthians 12:28; Titus 1:5*)

B. Proclamation Gifts

- **Teaching:** The gift of teaching is the Spirit-filled ability to provide explanation and application for the truths of Scripture.⁶ (*Acts 18:24-28; 20-20-21; Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-13*)
- **Exhortation:** The gift of exhortation is the Spirit-filled ability to offer relevant words of encouragement, consolation, or admonishment to a specific person or persons. (*Luke 3:16-18, Acts 14:22, Romans 12:8, I Timothy 4:13, Hebrews 10:25*)

⁴ Because of the differing lists of gifts in the New Testaments, many theologians would say that this compilation of 20 gifts is not intended to be exhaustive. Additionally, there is no consensus on how the gifts should be categorized. Some have offered the categories of Ministry Gifts (I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11), Motivational Gifts (Romans 12:6-8), and Manifestational Gifts (I Corinthians 12:8-10).

⁵ Scripture lists here and following are taken from C. Peter Wagner's Discover Your Spiritual Gifts. It is possible that not all references given fit the definition used here.

⁶ It seems that what we call "preaching" today is (or at least should be) a combination of the spiritual gifts of "teaching" and "exhortation" and "evangelism." In the New Testament, "preaching" is usually either a translation of *euaggelizo* (to announce good news) or *kerusso* (to proclaim).

- **Evangelism:** The gift of evangelism is the Spirit-filled ability to identify, relate to, and share the Gospel with those who do not yet know Christ as their Savior. (*Ephesians 4:11-13, Acts 8:5-6, 26-40, 14:21, 21:8, II Timothy 4:5*)

C. Leadership Gifts

- **Apostleship:** The gift of apostleship is the Spirit-filled ability to found and/or care for multiply congregations and their leaders.⁷ (*Acts 13:2-3; 14:4, 23; I Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 2:20; 4:11-13*)
- **Leading:** The gift of leading is the Spirit-filled ability to provide motivation, instruction, and direction to guide a group of people toward the achievement of a vision. (*Acts 7:9-10; 15:6-11; Romans 12:8; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17*)
- **Shepherding:** The gift of shepherd is the Spirit-filled ability to purposefully care for the spiritual needs of a group of believers. (*Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-13; I Timothy 3:1-7; I Peter 5:1-4*)

D. Prophetic Gifts

- **Prophecy:** The gift of prophecy is the Spirit-filled ability to share a revelation that God brings to one's mind or lays on one's heart.⁸ (*Luke 7:26; Acts 15:32; 21:9-11; Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:3-5, 29-33; Ephesians 4:11-13, I Thessalonians 5:19-21*)
- **Wisdom:** The gift of wisdom is the Spirit-filled ability to share an insight which provides direction or resolution for a specific circumstantial or relational difficulty. (*Acts 6:3-10; I Corinthians 2:1-13; 12:8; James 1:5-6; II Peter 3:15-16*)
- **Knowledge:** The gift of knowledge is the Spirit-filled ability to understand and share critical information which provides a breakthrough in a difficult person or situation. (*Acts 5:1-11; I Corinthians 2:14; 12:8; II Corinthians 11:6; Colossians 2:2-3*)

⁷ This 'apostolic gift' is analogous to, but distinct from, the first century 'Apostles' who were witnesses of the risen Christ and granted unique authority to establish the universal Church.

⁸ According to first I Corinthians 14:3, the purpose of prophecy is to edify, encourage, and console the people of God. We should expect this *revelation* to be an *illumination* or *application* (i.e. an insight) of some truth expressed in Scripture. Because Scripture is the final, sufficient, and authoritative Word of God, we will not receive any new and universal revelations. Those with a 'prophetic gift' do not speak infallibly, rather their words must be judged and tested (see I Corinthians 14:29-33 and I Thessalonians 5:19-21).

- **Tongues:** The gift of speaking in tongues is the Spirit-filled ability to praise God in utterances whose meaning are unknown to the speaker in the context of 1) exalting God before another people group, 2) personal prayer, or 3) a worship gathering accompanied by the gift of interpretation.⁹ (*[Mark 16:17]; Acts 2:1-13; 10:44-46; 19:1-7; I Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:1-28*)
- **Interpretation:** The gift of interpretation is the Spirit-filled ability to receive and announce the meaning (not a translation) of a word spoken publically in tongues. (*I Corinthians 12:10; 30; 14:1-28*)

E. Power Gifts

- **Healing:** The gift of healing is the Spirit-filled ability to manifest God’s mercy through the healing of a physical infirmity. (*Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-26; 9:32-4; 28:7-10; I Corinthians 12:9, 28*)
- **Miracles:** The gift of miracles is the Spirit-filled ability to manifest God’s power to heal and cast-out demons for the purpose of verifying the Gospel.¹⁰ (*Acts 8:13; 9:32-42; 19:11-20; 20:7-12; Romans 15:18-19; I Corinthians 12:10, 28; II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4*)
- **Faith:** The gift of faith is the Spirit-filled ability to maintain an unwavering belief in the work of God despite circumstances or worldly wisdom that would indicate otherwise. (*Acts 11:22-24; 27:21-2; Romans 4:18-21; I Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11*)
- **Discernment:** The gift of discernment is the Spirit-filled ability to distinguish between a teaching, person, or angelic being that is from God or that is from the devil. (*Matthew 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-11; 16:16-18; I Corinthians 12:10; I John 4:1-6*)

⁹ According to I Corinthians 14:4-5, 13-19, the purpose of tongues is to edify one’s spirit (when done privately) or edify the church (when accompanied by interpretation). According to I Corinthians 14:14-16, tongues is intended to be prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to God – even tongues spoken in the presence of foreigners or interpreted for the church. With this understanding, the three functions of tongues are united in their common direction toward God. Prophecy, then, is distinguished from interpreted tongues because it is directed toward man.

¹⁰ In I Corinthians 12:10 and 28 the word “miracles” is a translation of “*dunamis*.” This Greek word occurs 121 times in the NT and is translated 89 times as “powers” and 22 times as “miracles/miraculous.” “Miracles” seems to be distinguished from “healing” in that it has the direct outcome of testifying to the Gospel.

Part 3: Identifying & Using Your Gifts

A. Identifying your Gifts

- What were the top three gifts which resulted from your spiritual gifts assessment?¹¹ Do your God-given natural abilities seem to compliment these God-given supernatural gifts?

- As the gifts above were discussed, did any seem to weigh heavy on your heart or awaken a burden in your spirit?

- In what specific ways have you seen God use you in the lives of others? Has this been affirmed by others you trust?

B. Using your Gifts

- How are you currently involved in ministry? Does this give you the opportunity to use your spiritual gift?

- Are there other needs or ministries in the church that seem to be deficient of the very gift that God has given you?

- Are there specific people or circumstances in your life right now in which God could work if you were to “*fan into flame the gift of God which is in you*” (II Timothy 1:6)?

¹¹ A spiritual gifts assessment can be found at www.spiritualgiftstest.com.