

Spiritual Gifts

I. The Definition of Spiritual Gifts

A. What it is – Gift:

Precisely stated, a spiritual gift is a divine, supernatural ability given by God to enable a Christian to serve and to minister. More simply put, a spiritual gift is a special tool for ministry. (Kinghorn, *Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts: A Personal Inventory Method*, p. 8.)

A spiritual gift is a supernatural gift of grace that is measured and given out by God to each true Christian as stewards for serving the Church of Jesus Christ. Each gift is in the form of a specific spiritual ability for service. With it, the believer is to help build up the church and honor God. (Blanchard, *A Practical Guide to Finding Your Spiritual Gifts*, p. 14.)

... they are enrichments received from Christ...Spiritual gifts must be defined in terms of Christ, as actualized powers of expressing, celebrating, displaying, and so communicating Christ in one way or another, either by word or deed. They would not be edifying otherwise. (Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit*, pp. 82-82.)

B. What it is not – Talent/Ability

C. Why and how do we get them? (I Cor. 12:4-7, I Pet. 4:10)

II. The Description of Spiritual Gifts

A. Biblical Evidence

1. Rom. 12:6-8
2. I Cor. 12: 7-11, 27-31
3. Eph. 4:11
4. I Pet. 4:10-11

B. Theological Categories

| <u>Speaking</u> | <u>Ministering/Serving</u> | <u>Signifying</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Apostleship | Ministration (Helps) | Miracles |
| Prophecy | --hospitality | Healing |
| Evangelism | Giving | Tongues |
| Pastoring | Government (Ruling) | Interpretation |
| Teaching | Showing Mercy | |
| Exhorting | Faith | |
| Word of Wisdom | Discernment | |
| Word of Knowledge | Miracles | |
| Tongues | Healing | |
| Interpretation | | |

| “Leadership Gifts” (<i>Eph. 4</i>) | “Motivational Gifts” (<i>Rom. 12</i>) | “Display/Action Gifts” (<i>I Cor. 12</i>) |
|---|--|--|
| Apostle | Prophesying | Word of wisdom |
| Prophet | Serving | Word of knowledge |
| Evangelist | Teaching | Faith |
| Pastor/Teacher | Encouraging | Gifts of healing |
| | Giving | Miraculous powers |
| | Leadership | Prophecy |
| | Showing mercy | Distinguish spirits |
| | | Different languages |
| | | Interpret languages |

C. Theological Description:

1. The “Leadership Gifts” might be specifically defined as follows:

- A) APOSTLE -- A gifted individual given to the Church; one who had seen the resurrected Lord, and was gifted to establish churches and provide authoritative revelation for the Church at large. Originally, the "twelve" (Cf. Acts 1) alone were eye witnesses of Christ's resurrection and so designated. Later, Paul, Barnabas, and a few others were recognized as apostles with similar authority. But this was a 1st century gift, foundational and temporary (Eph. 2:20).

- B) PROPHET -- A gifted individual given to the Church; one especially gifted to predict future events and speak for God with inspirational authority. They, along with the apostles, specifically in what they taught, became the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20). Since this was primarily a gift for the transmitting of inspired revelation, this kind of

gifted individual, too, was not given to the Church once New Testament revelation had been written down and finalized (Agabus, Acts 11:28).

- C) **EVANGELIST** -- A gifted individual given to the Church; one especially gifted to present the gospel and pioneer its planting in new areas and with new peoples. Since this gift was not one that offered new revelation, but heralded the apostolic gospel, it appears evident that this gift was to continue in the New Testament age (Apollos, and perhaps also Timothy).
- D) **PASTOR - TEACHER** -- A gifted individual given to the Church; one especially gifted to take care of the spiritual lives and progress of believers. His ability includes making of apostolic doctrine clear and applicable to the spiritual understanding and experience throughout the age of the Church (Timothy).

2. The “Motivational/Ministry Gifts”

- A) **PROPHESYING** -- This grace-gift is the desire to and activity of speaking an urgent word from God. In the pre-canonical time of the early church, this gift involved delivering an inspired, prophetic word. The Thessalonians were told not to despise prophetic utterances, apparently given for their particular spiritual situation. In my judgment, once the New Testament revelation was written and began to be shared among the various churches, this grace-gift became a function of delivering a particularly applicable and urgent message from the revealed truth God had completed giving.
- B) **SERVING** -- This grace-gift involves the desire to fill a servant function, a helping function in the lives of other believers. It is a practical and need-meeting ministry. A person with this “grace” delights in eagerly assisting other Christians with needs.
- C) **TEACHING** -- This grace-gift evidences itself in the drive to understand and clearly communicate apostolic doctrine, the truth about Jesus Christ and salvation and spiritual progress in living. It is not revelatory in nature, but rather serves an illuminating purpose, so that Christians might be fed on spiritual food and nourishment.
- D) **ENCOURAGING** -- (or “exhortation”) This grace-gift finds expression in the person who is able to come alongside and provide a specific word of direction and to uplift a Christian going through difficult times or in a decision making spot. Necessary to this gift is having a storehouse of God’s wisdom and the insight to apply it to particular life situations.

- E) **GIVING** -- This grace-gift exhibits a generosity in tangible gifts to other believers and toward ministry needs. One need not be financially “set” to have this motivation and ministry. Giving out of one’s utter poverty may be the best evidence of such a dispensing of giving-grace in a person.
- F) **LEADERSHIP** -- This grace-gift finds its niche in helping to organize and superintend ministry thrusts and functions in the body of Christ. It literally means “to stand before” connoting the ability to make machinery of ministry function effectively so that people will follow and support.
- G) **SHOWING MERCY** -- This grace-gift is found in a person who ministers compassion and sympathy to those in the body who are in difficult life situations, in misery, or who have failed in their spiritual lives. They are able to “weep with those who weep.” Expressions of forgiveness and restoration flow from this gifted individual, along with hope for future progress in the Lord.

Each of these gifts, perhaps excepting the “inspired revelation” function of prophesying, continue to find living expression in the body of Christ.

3. The “Display/Action Gifts”

- A) **WORD OF WISDOM** -- The ability to deliver a spoken word of particular spiritual wisdom and immediate application to the body of Christ by the Spirit of God. I imagine a person functioning with this would say, “Thus the Spirit says. . .” and deliver a message. My impression is that this “manifestation” was revelatory and thus temporary.
- B) **WORD OF KNOWLEDGE** -- The ability to deliver a spoken word of particular insight into the doctrinal truth about Christ and the purpose of God in Him. As this well might have been revelatory in nature, this “manifestation” in all likelihood was unique to the first century church, perhaps even to Corinth.
 - 1) **FAITH** -- The ability to have a settled confidence and insight into what miraculous activity God would perform. This faith seems to be unique, beyond simple “saving faith” or the faith with which most Christians function each day. It seems this faith was “mountain moving,” not that it could itself move anything, but that it had assurance of a particular, divine working.
- C) **GIFTS OF HEALING** -- The ability to encounter people with sicknesses and disabilities, so as to be used by God to bring complete restoration.

Some have argued for a wide definition of this healing ability (to include things like “emotional” healing, due to plural word “gifts”). My conviction is that this ability is defined by the Scripture itself; namely, the miraculous and full recoveries of physically sick or distorted individuals.

- D) **MIRACULOUS POWERS** -- The ability to do “works of power.” This must mean a broadly defined ministry of being used by God to see things done contrary to natural physical laws and expectations. The blinding of Elymas, Acts 13:8-12, may be one such type of incident.
- E) **PROPHECY** -- The ability to deliver a specific message about the future, or bring a specific, urgent word from the Lord for the body of believers, or even the church as a whole. See the above description under “Motivation/Ministry Gifts” in Romans 12.
- F) **DISTINGUISHING SPIRITS** -- The ability to test and identify the source of a spiritual message and the motivation behind the messenger. Spiritual teachers of varying source (i.e., God or Satan), would seek an audience with religious groups. Corinth had a particular problem with this, spurring Paul’s letter of II Corinthians. Behind every teacher is a “spirit” (or “Spirit”) providing and empowering the message.
- G) **SPEAKING WITH TONGUES** -- The ability to speak, without previous learning, in a translatable language. This “manifestation” was judgmental and signatory in nature (cf. I Cor. 14:20-22), providing evidence that God had turned away from the unbelieving generation of Israel in the first century, and that they would hear the word of God, through a miraculous medium, from the church.
- H) **INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES** -- The ability to understand and translate the spoken language of one speaking in a foreign tongue, so as to bring a message of judgment for unbelievers (primarily) and benefit for the church (secondarily). Once again, viewing this as revelatory and judgmental (most likely for the first century) this gift, along with tongues, as temporary.

III. The Discovery of Your Spiritual Gifts

- A. Five Steps
 - 1. Explore the possibilities
 - 2. Experiment with as many as you cans

3. Examine your feelings
4. Evaluate your effectiveness
5. Expect confirmation from the Body

B. Four questions

1. What do you enjoy doing?
2. What service has God been blessing?
3. How have others encouraged you?
4. What has the Holy Spirit told you?