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Page | 1

Spiritual Gifts

Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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Page | 2

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Contents

Church History.....	5
Tongues in The Middle Ages	7
The Reformation and Revival Eras.....	8
Tongues in the Nineteenth Century	9
The Twentieth Century.....	10
The Romans Category	19
The Ephesians Category	20
The Corinthians Category.....	21
Other Gifts	22
The Five Fold Ministry	23
The 9 Spiritual Gifts	25
Summary	44

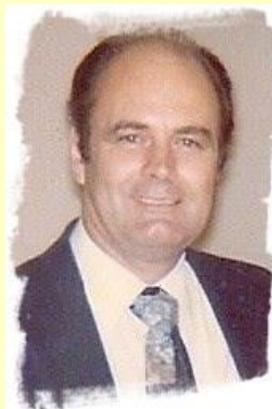
Spiritual Gifts

In this lesson on Spiritual Gifts, I have summarized some of my ministerial notes on this subject. Please note that this lesson is only a summary, and not a complete in-depth study of all the Gifts of the Spirit.

To do a complete in-depth study of the Gifts of the Spirit, and their operation in Christian lives and the church body, would take several volumes to complete.

I may also say that some of the Spiritual Gifts (especially speaking in tongues) is presented in another course in the Bachelor Degree Program. The course book is entitled, "Tongues, The Answer to the Debate."

Bishop Donald R. Vestal, Ph.D.
Chancellor



Church History

Church history clearly refutes any notion that charismatic gifts faded away after the apostolic age. Other than diminishing somewhat during the middle ages (probably due to the Bible being forbidden to the common people), it is obvious that spiritual gifts were never completely absent from the church. Scores of statements to this effect were recorded by church leaders such as Irenaeus, who wrote around 150 A.D. “we hear many of the brethren in the church who have prophetic gifts, and who speak in tongues through the spirit, and who also bring to light the secret things of men for their benefit (word of knowledge)..” Elsewhere Eusebius said, “When God saw it necessary, and the church prayed and fasted much, they did miraculous things, even of bringing back the spirit to a dead man” (Refutation and overthrow of False Doctrine, Pg. 174).

Near the close of the second century, Tertullian cited similar accounts, describing the operation of prophecies, healings, and tongues, and in 210 A.D., Origen reported many healings and other charismatic gifts, as did later writers such as Firmilian, Chrysostom and, others throughout many centuries.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says that spiritual gifts such as glossalalia (speaking in tongues), has occurred in Christian revivals of every age. In the same vein, Souer’s History of the Christian Church (Vol. 3, Pg. 406), cites a reference to the famed leader of the protestant reformation of the 16th century, stating, “Dr. Martin Luther was a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues, an interpreter, in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Spirit.”

Celsus (died 254 A.D.), a pagan philosopher, denounced Christianity for prophesying “as we find them **still doing** among the inhabitants of Phoenicia and Palestine.” Celsus then complained about **another** thing that these Palestinian Christians were still doing: “To these promises are added **strange, fanatical, and quite unintelligible words**, of which no rational person can find the meaning: for so dark are they, as to have no meaning at all....”

These third-century believers in Christ were speaking in tongues!

Novatian (died 257 A.D.), wrote concerning the Holy Spirit and His manifestations in the third century:

This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits...and arranges whatever other gifts there are of *charismata*; and thus makes the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all perfected and completed.

Pachomius (died 346 A.D.), was reported to have spoken "the language of angels...(and) after seasons of prayer, under the power of the Spirit, was able to speak languages which he had never learned."

Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (died 367 A.D.), mentioned, among other things, "gifts of either speaking or interpreting divers kinds of tongues." He concluded, "Clearly these are the church's agents of ministry and work of whom the body of Christ consists; and God has ordained them."

Such Charismatic manifestations continued in the fifth century. Theodore of Mopsuete (died 428 A.D.), wrote, "Many heathen amongst us are being healed by Christians from whatever sickness they have, so abundant are miracles in our midst."

In the last four years before the death of Augustine (430 A.D.), a revival swept the North African district where he was bishop. Once a skeptic concerning Charismatic gifts, Augustine now witnessed healings "so like the miracles of old" that he realized "how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these marvels of divine power to perish from among our people." He wrote of miraculous healings from breast cancer, paralysis, hernia, even the raising of the dead after the funeral was arranged. In his own church, two epileptics were instantly healed after they had fallen to the floor in convulsions. "Praise to God was shouted so loud that my ears could scarcely stand the

din,” Augustine remembered.

It is undeniable that the apostolic age closed with the church continuing to experience tongues, miracles, and the power of God. The “tongues have ceased” theory is not only unscriptural, but also unhistorical as well.

Tongues in The Middle Ages

In Israel’s Agricultural year, the planting rain (former rain) fell moderately (Joel 2:23), then tapered off into intermittent showers during the winter growing season. This corresponds exactly with the record of church history. Accounts of the Holy Spirit baptism become scanty during the long “winter years” of Catholic domination, but are still frequent enough to assure us that God had preserved a witness of His gifts and power. Reports of spiritual gifts become more and more common up until the prophesied return of the former rain in a 21st century Pentecost (Joel 2:23). And this is true of spiritual zeal and Bible truth, too, for they all work in hand.

What follows is a record of some of those intermittent showers that fell before the former rain returned in the 21st century Pentecostal movement.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) “sang in unknown words with such facility and winsomeness that her utterances were known as “concerts in the Spirit.”

Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) spoke in other tongues according to some editions of the Catholic Encyclopedia.

The Waldenses, followers of the reformer Peter Waldo (died 1217), were one of the purest Evangelical groups of the Middle Ages. Devoted to Bible reading, they denounced the corruptions of papal Rome, and strove to return to the purity of the New Testament church. The Waldenses believed in visions and prophecies. Both speaking

in tongues and healing were manifested among these heavily persecuted Christians.

Clare of Montefalco (1193-1253) spoke ecstatically in French, although her native tongue was Italian.

Bridget of Sweden (1302-1373), daughter of Birger. Prince of Sweden, Butler records: "To speak the language of angels was the happy privilege of Saint Bridget."

Louis Bertrand (1526-1581), Catholic missionary to the Indians of the Western Hemisphere, spoke their language by the power of the Spirit.

The Reformation and Revival Eras

In the Reformation, tongues and gifts of the Spirit were manifested among the anti-Baptists, heavily persecuted forerunners of the Mennonite and Baptist movements.

The Jansenists, an Evangelical movement within the Catholic church of the 1600's, were persecuted by the Jesuits for speaking in tongues, prophesying, discerning spirits, and praying for the sick.

The literature of the early Quakers records visions, healings, prophecies, and power that they likened to Pentecost.

The Huguenots of southern France spoke in tongues, prophesied, and exercised, many gifts of the Spirit. Many of these French Protestants fled to foreign lands under persecution. In this way the movement and the attendant gifts of the Spirit spread to Holland, Germany, and England.

The Moravian brethren, whose fervor sparked Wesley's conversion, had tongues speakers in their midst. They believed they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit

in the same manner as the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

Tongues in the Nineteenth Century

Believers in Kentucky spoke in tongues during the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801. Methodists also spoke in tongues in revival meetings in Seneca County, New York.

Meanwhile, Europe also received sprinklings of Pentecostal rain. In Prussia, Lutherans began meeting for worship and Bible study at the estates of Gustav von Below and his two brothers. Soon the services were marked by speaking in tongues and spiritual songs in unrecognized languages. A church commission was sent to investigate the strange phenomenon and declared it to be of God.

In the 1830's, James and George MacDonald received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, influencing many in Scotland for Christ. In London, members of Edward Irving's Presbyterian congregation began manifesting gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy. Rejected by their denomination, Irving's followers established the Catholic Apostolic Church, in which tongues and other gifts of the Spirit were often in operation.

Converts in the Welsh and Irish Revivals of 1859 burst into rapturous praises in other tongues. Many declared that the faces of those radiated an unearthly beauty. One Irish minister proclaimed, "Sir, it is the Acts of the Apostle's all over again."

W.P. Burton traveled to New Zealand in 1899 and heard believers in Christ speaking in tongues there.

Norwegians spoke in tongues in a remarkable revival in Oslo in 1899.

Presbyterians in Armenia spoke in tongues in the early 1800's long before the

Pentecostal movement came on the scene.

The Twentieth Century

Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers, and others received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues in a mighty revival that began in Topeka, Kansas, on New Year's Day, in 1901.

In 1906, the Pentecostal fire spread to Los Angeles, where an abandoned mission at 312 Azusa Street became the scene of a revival meeting that ran for three years. Missionaries from many nations came to take part in the revival, and returned to the field greatly encouraged and newly empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As the Pentecostal message spread, many followers were severely persecuted. One leader John W. Buckalew, was shot on seven occasions, the last time fatally.

In recent years, a mighty outpouring of the Holy Ghost brought about what was called the "Pentecostal Movement" in the early 1900's, where many churches experienced a revival of the Holy Spirit's power and spiritual gifts. Later in the 1960's, spiritual gifts began to emerge in all kinds of churches and mainline denominations throughout the world, in what was called the "charismatic renewal." Spiritual gifts were suddenly manifested wherever Christian believers or congregations were receptive, and opened themselves to the inner workings of the Holy Spirit.

Today, the charismatic gifts remain available as a part of God's plan for His church, and are increasingly being manifested within Christian fellowships and believers around the world. They are sometimes called God's "power tools," given to the body of Christ as valuable helps to accomplish the works of the ministry.

It should always be remembered that the purpose of all the gifts of the Spirit are to edify the church, and their distribution within the body is completely dependent upon the

discretion of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:11). The Scriptures imply that it is appropriate to seek specific gifts, however, one's motive must be for the building up of the church body, nor for self gratification. "...since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel" (I Corinthians 14:12).

There is a difference between gifts and fruit. Gifts are the Spirit's manifestation through a vessel, but fruit is the offspring of one's spiritual character. Spirituality cannot be measured by gifts, but by fruit (Galatians 5:22-24). Love is the predominate feature of spirituality (I Corinthians 13:13), without which, charismatic gifts cannot function effectively (I Corinthians 13:1-2). St. Paul expressed that the church should have a desire for spiritual gifts, but it should follow the foremost pursuit of love. "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts" (I Corinthians 14:1).

The service where spiritual gifts function may likely take on a less structured, more spontaneous environment that may seem peculiar to some. But in I Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul established specific guidelines for their use, so to remove the potential for confusion and disorder.

Rather than banishing the operation of these gifts entirely as some churches have done in fear of mayhem, they should seek to understand and implement the prescribed order, as the apostle Paul admonished: "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophecy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order: (I Corinthians 14:39-40).

Why is it that the Pentecostal churches are growing at such a phenomenal rate? Is it possible that they have the gifts of the Spirit in the church which others do not have?

A church where charismatic gifts in all their wonder and variety are not in operation, is not the church founded on the Day of Pentecost.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given to build up the church and to make it

whole. We neglect them to our own loss. The Holy Spirit has been given, complete with nine beautiful gifts, to help us to minister the love, life, and power of Jesus Christ through the supernatural.

In this “School of the Spirit,” we desire to know more about God’s gifts, what they do, how we can release them in an exciting practical way, and then to develop them through our becoming more excellent (I Corinthians 14:12) in the ministering of them.

Let us look at the Greek terms that are used to describe the spiritual gifts:

* In I Corinthians 12:1, St. Paul uses the word (*pneumatikoi*). It is usually translated “spiritual gifts,” but a more literal translation would be “spiritual things” or more simply “spirituals.” It is derived from the word (*pneuma*), another Greek word used in Scripture to describe the Holy Spirit. “Pneumatikoi” tells us the gifts are activated by the Holy Spirit (Who is already in us) rather than by natural ability.

* In I Corinthians 12:4, Paul uses the word “charismata” which is most often translated simply as “gifts.” the term “gifts of grace” would be more accurately used to describe the meaning of the Greek. This is Paul’s most popular word for spiritual gifts, and it denotes that they are bestowed by the Holy Spirit as an act of divine grace. The gifts are such that they are freely given to any believer in Christ who desires them.

* In I Corinthians 12:5, St. Paul uses the word “diakonia” to describe spiritual gifts. The word is translated in the New Testament into the following English words: administration, ministrations, minister, ministering, ministry, office, service, relief, serving, and do service. It is a firm reminder that the gifts are for the well-being of others. The verb “diakoneo” is used in Mark 10:45, by Jesus where, speaking of Himself, He says, “The Son of man also came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.” How we need to have that attitude in our desire to bless others through the spiritual gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are our “tools” to enable us to minister to others in a God-glorifying way.

There may be seven purposes of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

1. To build up the body of Christ (I Corinthians 14: 4, 12).
2. To encourage (I Corinthians 14:3, 31).
3. To comfort (I Corinthians 14:3).
4. To praise God (I Corinthians 14:16, NIV).The KJV uses “bless” and “giving thanks.”
5. To build yourself up (I Corinthians 14:4; Jude 20).
6. To win people for Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 14:23-25).
7. To instruct (I Corinthians 14:31, NIV). The KJV uses the word “learn.”

The purpose of God is to raise up a strong army of Christian believers that is equipped to do the same works that Jesus did. Spiritual gifts in operation are a part of that purpose. Paul makes it clear that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for every believer (I Corinthians 12:7; I Corinthians 14:31). It is not God’s intention that the gifts be confined to a “spiritual elite” or to a limited number of “superstars.” God intends that every Christian believer in Christ manifests spiritual gifts. That means you and I. Remember, when using spiritual gifts, our motives and words must be checked against the standard of love.

The foundation for the power of God to move is the love of God.

1. Introduction

God has given each believer a combination of opportunities and gifts that is perfectly

suiting to his or her situation in life. Every Christian believer is really a minister with a unique contribution to make to the body of Christ. The central thrust of your ministry depends on the spiritual gifts you have received. In this course, we will look at the definition, design, desirability, and description of the gifts of the Spirit. We will also see how to discover and develop spiritual gifts, and consider the danger of their abuse and directions for their use.

II. Diversity and Unity in the Body of Christ.

When the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two, a new organism was created. This organism consists of all those who have received the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. In Acts 2:38, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:4-7, and Ephesians 2:19, it is described as a spiritual household or family. By virtue of both adoption and new birth of the water and the Spirit, we have become sons and daughters of God. This organism is also called a holy temple in Ephesians 2:20-22, and I Peter 2:4-5, and believers are its living stones. But the most frequently used metaphor for this new creation is the body of Christ (see Romans 12:4-5; I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; and Colossians 1:18).

The three major New Testament lists of the gifts of the Spirit are all introduced by a description of the unity and diversity in the body of Christ. St. Paul's metaphor for the church could not be more appropriate, because both the universal church (all believers), and the local church (geographically localized groups of believers) are unities which are built out of diverse elements.

All believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Christ is the head, the ruler of the body (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18), and believers are the individual members or components. In this analogy, each Christian has been given a special function to perform and the ability to fulfill it in a way that will benefit the other members. There is quantitative and qualitative growth when believers discover and actively use their spiritual gifts. Each part of the

body depends on the rest for its well being, and there are no useless organs. This is why edification through teaching and fellowship is so necessary in the local church. The biblical concept of *koinonia* or fellowship communicates the fact that isolation leads to atrophy. Just as no organ can function independently of the others, so no Christian can enjoy spiritual vitality in a relational vacuum. The Spirit has sovereignty distributed spiritual gifts to every member of the body, and no single member possesses all the gifts. Thus, growth does not take place apart from mutual ministry and dependence.

The body of Christ is an organism, not a dictatorship or a democracy. As such, the local church is best structured around the distribution and function of the spiritual gifts found in its members.

III. Definition and Design of Spiritual Gifts.

A. Definition

The Greek word most frequently used for spiritual gifts is *charismata*, a word that relates to the grace (*charis*) of God. Concerning these gifts, St. Paul writes, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7 NET Bible). Another word, *pneumatikos*, means spiritualities, or spiritual things.

B. Design

Here are twelve principles that relate to God’s design for spiritual gifts:

1. Every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts.

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all (I Corinthians 12:7). It is one and the same Spirit, distributing as He decides to each person, who produces all these things (I Corinthians 12:11). But to each one of us

grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7). Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God (I Peter 4:10).

Spiritual gifts are not limited to a sub-group of believers, they are distributed by the Spirit to all Christian men, women, and children.

2. Many believers have evidently received more than one spiritual gift. Because there is such a variety of gifts, the number of possible combinations is great. Each multi-gifted Christian has received a combination of spiritual abilities that is perfectly suited to his or her God-given ministry.

3. Spiritual gifts may be given at the moment of being born again of the water and the Spirit, but they may lie undiscovered and dormant for a long period of time. Multi-gifted Christians often discover their combination of gifts through a gradual process.

4. Spiritual gifts can be abused and neglected, but if they are received at the moment of being born again of the water and the Spirit, it would appear that they cannot be lost, except backsliding from God. The Corinthian church illustrates the fact that Christian believers can be highly gifted but spiritually immature.

5. Spiritual gifts are not the same as the initial gift of the Spirit speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance. The gifts of the Spirit, on the other hand, are distributed as He decides to give each person (I Corinthians 12:11).

6. Spiritual gifts are not the same as the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual fruit is produced from within; spiritual gifts are imparted from without. Fruit relates to Christlike character; gifts relate to Christian service. The fruit of the Spirit, especially love, should be the context for the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. St. Paul made it clear in I Corinthians 13, that spiritual gifts without spiritual fruit are worthless. Fruit is eternal, but gifts of the Spirit are temporal (I Corinthians 13:8); the former is a true measure of spirituality, but

the latter is not.

7. Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents. Unlike the natural abilities which everyone has from birth, spiritual gifts belong exclusively to born again believers in Christ. In some cases, the gifts of the Spirit coincide with natural endowments, but they transcend these natural abilities by adding a supernatural quality. Both are given by God (James 1:17), and should be developed and used according to their purpose for the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

8. All Christians are called to a ministry, but not all are called to an office. Ministry is determined by divinely given gifts and opportunities (Ephesians 3:7). Offices (e.g., elder, deacon, evangelist, and teacher) are humanly recognized and appointed spheres of ministry within the body.

9. Some spiritual gifts are more desirable in the Church than others because they result in greater edification of the body. St. Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to be eager for the greater gifts (I Corinthians 12:31).

10. *Charismata* literally means grace-gifts, they are sovereignly and undeservedly given by the Holy Spirit. There is no basis for boasting or envy. Every member of the body has a special place and purpose. Whether more or less prominent in the eyes of men, the same standard applies to all; it is required of stewards that one be found faithful (I Corinthians 4:2). Work with what God has given to you (II Timothy 1:6), and seek to please Him rather than men (Galatians 1:10; I Thessalonians 2:4).

11. Gifts are God's spiritual equipment for effective service and edification of the body. They are not bestowed for the self aggrandizement of the recipient, or as an evidence of a special endowment of the Spirit, but for the profit and edification of the Body of Christ. The possessor is only the instrument and not the receiver of the glory. Gifts were given so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:11).

12. High mobilization of spiritual gifts was the key to the rapid growth of the church in the New Testament (Romans 1:11; Ephesians 4:12; II Timothy 2:2).

IV. Desirability of the Gifts.

It is important that every Christian discover and develop the spiritual gifts that have been bestowed on him or her by God. These gifts are desirable for three basic reasons:

A. You will be satisfied.

Knowing and using your gifts will give you an understanding of the unique and indispensable ministry you have been called to accomplish in the body of Christ. You will discover a significant part of your purpose for being on this earth and realize that God has made you competent to produce something that will last for eternity. You will have a sense of fulfillment and joy in the service of others as you become an available instrument through which the Holy Spirit can work.

In addition, knowledge of your spiritual gifts will greatly assist you in discerning and affirming the will of God at various points in your life. God will not call you to accomplish anything without giving you the power and enablement to do it. You will be able to make more intelligent decisions about possible involvement in specific opportunities, and training in light of your God-given function in the body (Romans 12:4). You will also use your time more effectively by focusing on the things you have been equipped to do well, rather than expending your energy in areas of minimum potential.

B. Others will be edified.

Knowing and using your gifts will lead to edification of other members of the body of Christ. As you exercise your spiritual gifts, you will play a substantial role in building up other Christians and leading them into maturity (Ephesians 4:12-16). If you fail to develop your gifts or let them decline through disuse, your brothers and sisters in Christ

will actually be hurt because they will be deprived of the unique ministry that only you could perform in their lives.

C. God will be glorified.

According to I Peter 4:10-11, your spiritual gifts are ultimately designed to bring glory to God. This is your highest calling, as it relates to God the Father. As you use your spiritual gifts in conjunction with the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus Christ, God receives the glory.

Digging for the gifts.

Romans 12; I Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4, are the three primary passages of Scripture on spiritual gifts. I Peter 4:8-11 provides supplementary information on this vital subject.

V. Description of the gifts of the Spirit.

A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Spirit...given for the benefit of all (I Corinthians 12:7). As a supernatural endowment, its source is always the Holy Spirit, and its purpose is the building up of others to the glory of God.

Trying to distinguish one spiritual gift from another, or one category of gifts from another is not an easy task. In trying to make these distinctions, one must bear in mind that St. Paul uses the same Greek word (*charismata*) to describe them all. So, one has to ask whether Paul meant them to be differentiated in this way. The Scriptures do, however, help us sort these out.

The Romans Category

Lists spiritual gifts which are given by God (as identified in I Corinthians 12:6). The

passage in Romans 12, is a little more obscure in its identification of the Giver, yet the context of the passage and, once again, the verse (I Corinthians 12:6), will support the Giver as being God.

Romans 12:1-4, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of **God**, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto **God**, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of **God**. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as **God** hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Unlike the Ephesians 4 category, these gifts are not administrative nor are they callings (Romans 12). They are given to all for service in the body of Christ, and considered operational in their application (I Corinthians 12:6). These particular gifts have not been restricted to the body of Christ like the other two categories, but have been given to all people. As per I Corinthians 12:6: “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” The word “all” being the same as the “all” in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” and Jesus Christ died and rose for “all.”

Everybody is able to Teach, Serve, Rule, etc., in various capacities, and with varied effectiveness according to the measure given to each individual. One may be comfortable and effective at Teaching while not so effective at Exhortation. God being “no respecter of persons” metes out the seven gifts to all individuals so that everyone can function equally serving one another for the benefit of all.

The Ephesians Category

Is somewhat different in its application and its nature. The gifts of this category are identified as gifts by the Lord Jesus Christ, to the body of Christ. Verse 8 implies that

these gifts are part of the benefits of the resurrection which are directly associated with the works of the Son of God. Verses 12 and 13, state that they are given for the body of Christ and its edification. I Corinthians 12:5, tells us that the gifts are gifts of Administration. They can be termed administrative or ministry positions within the body of Christ that are instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ by a particular calling. This view is supported by Romans 11:29, which says, “The gifts and callings of the Lord are without repentance.” Jesus Christ, the Son of God, therefore calls individuals to take on administrative positions or roles (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers) within the body of Christ for the edification of all believers.

The Corinthians Category

Has the distinction of being gifts as opposed to Administrations and Operations (verses 4-6). Verse 7, however, identifies and clarifies them precisely as manifestations that are available to all in the body of Christ with our reservation and at the will of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit chooses one person or another to exhibit a particular gift for the profit of all. One may be given the gift of Healing because of a hospital visit that day, while the following day he may be given the gift of Prophecy, in order to communicate God’s will and love to a local congregation. These gifts are understood to be manifestations given at the time of need for the purpose at hand. Each individual believer, if open and willing to be used by the Holy Spirit, will eventually be used at the discretion of the Holy Spirit.

A. The gifts in Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; and I Corinthians 12:1-14

Other Gifts	The 5-Fold Ministry	The 9 Spiritual Gifts
Romans 12:6-8	Ephesians 4:11	I Corinthians 12:1-14

* Prophecy	* Apostolic	* Wisdom
* Ministry	* Prophetic	* Knowledge
* Teaching	* Evangelical	* Discerning of Spirits
* Exhortation	* Pastoral	* Speaking in tongues
* Giving	* Teaching	* Interpretation of tongues
* Leading		* Prophecy
* Showing mercy		* Faith
		* Working of miracles
		* Healing

Other Gifts

Sometimes referred to as Motivational (practical) gifts.

1. **Prophecy** (Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 14:1-40; Ephesians 4:11). The ability to receive and proclaim a message from God. This could involve the foretelling of future events, though its primary purpose as seen in I Corinthians 14:3, is forthtelling; one who prophecies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation. This gift provides a word from God to a specific group, not the normative Word of God to all believers. Some maintain that prophecy is still operative in this sense today, while others say that the nearest current equivalent is Spirit-empowered preaching.

2. **Ministry** (Romans 12:7). The ability to identify and care for the physical needs of the body through a variety of means. The Greek word for this gift is the same as that for Ministry or Deacon, but the gift should not be confused with the office.

3. **Teaching** (Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11). The ability

to clearly explain and effectively apply the truths of God's Word so that others will learn. This requires the capacity to accurately interpret Scripture, engage in necessary research, and organize the results in a way that is easily communicated.

4. **Exhortation** (Romans 12:8). The ability to motivate others to respond to the truth by providing timely words of counsel, encouragement, and consolation. When this gift is exercised, believers are challenged to stimulate their faith by putting God's truth to the test in their lives, and to do the works of Christ.

5. **Giving** (Romans 12:8). The ability to contribute material resources with generosity and cheerfulness for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Christians with this spiritual gift need not be wealthy.

6. **Leadership** (Romans 12:8). The ability to discern God's purpose for a group, set and communicate appropriate goals, and motivate others to work together to fulfill them in the service of God. A person with this gift is effective at delegating tasks to followers without manipulation or coercion.

7. **Mercy** (Romans 12:8). The ability to deeply empathize and engage in compassionate acts on behalf of people who are suffering physical, mental, or emotional distress. Knowing who to help and when to help. Those with this gift manifest concern and kindness to people who are often overlooked.

The Five Fold Ministry

Sometimes referred to as Ministry (office) gifts.

1. **Apostleship** (Ephesians 4:11). In the New Testament, the apostles were not limited to the Twelve, but included Paul, Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, and others as well (Acts 14:14; Romans 16:7; I Corinthians 15:5,7; I Thessalonians 2:6). If the

requirement for the office of apostle includes having seen the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:22; I Corinthians 2:6), this office ceased to exist by the second century. However, many believe that the gift of apostleship continues to be given. As a spiritual gift, this is the ability to begin and/or oversee new churches and Christian ministries with a spontaneously recognized authority.

2. **Prophetic** (Ephesians 4:11). One who speaks, or communicates a message, authoritatively, as moved by the Holy Spirit. A prophet is also known to see visions of the past, present, or future as God's discretion for His glory or to teach.

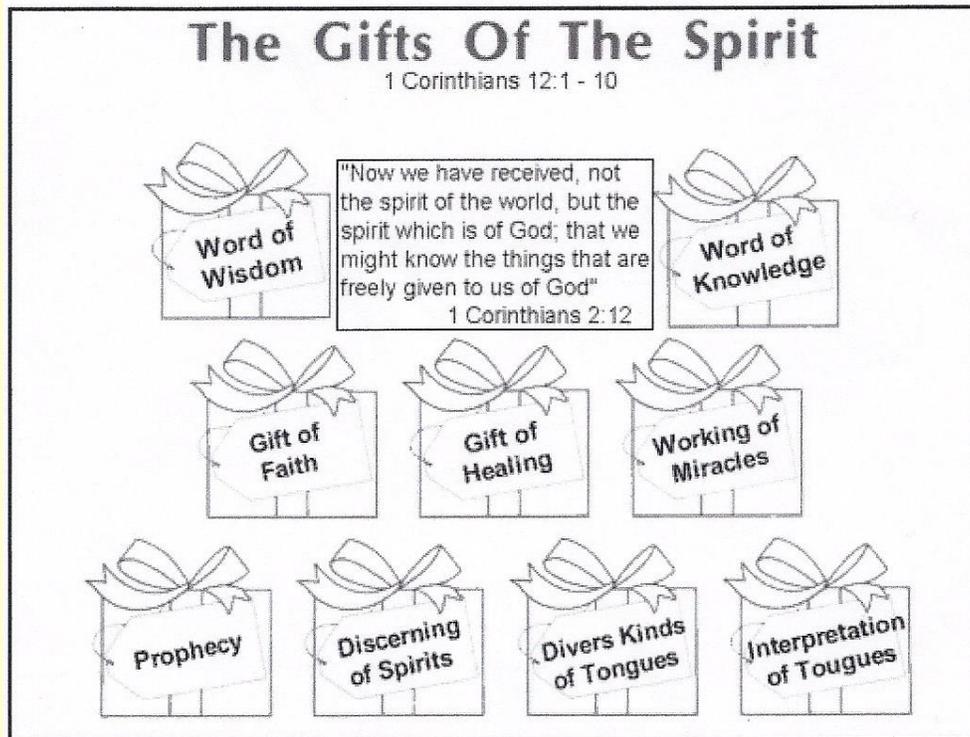
The Greek verb used in the New Testament is "profeteuo" meaning "communicating a divine revelation," or "communicating something that is hidden," or "predicting some future event."

The Hebrew word for prophet is "Nabi" or "Navi" and the verb is "Naba." The meaning of this verb is interesting as it originally means "to bubble up" or "let words flow in abundance," or "singing and speaking under divine inspiration."

3. **Evangelism** (Ephesians 4:11). The ability to be an unusually effective instrument in leading unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some with this gift are most effective in personal evangelism, while others may be used by God in group evangelism or cross-cultural evangelism. Sometimes it requires a person who is able to travel over long distances to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. **Pastor** (Ephesians 4:11). Peter was commissioned by Christ to shepherd His sheep (John 21:16), and Peter exhorted the elders in the churches of Asia Minor to do the same (I Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28). A person with this spiritual gift has the ability to personally lead, nourish, protect, and care for the needs of a flock of born again believers. Not all people with the office of Pastor (elder, overseer) have or need the gift of pastoring or shepherding, and many with this gift do not have or need the office.

5. **Teaching** (Ephesians 4:11). A teacher is someone able to understand the more difficult things of God, and explain them in a way that is easy to understand and live by in daily life.



The 9 Spiritual Gifts

Sometimes referred to as Charismatic (spiritual) gifts.

The outpouring of God's Spirit molded together a spiritual body (group of believers) Scripturally defined as the "church," (Ephesians 1:22-23). Supernatural manifestations of the Spirit occurred, commonly referred to as the "gifts" of the Spirit." By "supernatural," it is meant that which cannot be explained or understood by human reasoning and is not restricted to "natural laws." No one should ever limit the power of God to work only through those things that the natural man understands, for He hath

declared: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). The Apostle Paul, before teaching the Corinthians about the use of spiritual gifts, reminded them in I Corinthians 2:11, that: “The things (ways and thoughts) of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” This is not to say that man cannot learn the things of God, but rather that they are not perceived by worldly wisdom. Human reasoning is unable to digest spiritual truth.

The spiritual gifts are given by God to His church to profit the church and its members. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (I Corinthians 12:7). There are those today who contend that the gifts are no longer property of the church to be experienced. But there appears nothing in the Scriptures nor in the course of history to show when any of the gifts were withdrawn. The body of man has many members (hands, fingers, eyes, ears, etc.), so is the body of Christ. There are many members of one body, and all are important. Some may be more evident than others, but all are needed.

It is very clear that the early Christians read the Book of Acts of the apostles and the first letter to the church at Corinth, and knew the functioning of several abilities that were of supernatural origin, the Spirit of God. Many spoke in languages they never learned, others healed the sick though they never had studied medicine, and then there were those who had supernatural insight and wisdom.

1. The difference between the Gifts and the Fruit of the Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit are not to be confused with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is spiritual grace in the character of the believer. All aspects of the fruit are to be possessed by every believer for use all the time. On the other hand, the gifts of the Spirit are divine enablements used in directing and blessing the church body.

2. **Great Care in their Operation.**

There must be great care taken in the operation of the spiritual gifts. The church in Corinth had “gone to seed” on some of the more “spectacular” gifts. St. Paul was writing to the Corinthians to give them instructions on the regulations of the spiritual gifts within the church.

The Nine Gifts of The Spirit.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant” (I Corinthians 12:1). The gifts are placed in three distinct categories as follows:

The Gifts that Give Power to “Know” Supernaturally.

1. **Wisdom** (I Corinthians 12:8). The ability to apply the principles of the Word of God in a practical way to specific situations and to recommend the best course of action at the best time. The exercise of this gift skillfully distills insight and discernment into excellent advice. Natural wisdom according to the dictionary is the ability to apply possessed knowledge and experience. The “Word of Wisdom” and the “Word of Knowledge” are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit and exist on a plane infinitely above their natural and human counterparts. The “Word of Wisdom” is supernatural and is not associated with the wisdom of this world. There could be times that the answer we need will not come by man’s wisdom, but we will need a specific “Word of Wisdom” given by the Spirit a particular time for a particular situation.

It is the gift of the “Word of Wisdom,” and implies a spoken utterance through a direct operation of the Holy Spirit at a given moment, rather than an abiding deposit of supernatural wisdom. The normal life of the church provides a constant need for wise leadership. Problems will occur, and delicate situations arise among the most spiritual believers.

EXAMPLES:

The way the apostles dealt with the problem of the daily ministrations to widows in Acts 6:1-7.

Jesus dealing with the question of the baptism of John (Matthew 21:23-27).

The question about paying tribute to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22).

The “Word of Wisdom” is therefore the supernatural revelation, by the Spirit, of Divine purpose: the supernatural declaration of the mind and will of God, the supernatural unfolding of His plans and purposes concerning things, places, people, individuals, communities and even nations.

2. **Knowledge** (I Corinthians 12:8). The ability to discover, analyze, and systematize truth for the benefit of others. With this gift, one speaks with understanding and penetration. Some also associate supernatural perception with this gift. Every Christian must endeavor to grow in “grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord” (II Peter 3:18). The Bible does not state “gift of knowledge,” but rather it states “Word of Knowledge.” All knowledge is ultimately with the Lord,” in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). It is therefore a reasonable thing to believe that the Holy Spirit can impart a manifestation of any part of the divine “all-knowledge” at any time, as He wills. An unction of the Spirit can impart to someone the “Word of Knowledge” which would be facts from God about people, places, things and even events which a person could not possibly know unless God revealed them to him.

EXAMPLE:

* Peter and Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts 5:1-10).

* Jesus telling Peter where to find his taxation money - in a fish’s mouth (Matthew

17:27).

- * Ananias in the conversion of Paul (Acts 9:22 and 26).
- * Cornelius in finding Peter, who then was instrumental in bringing the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

The purpose of the Word of Knowledge:

- * To bring supernatural encouragement.
- * To give confirmation to what God has already been saying or doing.
- * To give insight and understanding of what is ahead in the purposes of God.
- * To help in counseling/evangelistic situations.
- * To unlock hindrances to healing/unanswered prayers.
- * To give strategies in spiritual warfare.
- * To reveal where sin is being covered up.
- * To open up a meeting or situation for God to move.

3. **Distinguishing of Spirits** (I Corinthians 12:10). The ability to clearly discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (I John 4:6). With this gift, one can distinguish reality versus counterfeits, the divine versus the demonic, true versus false teaching, and in some cases, spiritual versus carnal motives. I John 4:1 admonishes us to "...believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God..." This gift is placed in the church so that there will be means to detect what is true and what is false.

The gift of “discerning of spirits” is not only defensive; it can also be offensive in the sense that once an evil spirit is detected as operating through some human channel, that channel can then be delivered through the power of the name of Jesus Christ.

EXAMPLES:

Peter in denunciation of Simon the sorcerer was based upon discernment of the spirit of his heart (Acts 8:23).

St. Paul rebuked a spirit possessing a girl at Philippi (Acts 16:16-18).

The word “discerning” is from the Greek word “diakrisis” meaning:

- * a thorough judging.
- * a distinguishing, discerning clearly, discriminating.
- * recognizing or perceiving clearly.

Some purposes of the gift of Discerning of Spirits:

- * Being aware of good people and the good spirit that motivates them, i.e. gentle, sweet, loving, faithful, etc.
- * Counseling situations: discerning the genuine from the dishonest.
- * Revealing error in individuals or ministries, e.g. when Peter spoke to Jesus and then was rebuked (Matthew 16:21-23).
- * Evaluating the operation of spiritual gifts.

The Gifts that Give Power to “Speak” Supernaturally.

4. **Tongues** (I Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30: 14:1-40). The ability to receive and impart a spiritual message in a language the recipient never learned. For other members of the body to be edified, this message must be interpreted either by the recipient (I Corinthians 14:13), or by another person with the gift of interpretation (I Corinthians 14:26-28).

Because of the controversial nature of this gift, here are several observations:

* St. Paul qualified the public use of this gift, stating that in a meeting of the church, two or at the most three could speak in a tongue, it must be done in turn, and a person with the gift of interpretation must be present so that the body would be edified (I Corinthians 14:26-28).

* There are a number of differences between the manifestation of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), and its use in Corinth (I Corinthians 14), and these differences suggest that the two are not identical.

* In his list of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12:28, St. Paul spoke of kinds of tongues. This, coupled with the statements in I Corinthians 14:2,4, 14-15, 28, has led many to distinguish a private use of tongues, often called a prayer language (I Corinthians 14:14-15), from the public use of tongues which must be interpreted. St. Paul wrote that if there is no interpreter, he or she should be silent in the church. Let him speak to himself and to God (I Corinthians 14:28).

* This gift is easily counterfeited and often abused. It can be a source of spiritual pride, excessive preoccupation, and divisiveness.

There are different ways in which speaking in tongues is used in the Scripture.

Initial evidence when receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:6).

Speaking to God in prayer (I Corinthians 14:2, 14-15| 14:13-27). “he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.” The believer can speak in tongues in private devotion and there is no need for an interpretation.

Addressing the church, coupled with interpretation (I Corinthians 14:13-27).

Interpretation of tongues-Notice that the Bible says “interpretation” and not translation of tongues.

It is also noted that the gift of tongues as in I Corinthians 12 is different to the tongues we receive at our baptism in the Holy Spirit.

5. Interpretation of Tongues (I Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26-28). The ability to translate into the vernacular a message publicly uttered in a tongue. This gift may be combined with the gift of tongues (I Corinthians 14:13), or it can operate separately (I Corinthians 14:26-28).

When a person is used in bringing a message to the church through the “gift of tongues” there should be the gift of the “interpretation of tongues” present in order to edify the body (I Corinthians 14:13). “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.” A person must seek to excel to the edifying of the church (I Corinthians 14:12). If there is no interpreter present, the one speaking in the unknown tongue should keep silence in the church (I Corinthians 14:28). All the gifts of the Spirit should be under the control of the pastor. What a blessing the gifts, under the proper direction, can be in the local church. The pastor should always have the oversight in the final judging of the operation of the gifts (I Corinthians 14:29, 33). It is

important that there be some present who are capable of judging the operation of the Spirit.

6. **Prophecy** Prophecy can be divided into two parts: Forttelling and Foretelling. We must remember that prophecy will always be in harmony with God's Word. Prophecy will never replace the Bible or diminish its worth. The prophecy must always agree with the Bible. A prophet can prophesy, but because a person uses the gift of prophecy does not make that person a prophet (Ephesians 4:11-13). The gift of Prophecy is to bring edification, exhortation and comfort to the church (I Corinthians 14:3-5). "Prophecy serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (I Corinthians 14:22). Most prophesying statements do not contain predictions about the future.

The gift of Prophecy is the special ability that God gives to members of the body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to his gathered people, a group among them, or any one of His people individually, through a divinely anointed utterance.

Example:

Zacharias (Luke 1:67-79).

The Greek word for prophecy, "propheteia," implies that one is speaking for another; speaking on behalf of God. We are exhorted to specifically desire to prophecy (I Corinthians 14:1, 31).

Prophecy is designed by God to:

- * Strengthen the Church (I Corinthians 14:3)
- * Encourage the Church (I Corinthians 14:3).

- * Comfort the Church (I Corinthians 14:3).
- * Instruct the Church (I Corinthians 14:31).
- * To affect unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:24).

Prophecy touches the church at its point of need. It is based on revelation, the revelation of God's love, care, and desire for His people to be built up. It is not to be used to criticize or "bash" the church.

The Gifts That Give Power to "Act" Supernaturally.

7. **Faith** (I Corinthians 12:9). The ability to have a vision for what God wants to be done, and to confidently believe that it will be accomplished in spite of circumstances and appearances to the contrary. The gift of faith transforms vision into reality.

"Faith" here is translated from the Greek word: "pistis" meaning:

- * Faith, faithfulness, steadfastness.
- * "Firm persuasion, the conviction which is based upon hearing, not upon sight or knowledge; a firmly relying confidence in what we hear from God in His Word."

The spiritual gift of Faith is to be distinguished from that ordinary faith without which it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Saving faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), but this is not the spiritual gift of Faith referred to in I Corinthians 12:9. There is a faith that comes by the hearing of the Word of God (Romans 10:17), but the gift of Faith comes by the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7,9, 11). The gift of "Faith" is a measure of faith above that faith which all of us have as a child of God. It is a special Faith quickened to us by the Spirit, as are the other gifts of the Spirit. The gift of Faith surpasses all

reason, looks impossibilities in the face, and turns them into miracles (Acts 3:4, 15). There could be a time in life that one could believe God for just about anything. Act upon that faith and rejoice in what God does through that faith.

8. **Miracles** (I Corinthians 12:10, 28, 29). The ability to serve as an instrument through whom God accomplishes acts that manifest supernatural power. Miracles bear witness to the presence of God and the truth of His proclaimed Word, and appear to occur most frequently in association with missionary activity. The New Testament records that miracles took place such as:

Dorcas raised to life (Acts 9:40)

Eutychus raised to life (Acts 20:10)

At Ephesus, God wrought special miracles (Acts 19:11-12).

The working of Miracles is a gift of the Spirit in which supernatural power is released by God through a person's life to affect an immediate supernatural healing or happening.

The word "working" is, of course, an action word and is translated from the Greek word "energema" meaning:

- * "an energy, in working.
- * "to be in work, to be effective, active, operative, to energize or be energized."

The word "miracles" is translated from the well-known word "dunamais" meaning:

- * "act of power."

* “special miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself).

* “capability, power to do anything; then, power, might in action...a miracle as wrought by divine power; a work, with reference to the power required for its performance.”

Examples:

* Peter walking on the water (Matthew 14:25-33).

* Joshua commanding the sun to stand still (Joshua 10:12-14).

This gift is desperately needed today to impact an unbelieving world, and the church in general.

9. **Healing** (I Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30). The ability to serve as a human instrument through whom God supernaturally cures illnesses and restores health. The possessor of this gift is not the source of power, but a vessel who can only heal those diseases the Lord chooses to heal. Inner healing, or healing of memories is sometimes associated as another manifestation of this gift. These special “gifts of healing” though only given to certain individuals, do not preclude all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from laying hands upon the sick for their recovering (Mark 16:18), or all elders in the church from anointing with oil for healing (James 5:14). Such ministries are not dependent upon possessing any spiritual gift of Healing. When the “Gifts of Healing” are in operation, and hands are laid upon the sick, God can remove the cause of disease or affliction and healing occurs.

Most pastors and evangelists and elders who see people healed by their word of faith and authority, or by the laying on of the hands or anointing with oil, affirm that they have no special gift to heal, but that God does the healing.

Let us bear in mind that in this age, demonstrations of God's healing power are just foretastes of His glorious healing and restoring power that will work perfectly in the coming age, when His Kingdom will be established on earth and evil powers bound. Till that age, we remain frail, vulnerable and mortal bodies, and live in a dangerous and evil world.

Healing in I Corinthians 12:9 is translated from: "iama" meaning:

- * "healing"
- * "A cure, healing"
- * "healing" (the termination denoting the complete act; the result or product of the act)"

Healing was a vital part of the ministry of Jesus. He taught His disciples to follow His example and also to heal the sick. It should be an ordinary part of our lives and ministries.

Example:

- * Paul on the island of Melita (Acts 28:1-9).

Combinations and Variations of Gifts

Many if not all believers have combinations of two or more spiritual gifts. Some combinations are unusual, while others are commonly combined. Gifts that work together include pastor-teaching, leadership-administration, evangelism-teaching, tongues-interpretation, and discernment-exorcism. In addition, St. Paul distinguishes three parameters in I Corinthians 12:4-6: gifts (*charismaton*), ministries (*draconian*), and effects (*energemation*). There are not only variations in the gifts and gift-combinations, but also in the spheres and manifestations of gifts. For example, there are many

variations in the spiritual gift of teaching. Some are more effective with small groups, others with large groups, some can effectively communicate with youth, while others are best at teaching adults.

Classification of Gifts

Perhaps the best classification of spiritual gifts emerges from I Peter 4:10-11. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God. Whoever speaks, let it be with God's words. Whoever serves, do so with the strength that God supplies, so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belongs the glory and the power forever and forever.

Debate Over the Gifts

Some of the gifts like Prophecy, Miracles, Healing, Tongues, and Interpretation are the subject of considerable controversy. The vast majority of Christians are charismatics in the sense that they believe in the exercise of spiritual gifts (*charismata*). But in another sense, not all believers are charismatics; those who describe themselves by this term believe that all the gifts are still given today, while non-charismatic's believe that the controversial gifts mentioned above have ceased. The latter generally make a distinction between sign gifts and edification gifts. Sign gifts, they say, served their purpose in the first century by attesting to the authority of the apostles and their divinely-inspired message. Once the New Testament canon was complete, miraculous gifts were no longer necessary, and they gradually disappeared from the church. Hebrews 2:3-4, for example, is used by non-charismatics to imply that signs and wonders had already ceased by the time of the second generation of Christians. Some also build a case for the cessation of sign gifts from I Corinthians 13:8-10.

Charismatics generally maintain that while these gifts declined in the early church, they did not disappear. They also contend that the non-charismatic argument from I Corinthians 13:8-10 is not conclusive, because the perfect may refer to the Second

Advent of Christ, rather than the completion of the canon of Scripture. In addition, they say that the gifts of Prophecy, Miracles, Healing, Tongues, and the Interpretation of

Tongues are not merely for signs, but also for edification.

There are also differences of opinion even within the charismatic and the non-charismatic camps. Charismatics, for example, do not all agree on the role of tongues and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

VI. Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

A. Three Prerequisites:

As you seek to discover your spiritual gift or gifts, ask yourself these questions:

1. Have I been born again of the water and the Spirit. Unlike natural talents, spiritual gifts are only bestowed on believers in Christ.

2. Am I walking in fellowship with the Lord? To be effective, spiritual gifts must be manifested in the context of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This fruit is impeded by unconfused sin and a failure to abide in Christ (John 15:4).

3. Do I really want to develop my gift? A prerequisite to knowing your gift is a willingness to go through the effort to be involved in discovering and developing them.

B. Six Steps

1. **Asking.** Begin to ask God to show you your gifts (Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5). God wants you to discover and implement the gifts He has given you, and this is a request you can make with confidence and expectation.

2. **Awareness.** Expose yourself to the biblical teaching on spiritual gifts by studying Romans 12, I Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4. Expose yourself to other Christians who clearly know and use their spiritual gifts. Ask them about their gifts and how they discovered them.

3. **Aspiration.** God is committed to your joy, not your misery. Then you will take delight in the Lord, and He will answer your prayers (Psalms 37:4). As you pray and learn about the various gifts, ask yourself what you would most want to do. For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Your feelings should not be the only test, but they may indicate the direction for you to take. For example, Paul told Timothy, if someone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good work (I Timothy 3:1).

4. **Activity.** Just as we discover our natural talents by trying our hand at numerous things, in the same way, we can discover our spiritual gifts by experimenting with several of the available gifts. If we don't try, we will never know. This requires availability and a willingness to learn our weaknesses as well as strengths.

5. **Ability.** Activity eventually points to ability. Don't be premature in your personal evaluation, because ability increases with practice. Be sensitive to areas of improvement. Look for opportunities within the community of believers of which you are a part, and seek the evaluation of mature Christians who are familiar with your activities. Because of the danger of self-deception, spiritual gifts are best recognized by other members of the body.

6. **Affirmation.** The final affirmation of a spiritual gift is the blessing that should result from its exercise. As you use your gift or gift-combination in the power of the Spirit, God will confirm and establish you in your ministry, and there will continue to be positive feedback from those to whom you minister. It has been said that desire may indicate it, ability will confirm it, and blessing will accompany it.

VII. Developing Your Spiritual Gift

Having discovered your gift or combination of gifts, you are accountable to yourself, others, and God, to develop and cultivate that which the Spirit has implanted within you.

The gifts of the Spirit are developed in three ways:

A. By exercise. Like natural talents, spiritual gifts are developed by practice, not just by desire. Without regular exercise, they will suffer from atrophy. Continue to pursue opportunities and persevere in the use of your gift.

B. By evaluation. Be open to the evaluation and counsel of other believers in Christ. Periodically ask godly people to evaluate your ministry in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and ways to improve.

C. By education. More educational and developmental materials are available today in the ministry than ever before. Take advantage of the best books, classes, tapes, seminars, college courses, that can help you improve your God-given abilities.

VIII. Danger of Abuse

The mobilization of spiritual gifts is critical to the qualitative and quantitative growth in the body of Christ. For this reason, we must be careful to avoid the many pitfalls associated with this crucial subject. Here are ten dangers of abuse:

A. Spiritual gifts are not merely for personal use. They are designed for the edification of others. Others should benefit primarily; the user should benefit secondarily.

B. Spiritual gifts are not gained by merit or by begging. The very term *charismata* tells us that they are given solely by the grace of God (Ephesians 4:7). The Holy Spirit

distributes them as He does to each person (I Corinthians 12:11).

C. Spiritual gifts can be abused by being exercised in the power of the flesh. If they are not being used in the power of the Holy Spirit and through the love of Jesus Christ, they are of no value whatsoever (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

D. The discovery and the use of Spiritual gifts is not a game or an option. Your gifts will determine your ministry, and your ministry can have eternal consequences. God has called us to be committed and faithful to Him, and this is reflected in part by our stewardship of the abilities and opportunities He has given to us.

E. Spiritual gifts should not be a cause of discouragement. As a rule, they develop gradually, and this requires time and work. Don't be in a hurry, and don't become jealous of the gifts bestowed on others. As we have seen, gifts vary in nature, combination, extent, and intensity. God is sovereign in His distribution, and He has given you the gifts that perfectly suit your personality and circumstances.

F. Spiritual gifts should not be a cause of pride. Since they are sovereignly distributed according to the grace of God, they ought to be regarded as divinely-entrusted responsibilities, not status symbols, achievements, or trophies. Christian character and maturity is measured by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), not by spiritual gifts.

G. Spiritual gifts should not be sought as ends in themselves. In some Christian circles, there is a tendency to exalt the gifts above the Giver (God).

H. Avoid extreme positions on the gifts that are not warranted by Scripture, like the teaching that we should not seek to discover spiritual gifts, or the teaching that a Spirit-filled Christian can have all the gifts.

I. The gifts of the Spirit can be counterfeited not only by the flesh, but also by

Satanic and demonic forces. Scripture counsels us to be sensitive to this problem (Matthew 7:22-23; II Corinthians 11:13-15; I Timothy 4:1; II Peter 2:1).

J. Avoid the temptation of projecting your gifts onto others. Our thinking is naturally colored by the gifts we have been given, and if we are not careful, we will take the prescription that works for us and turn it into the norm for everyone. This can lead to a judgmental perspective on our part, and a sense of guilt on the part of others who are not gifted in the same way.

X. Directions for Use

Here are four principles that should govern our use of spiritual gifts:

A. Remember, that the Holy Spirit is the true dynamic behind the gifts. They must be exercised in dependence upon His power.

B. Spiritual gifts function best in the sphere of love (the way that is beyond comparison; I Corinthians 12:31). St. Paul placed his great description of love (I Corinthians 13) right in the middle of the most extensive Biblical passage on spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:14). It is no accident that the two other major lists of spiritual gifts (Romans 12 and Ephesians 4), also include exhortations to love.

C. In your ministry, concentrate your energy in productive areas. It is wise to maximize time in gift-related activities and minimize time in activities for which you are not suited.

D. On the other hand, Scripture commands all Christian believers to perform certain ministries regardless of individual gifts. Christian roles like intercession, faith, service, helps, mercy, and giving are the responsibility of all Christians, not just those who are specifically gifted in these areas. For example, some have the spiritual gift of Evangelism, but all believers have a role of evangelism that corresponds to the

opportunities they have been given. Be careful to avoid the spiritual cop-out mentality that says, "That's not my gift!"

Summary

When St. Paul admonishes us to "covet earnestly the **best** gifts" (I Corinthians 12:31), he is not implying that there is an absolute value scale of the gifts from greatest to least, for this is nowhere spelled out in Scripture. Therefore, seeking "the best gifts" necessitates taking into consideration what gifts the church lacks, for the church needs all the gifts just as the body needs all its members. Seeking "the best gifts" also necessitates considering the ability and personality of the seeker, for the Lord's yoke (ministry) fit's the worker in God's harvest field. Therefore, the seeker should seek to learn God's will when praying for a gift, in order to allow the Lord to distribute His gifts "as He wills: (V. 11).

God has placed the gifts of the Spirit in His church. Who is man to uproot them? No wonder the church is spiritually weak today - the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the gifts given by the Spirit have been largely ignored and rejected.

Is it any wonder that Christendom today is weak and has not fulfilled its commission to disciple the world when:

1. Most Christians refuse to ask for the Holy Spirit, as God's children are commanded to do in Luke 11:9,13?
2. Most Christians have not waited for the Promise of the Father before going out to witness, contrary to Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5, 8?
3. Most Christians teach that people automatically receive the Holy Spirit when they become believers, contrary to John 7:39, Acts 8:15-17, and Acts 19:2?

4. Most Christians deny tongues as the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit, contrary to Acts 10:45-46?

5. Most Christians are ignorant concerning spiritual gifts, contrary to I Corinthians 12:1?

6. Most Christians do not earnestly desire spiritual gifts, contrary to I Corinthians 14:1?

7. Most churches forbid speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Spirit contrary to I Corinthians 14:39?

8. Most Christians do not pray in the Spirit contrary to Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18, and Jude 20?

9. Most Christians do not pray for the sick, and do not believe God for healing, which is part of the Atonement and the New Covenant according to I Peter 2:24, Mark 16:18, James 5:14-15, and I Corinthians 12:28?

10. Most Christians refuse to crucify the flesh and sin, contrary to Romans 6:1-2, 12-13?

I Corinthians 13:1-2

“Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”--**St. Paul the Apostle**



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ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-20

