

Life in the Spirit

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

PURPOSE: To learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I. GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. There Are A Wide Variety of Gifts

Biblical authors list spiritual gifts in at least five different places (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 12:28, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Peter 4:11). There is overlap in these lists and none of these lists are exhaustive, i.e. they don't attempt to list all the possible spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 - For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Romans 12:6-8 - Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Ephesians 4:11 - And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

¹ For this study, we leaned heavily on a discipleship class from our sister church, *Crossway Community Church* in Charlotte.

1 Peter 4:11 - whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

There are many gifts because there are many areas in which ministry is needed and many effects that God desires to produce.

For an explanation of each of these gifts see “New Testament Spiritual Gifts” in Appendix I

MILLARD ERICKSON – “Since none of the four lists includes all of the gifts found in the other lists, it is quite conceivable that collectively they do not exhaust all possible gifts of the Spirit.” (Christian Theology, 876)

B. Natural or Supernatural Gifts?

Some gifts seem more “natural” (leadership, mercy, administration) while others seem “supernatural” (prophecy, healing, tongues) but all are gifts from God. Seemingly “natural” abilities are still gifts from God and unless empowered by God for particular use in the church they will never impact the church and glorify God. We can't make it in the church on “natural” talent.

J. RODMAN WILLIAMS (Renewal Theology, 332) – “Gifts of the Holy Spirit...are not latent natural talents or trained abilities brought to heightened expression....they are gifts of the Spirit, endowments, not enhancements – apportionments of the Holy Spirit.”

C. The Source of Gifts

1 Cor. 12:4-6 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

The word charisma itself means grace gift - the same word is used in the NT for salvation. No gift is earned or merited. The gifts, calling to use them and power for using them all come sovereignly and graciously from God. Although the gifts are diverse, the source is God alone.

1 Cor. 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Cor. 12:18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

D. The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

1 Cor. 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

WAYNE GRUDEM – “Spiritual gifts are given to equip the church to carry out its ministry until Christ returns.” (Systematic Theology, 1018)

1 Cor. 1:7 you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The gifts are given to edify the church and to glorify God, especially Jesus as Lord. They are expressions of His ministry among His people and care for His people.

J. RODMAN WILLIAMS (Renewal Theology, 335) – “The gifts of the Holy Spirit, not unlike the gift, are the means whereby the exalted lord carries forward His ministry through persons. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit the lord invests people with the power to witness mightily in word and deed; through the gifts he enables them to minister effectively to one another. The ministry may be to one person, to several, or to the whole body, as the Lord knows and meets the needs. As each person exercises a gift, the body is built up for its ministry of the gospel.”

E. Earnestly Desiring Gifts

1 Cor. 12:31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts.

1. Ask God For Gifts

Nowhere does the scripture discourage us from pursuing spiritual gifts. On the contrary, we are encouraged to pursue them. But...

2. Ask With Right Motives

A major portion of Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is devoted to believer's motives for desiring and using these gifts. We are to desire spiritual gifts so that God may be glorified and His church may be edified and not for our own glory or gain. Each gift is given so that we might effectively serve one another in love.

WAYNE GRUDEM (Systematic Theology, 1029) – "If spiritual gifts are sought only so that the person may be more prominent or have more influence or power, this certainly is wrong in God's eyes...It is a fearful thing to want spiritual gifts or prominence in the church only for our own glory, not for the glory of God and for the help of others. Therefore those who seek spiritual gifts must first ask if they are seeking them out of love for others and a concern to be able to minister to their needs, because those who have great spiritual gifts but "have not love" are nothing in God's sight."

a. Beware the "poor me" mentality

1 Cor. 12:14-19 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

b. Beware the elitist mentality

1 Cor. 12:20-26 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that

the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

SINCLAIR FERGUSON (The Holy Spirit, 209) – “The fruit of the Spirit should be distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit, but ought never to be absent in their exercise.”

3. Seek Opportunities To Test Your Gifting

This simply means seeking ways God would have you serve and being alert to opportunities or promptings from the Spirit to use a spiritual gift. This opens up the possibility that, while you may be particularly gifted in a particular area, God may choose to manifest a gift through you that is not a regular part of your experience.

HENRY BLACKABY AND CLAUDE KING (Experiencing God, 46)
– “I believe many people today are seeking God’s call to ministry or an assignment backwards. We teach people to discover their spiritual gifts and then look for an assignment in which they can use their gifts...When God gives an assignment, a person obeys, and God accomplishes what he intended through the person. The evidence of God’s supernatural activity is what we usually identify as spiritual gifts. A person who has never accepted an assignment will not likely know or see his or her spiritual gifts. Seeking to identify gifts instead of the assignment also can be severely limiting for a believer who only bases his future usefulness to God on his past usefulness. The way many people teach about spiritual gifts, God can only use you in assignments that require gifts you have seen evidenced in the past. Consequently many people get an assignment from God and say, “That couldn’t possibly be from God. That is not the area of my gifts. If it is an assignment from God, you obey Him and you will see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in new ways you may never have experienced before.”

4. Be Faithful With The Gifts You Now Have

Faithfulness is a powerful principle in scripture. In Jesus’ parables of the minas and the talents the ones who faithfully used what they had been given, either much

or little, were the ones who were rewarded with more. The ones who were unfaithful lost even what they had. God is looking for faithful servants and He is able to give them whatever gifts they need to accomplish the task.

5. SUMMARY

- All Christians have gifts
- There are varieties of gifts
- Every gift is necessary and therefore to be valued
- All gifts are given sovereignly and graciously
- Gifts are to be earnestly desired (1 Cor 12:31, 14:1)
- Gifts are for serving
- Ultimately, all gifts are for God's glory

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