
SPIRITUAL GIFTS EXPLAINED

One of the great keys to effectively serving God is to determine your spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a special ability give by God to a believer in Jesus Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables the believer to minister to others, and thereby edify the Body of Christ. While many Christians talk about spiritual, very little is done within the community of Believers to determine what a person’s spiritual gifts really are. Before we dive into the specifics of spiritual gifts, it will be beneficial to look at a “Big Picture” text on how the Church is supposed to function. Ephesians 4 sets a great stage for why spiritual gifts are so important within the Church.

DAY 1 – God’s Plan for Unity in the midst of Diversity



Read Ephesians 4:1-16

1. In Ephesians 4:1-6, what are some things all Believers have in common?

After saying in verses 7-10 that the exalted Christ is the giver of all gifts, Paul then says in verse 11 that Christ gave the Church special offices (positions) designed to bless the Church by equipping the body to serve according to those gifts.

2. According to Ephesians 4:11-16, what are the 5 offices that God has given the Church?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

3. What is the difference between an office and a gift? Explain.

Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 says that the offices of Apostle and Prophet were foundational and revelatory to the early church. While the gifts of apostleship and prophecy still exist today, the offices through which new revelation was given have ceased to be necessary because the Canon of Scripture has been closed.

4. Based on Ephesians 4:11-13, what must take place for us to attain “ mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...”?

5. According to Ephesians 4:14-16, what happens to the Church when we don't exercise our spiritual gifts in the service of God's Kingdom?

6. Why do you think that a church abstaining from serving God is "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes"?

7. What does Ephesians 4:11-16 tell us about the Church's purpose and strategy?

Spiritual Gifts – Toward a Definition

The most frequent Greek word used for the concept of spiritual gifts is *charisma*, or plural, *charismata* ("grace", "favor"), from which the word "charismatic" is derived. *Charis* is the directly related word that is most often translated as "grace". The concept of spiritual gifts includes a variety of free gifts given by God, ranging from spiritual salvation (Romans 6:23) and temporal rescue (2 Corinthians 1:11), to celibacy and marriage (1 Corinthians 7:7). In all circumstances, these "gifts" are totally undeserved and are imparted by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In the special or technical usage, spiritual gifts are the particular endowments given by the Spirit to all Believers that enable them to serve others for the building up of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 Peter 4:10). Since all believers receive spiritual gifts, we are all, in the most Biblical sense, charismatic!

8. What is most surprising about the information above?

The purpose of these charismatic gifts is primarily for the edification of the whole Church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 14:12), and, secondarily, for the conviction and conversion of unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:21-25; Romans 15:18f.).



Read Romans 12:1-8

9. What are some general principles that Paul gives us to prepare us to exercise our spiritual gifts?

10. List the gifts that Paul mentions in Romans 12:3-8.

11. Do you think that this list is a thorough listing of all the spiritual gifts God gives? Why or why not?



DAY 2 – Understanding Spiritual Gifts



Read 1 Corinthians 12

12. Do the spiritual gifts God has given you really matter? Why?

13. Now go back and read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 which has a repetitive pattern. “There are varieties of ... but the same....” What do you think is Paul’s emphasis in this section?

14. Look now specifically at verse 7. Why did God give people spiritual gifts?

15. Look now at 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. The Greek word *hetero* is used 7 times in 4 verses. *Hetero* means “a different one” or “a different kind.” What is the primary point Paul is making in this section of the text?

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul utilizes the Church as the body, and we are the components of the body metaphor. Look at verses 18-25.

16. Does anyone receive all the gifts? _____

17. Is any single gift given to everyone? _____

18. What does this text tell us about the importance of gathering together to worship God?

19. What does this text tell us about the necessity of each gift? Give a summary of Paul's points on this topic.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, and 18.

20. Does everyone receive at least one spiritual gift? _____

21. Who determines who gets what gifts? What is the basis for that determination? (Hint: v. 11 and 18 give the answer)

Two Hazards to Avoid:

While spiritual gifts are discussed in several different places in the Bible, they are sometimes misunderstood and misapplied. There are at least two hazards to avoid:

Hazard #1 – One Spiritual Gift is offered to all through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which takes place some time subsequent to salvation.

Some, but not all, charismatics hold this position. Hazard #1 is actually two or three hazards, but we can cover them all at once. The erroneous thought process goes as follows:

1. A person professes faith in Christ, but then struggles in their sin for some time.
2. A "second work of grace" or a "second baptism" occurs that frees the person from their slavery to sin so they can live the "victorious Christian life."
3. This second work of grace is evidenced by the believer's receiving the gift of tongues.

The reality is that Scripture speaks of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as taking place at the point of conversion (see Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:1-4; and Ephesians 1:3, 13-14) and giving us our identity in Christ. If the baptism of the Holy Spirit took place subsequent to conversion, there would be professing Christians who are not part of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians), who are not heirs of God (Galatians), and who are not guaranteed salvation (Ephesians). In other words, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an additive to faith; it is the engine of faith! Salvation doesn't go without the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

22. What would you say to someone who told you that you needed to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Hazard #2 – Some gifts are more important than others.

While Paul does instruct us to desire the greater gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31), he also goes into great detail about all Christians serving as members (parts) of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). 1 Corinthians 14 is about the superiority of prophecy over tongues, but these words are couched in a context in which the Corinthian church had become very sinful and arrogant due to the over emphasis on the gift of tongues. Paul's larger point is not that some gifts are not important, but that one gift should not be exalted at the expense of others. The illustration of the Body and its various members exists to emphasize the importance of all the gifts and their contributions to the overall health of the Body. While some gifts might be less glamorous than others, every person's contributions to the church in their area of giftedness is vitally important for a healthy congregation.



DAY 3 – Spiritual Gifts – A Description

There is a fairly large debate in Christendom as to whether all spiritual gifts are permanent or occasional. Some people contend that all spiritual gifts have seceded (God doesn't give them anymore); while the other end of the spectrum believes that God gives all spiritual gifts permanently. It is my opinion that some spiritual gifts are permanently given to individuals, while other gifts are given by God on an occasional or situational basis. Please remember that while this is my position, it is also one that is derived by logical inference rather than by exegesis (Scriptural study). It just seems to me that if someone was endowed with the gift of healing on a permanent basis, their time would be well spent in a hospital, and the medical profession would cease to exist. It also seems like nobody would die if that was the case. Despite the best claims of some television faith healers (whom I believe to be frauds), I just don't believe miracles on demand (especially for profit) was God's intent. That being said, I do believe that God still works miracles today, and I also believe that He uses His faithful servants in the process. I will readily admit that I have lots to learn in this area.

Because we need to break up the list for the sake of study, I've separated the spiritual gifts into the following categories: service gifts, speaking gifts, and the situational gifts. In addition to a description, I have also included the great rewards associated with each gift, as well as how these gifts can lead us into sin if we do not rely on God as we exercise them.

Service Gifts

Mercy: Romans 12:8

Description: The person with the gift of mercy demonstrates genuine sensitivity when others are suffering. The gift of mercy prompts a person to try to help reduce pain, or at least to empathize with the sufferer in her time of pain. It is a gift that focuses on the person and the pain, rather than the details and the solution.

Danger: Emotional stability is often difficult to attain for the young believer with a strong gift of mercy. The tendency is to be swayed to every hurting person, bearing their burdens as if they were your own. That can become overwhelming!

Reward: The great reward for the person gifted with mercy is in knowing that they helped a person in a critical time. The opportunity also exists to lead the Church toward greater compassion ministries (perhaps partnering with someone gifted in administration).

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Service / Helps: Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Description: The person with the gift of service/helps delights in serving God by addressing the physical needs of others. It is usually illustrated when the strong give aid to the weak, and there seems to be a special Biblical precedent for this gift when it is manifested among the sick and needy. Deacons within a church often have the gift of service/helps.

Danger: The great dangers in this gift are burn-out and self-righteousness. If other people in the church don't share the burden for a particular ministry, the person gifted in service can take on too great a load and/or become resentful of the other people unwilling to serve.

Reward: People with the gift of service are the motor under the hood of any church. They set up, tear down, make coffee, etc. There is great satisfaction in knowing that your contributions are absolutely essential to the church and to the needy!

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Giving: Romans 12:8

Description: The person with the gift of giving has the divine enablement and ability to give money and material resources to the work of the Lord with great cheerfulness and liberality. The key to this gift is not the amount a person is able to give, but rather the heart condition when giving sacrificially. If you feel like you are truly and passionately worshiping God when you give sacrificially, you probably have this gift.

Danger: The danger in this gift, like many of the other gifts, is found in projecting your paradigms onto other Believers. The deception often associated with this gift is manifested when a giver angrily asks, "Why doesn't everyone else give sacrificially like I do?"

Reward: The reward from this gift is in knowing that you have made a difference in the advancement of ministry for God's Kingdom by your sacrificial giving. It is a gift empowered by the recognition of the true nature of stewardship – we are merely stewards of God's money to be given to God's purposes!

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Leadership: Romans 12:8

Description: The person with the gift of leadership delights in casting biblical vision and bringing a team of people together to move toward realizing that vision. While this person is able to cast vision, the Bible also sees this person as a servant. This is a "big picture" gift that is always driven by the purposes and pleasure of God. The person who is gifted in leadership will most likely depend on some administrators to help with implementation.

Danger: The primary danger in the gift of leadership is found in adopting a worldly view of what leadership entails. The spiritual gift of leadership can certainly have creative expression, but is defined primarily by a consistent resolve to move toward the purposes of God. The leader can also become frustrated when the followers don't move as quickly as the leader would desire.

Reward: The person gifted in leadership has the satisfaction of knowing that God's purposes were accomplished through a group of people moving together to accomplish a vision. The leader has a wonderful view of all that God is doing in people's lives to prepare them for His ministry.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Administration: 1 Corinthians 12:28

Description: The person with the gift of administration has the divine enablement to understand what makes an organization function. The administrator can plan and implement procedure and structure that increases the church's ability to minister effectively.

Danger: The person gifted in administration can burn out or get overwhelmed if unwilling to delegate certain assignments to other people. The administrator is often a perfectionist who hesitates to delegate because others might not accomplish a task in as organized or excellent manner.

Reward: The administrator has the satisfaction of knowing that he or she is the critical cog in the implementation of vision. If the leader is the architect, designing a picture of what a structure will look like, the administrator is the general contractor who comes in and takes the steps necessary to develop the structure. The administrator takes responsibility for the "nuts and bolts" of ministry.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Faith: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Description: This gift does not refer to salvation (all Christians have that spiritual gift!), but rather to the divine enablement to see the Lord's will and act on it with an unwavering belief in God's ability.

Danger: Living with an unwavering belief in God's ability is a wonderful thing, but we must understand God's will in order to do this well. The danger associated with this gift is found in stepping boldly out on an unsupported limb due to a misguided interpretation of Scripture. The other danger related to the gift of faith is disillusionment with Christians who don't see things as being as black and white.

Reward: The person who has this gift is able to boldly move forward in obedience to God without great anxiety. The complex issues of life for others seem simpler for people with the gift of faith. They ask, "Is God for this?" and respond accordingly. They also accomplish great tasks for God's glory that others would never venture to attempt.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Apostleship: 1 Corinthians 12:28

Description: The person with the gift of apostleship is one whom God sends out as a missionary or church planter. The gift of apostleship should not be confused with the Office of Apostleship. Apostle means "sent out one." The twelve disciples were called the Apostles because Jesus sent them out. The Twelve (and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles) had special roles in the establishment of the Church and the giving of God's Special Revelation (the Bible). This giving of Revelation was foundational to the Church but doesn't exist today. Today, the gift of apostleship is manifested in a divine ability to extend the work of the Church by serving on the mission field or by planting churches, often crossing cultural or language barriers to do so. Today's apostles are still "sent out," but they do not give new revelation.

Danger: The first danger of someone with the gift of apostleship is not exercising that gift! Staying home when God has gifted you to travel is both unfaithful and unfulfilling! The second danger is

experienced in going, and then becoming bitter that so many other people won't come with you! It is a special gift not granted to all!

Reward: The reward received in the exercise of this gift is the experience of ministry in front line dependence on God. The person with the gift of apostleship forsakes much and depends on God for much more than the average person. Because of this dependence, the person gifted with apostleship also sees the abundant provision of God in all of life's circumstances!

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____



DAY 4 – Spiritual Gifts – A Description

Speaking Gifts

Prophecy: Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:1–6, 22–25; 29–33, 39

Description: The person with the gift of prophecy has a divine enablement to proclaim God's truth with power and clarity in a timely and culturally sensitive fashion for correction, repentance, or edification. This gift includes both exhortation and encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:3). While prophecy in the Bible is sometimes associated with the giving of new revelation, it is primarily related to applying Scripture to current circumstances. The O.T. prophets were not killed for telling the future: they were killed for telling Israel that it fell short of God's existing revelation! Today, the person gifted with prophecy speaks with clarity and strength about how God's Word addresses a person's or persons' circumstances.

Danger: People with the gift of prophecy view truth as the ultimate (and sometimes only) factor in communication. Prophets have a zeal for truth, which is good, but their zeal for truth can bowl people over, often offending a person unnecessarily. Prophets should not water down their words, but they should think about how their words will be received with the greatest effect.

Reward: The great reward for using the gift of prophecy is that we get to speak God's truth into people's lives, fully expecting that the Holy Spirit will give conviction and clarity leading to life change. The role of prophet can be lonely, but it can also be instrumental in a person or church's turn toward God and righteousness.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Teaching: Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Description: The person with the gift of teaching has a divine enablement to understand, clearly explain, and properly apply the Word of God to people's lives.

Danger: The danger in the gift of teaching comes when we confuse the spiritual gift with the ability merely to communicate. Powerful communication is a dangerous thing when it isn't tethered to the Word of God. The temptations of manipulation and arrogance always accompany the gifted teacher.

Reward: The great reward for faithfully exercising the gift of teaching is the opportunity to watch God's Spirit produce change in people's lives through the unadulterated teaching of God's Word! To see people "get it" and to watch their lives transform as a result is indescribable!

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Word of Knowledge: 1 Corinthians 12:8

Description: The person with the gift of knowledge has the divine enablement to accumulate and analyze Biblical information effectively. Scholarship and depth are marks of this gift, which is given by God to help the rest of us catch up!

Danger: The danger associated with the gift of knowledge is intellectual arrogance. Instead of giving glory to God for the truth that possesses us, the danger is found in believing that we possess the truth.

Reward: The reward associated with this gift is the privilege of spending countless hours in the study of God's Word. These people are on the cutting edge of Biblical Study and pave the way for the church's growing understanding.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Word of Wisdom: 1 Corinthians 12:8

Description: The person with the gift of wisdom (words of wisdom) has the divine enablement to apply Biblical knowledge to daily life. A good working definition of wisdom is "knowledge applied," and a good working definition of the gift of wisdom is "the ability, given by God, to apply Biblical knowledge to daily life." This gift is wonderful because it is very practical and valuable to most people (even non-Christians).

Danger: Arrogance is the dangerous dark side of this gift. If we forget that it is God's wisdom given to us as stewards, then it is easy to become self-impressed with this gift. People will seek out the person gifted with wisdom, and that can be intoxicating.

Reward: The beauty of exercising this gift is that the person gets to help people see the amazing relevance of Biblical truth! In doing so, the person helps people and shows people how vital Scripture is to our daily lives.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____

Discernment of Spirits: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Description: The person with the gift of discernment of spirits is charged with the protection of doctrine in an age of increasing heresy. The basic meaning of discernment has to do with separating out for examination and judging in order to determine what is genuine and what is spurious. Satan is the great deceiver, "the father of lies" (John 8:44), and ever since the Fall he and his demons have counterfeited God's message and God's work. The person with this gift stands guard over that which is true and alerts people to false teaching.

Danger: This gift can run amuck when we become intolerant on non-essentials. This gift can and should be exercised graciously while also promoting Truth.

Reward: The reward for the person who exercises this gift is the knowledge that in doing so, he or she has called the Church away from wolves or false teaching. It is a gift given to one with a shepherd's heart, and it gives satisfaction to the shepherd who brings sheep into the fold.

Who do you know who consistently evidences this gift? _____



DAY 5 – Spiritual Gifts – A Description (and a Dilemma)

Miraculous Gifts, or Just Miracles?

A thorough examination of biblical references to spiritual gifts will yield the truth that spiritual gifts fill two major purposes: the permanent gifts edify the Church, and the situational gifts are primarily signs to confirm the Word of God among unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:22). The great question in my mind is whether or not the situational gifts are still given today in light of the sufficiency of a completed Canon of Scripture. This does not mean that I question God's ability to act miraculously. I fully believe God works miraculously today in accordance with the prayers of the saints. God can and does heal diseases miraculously and often uses the prayers of the saints in that process. I believe that God does perform miracles to glorify His name and to illustrate His purposes. God can enable someone to bridge a language barrier for the proclamation of the gospel. I believe He has done it, and will do it in the future. My question today is not whether God can perform miracles today, but rather how miracles today relate to the spiritual gifts that we will discuss below. Clearly God doesn't need a faith healer to heal. Clearly God can use the prayers of any child in the accomplishment of His purposes. I am certain that God used these gifts at the establishment of the New Covenant in order to validate the claims of His Apostles before the Canon was established. What is the purpose of these gifts today? Are they permanently given to certain people? Are they given only on a situational basis? Does God do these things today by using us but without giving us permanent gifts? I probably have more questions than answers...

Tongues: 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 13:1; 14:2–40

Description: A person enabled by God to speak in tongues speaks a known language for the purpose of articulating the Gospel (see Acts 2). The mandate of Scripture is that this gift would be exercised in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:27) and only in the presence of an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:28). These instructions are given in order to insure that this gift would continue to strengthen the Church, rather than to draw attention to individuals, while confusing the Church (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Danger: The danger of the gift of tongues is misinterpretation that leads to mindless self-comfort that does not edify the Body of Christ. A popular notion that tongues is available to anyone who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit results in spiritual manipulation and an emphasis on one gift over all others.

Reward: There are two rewards for the proper exercise of the gift of tongues. The first is the proclamation of the gospel among non-believers who do not speak your language. The second reward comes when someone in the congregation can interpret, and the net effect is a prophetic utterance proclaiming an existing Scripture's application to the life of the Church.

Have you ever met anyone who had evidenced this gift as described above? _____

Interpretation of tongues: 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:26–28

Description: The person that God enables, on occasion, to interpret tongues translates a known language that another person has been miraculously enabled to speak. The net effect is prophecy that declares known Scripture in application to a person or church's circumstances.

Danger: Making something up and thereby leading others astray!

Reward: Being used miraculously to remind God's people of God's directives.

Have you ever met anyone who had evidenced this gift as described above? _____

Healing: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Description: The miraculous ability to convey God's healing to someone for the purpose of God's Gospel. This gift never gives its possessor the sovereign authority to heal indiscriminately. Paul and the other Apostles used this gift sparingly and only to validate the Gospel. Paul himself was sick, yet never healed himself. Paul prayed to God that Epaphroditus would not die. God honored that prayer, but not through the gift of healing (Philippians 2:27). When Timothy had a troubled stomach, Paul merely advised him to drink wine (1 Timothy 5:23). Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). The gift of healing never was intended to cure all ailments, but only those that would validate the gospel or serve God's purposes. A Christian today has the right to ask God for the healing of any illness. God may choose to heal, but He is under no obligation to heal, because He has made no blanket promise to heal during any age (Numbers 12:9–10; Deuteronomy 28:21–22; Psalms 119:67; 1 Corinthians 11:30).

Danger: Television faith healers who usurp God's glory and assume God's sovereignty. Don't send them your money. Also, it is dangerous whenever a person claims to have done a miracle (healing being miraculous) rather than acknowledging that God did the miracle and therefore deserves all glory.

Reward: If we can maintain a belief that God is sovereign and can work in and through our prayers, then we will sometimes see His power displayed through miraculous healing.

Have you ever met anyone who had evidenced this gift as described above? _____

Working of miracles: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Description: A person enabled by God to call upon God such that the governing laws of nature might be superseded, thereby producing what we call a miracle. It appears from Scripture that the working of miracles was reserved for the Apostles who worked to establish and authenticate God's New Covenant. "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles" (2 Corinthians 12:12). Miraculous signs were a mark of apostleship, authenticating the apostles' message and work as being of the Lord. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him (the Apostles), God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will."

Danger: The danger in this gift (if it still exists) is to believe that the individual does the miracle, rather than God doing the miracle through our faithfulness.

Reward: God, as the sovereign creator of all things, has the right and capability to supersede the laws of nature when He wishes to illustrate His glorious power. By believing that God can do miracles, we are more likely to see God do miracles!

Have you ever met anyone who had evidenced this gift as described above? _____

