

Shape – Your Gifts for God’s Good Purposes

Part Two: Spiritual Gifts

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By Pastors David Fields & Ricky Stephen

Spiritual Gifts

You might not be able to remember a time when Spiritual Gifts came up in conversation. We talk about our heart-desires, abilities, personalities, and experiences far more often.

However, the Bible tells us that it is part of our job after coming to Jesus to find out what our gifts are:

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. – Romans 12:3

Canadian Pastor Jon Thompson paraphrases Romans 12:3 this way:

“Do not spend your life trying to be something God did not make you to be. Do not wish for other gifts not given to you by the Spirit. Do not waste your time trying to work in ministry areas that you are not gifted in.”¹

Our most purposeful and powerful—yes, soaked in the power of God’s Spirit—life is available when we know and operate within our Spiritual Gifts.

What are the Spiritual Gifts?

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes:

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers, and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

¹ Jon Thompson, *Convergence*, pg. 79.

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b] ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

In this passage we learn four important things about spiritual gifts:

1. The Spiritual Gifts *Give Glory to Jesus* (1 Corinthians 12:3)—these are not just our natural abilities, the Spiritual Gifts come into our lives when we accept and follow Jesus.
2. The Spiritual Gifts are *Generously Given by God's Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:1, 11)—we do not merit the gifts given by the Spirit and they can come upon us in spite of our natural proclivities or personality at times.
3. The Spiritual Gifts are for the *Common Good* (1 Corinthians 12:7)—our gifts are not for our benefit, nor do they elevate us above others. We are equally important and differently gifted (12:12-26)
4. The Spiritual Gifts can be *Grown* (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1)—it is for us to seek and develop our use of these gifts and call out the gifts in others.

A Brief and Inadequate Survey of Spiritual Gifts

The gifts show up in three main passages: Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4:11-16. These passages do not describe all the gifts the Spirit can give, but they are the primary gifts still operative.

What follows is a brief description of each named gift in scripture. They are divided into three categories based loosely on the work of Jon Thompson and Robert Clinton. These categories help us see that sometimes we can overemphasize one area of gifts and downplay others. The categories are Service Gifts, Word Gifts, and Power Gifts.

Service Gifts

The Service gifts exist to make manifest the love of God.²

- **Guidance** (1 Cor. 12: 28)
 - The gift of guidance or administration is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to love people by managing the details of day-to-day service, especially to free up those with other gifts to prioritize their efforts.

² Much of this list and these descriptions is adapted from Jon Thompson's *Convergence* mentioned above.

- **Service** (1 Cor 12:28; Rom. 12:7)
 - The gift of service or helping is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to notice and meet the practical needs of people.
- **Mercy** (Rom. 12:8)
 - The gift of mercy is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to show grace, pity, and compassion to people—especially those seen as undeserving by others.
- **Giving** (Rom. 12:8)
 - The gift of giving is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit toward outrageous generosity in the support of the work of God.

Word Gifts

Word gifts clarify the nature, action, and purposes of God.

- **Teaching**
 - The gift of teaching is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to unpack the truths found in the word of God.
- **Exhortation/Encouragement** (Romans 12:8)
 - The gift of exhortation is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to encourage, strengthen, and advise.
- **Apostleship**
 - The gift of apostleship is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to pioneer ahead into new work or territory. This is often associated with missionaries. I know there is a limited sense that the word is used to speak of those who saw Jesus raised from the dead. But Paul uses it in a broader sense of a still active gift too.
- **Leadership**
 - Leadership is the gift and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to envision new realities and help a group of people to move into these.
- **Pastoring**
 - Pastoring is the gift and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to lead and nurture from alongside, as opposed to from 'in front', by modeling maturity, protecting from error, and disseminating truth.
- **Evangelism**
 - We are all called to evangelism, yes. However, it is a gift as well. The gift of evangelism is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to communicate the gospel in a powerful and persuasive way.

Power

The Power Gifts demonstrate the power, presence, and reality of God.³

- **Prophecy** (1 Cor. 14:3)
 - Prophecy is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to offer a situational word from God—describing how He will act in the future or what He is up to now.
- **Tongues**
 - Tongues is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues not known to the speaker.⁴
- **Intercession**
 - The gift of prayer is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to pray for the needs of others, sometimes without those needs being disclosed beforehand.
- **Faith**
 - All are called to have faith, but the gift of faith is an empowerment of the Spirit to help the community move to a deeper sense of trust in God for the miraculous or to trust him when things go wrong.
- **Discernment of Spirits**
 - The gift of discernment is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be sensitive to the unseen realm and the way it interacts with our lives.
- **Words of Wisdom/Knowledge**
 - Words of Wisdom or Knowledge are an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to know things you should not know about a person or speak with an authority about something you do not know in their lives.
- **Healing**
 - Healing is an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to bring wellness to a person's being.
- **Miracles**
 - The gift of Miracles is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate God's power—physically or spiritually.

³ A note on these gifts, we should still expect these gifts to be operative within Christian community. However, if we aren't seeing them operative every week, it doesn't mean the Spiritual Gifts aren't at work. All the above gifts are supernatural empowerments of God's Spirit as well.

⁴ Tongues are presented multiple ways in scripture. As a private prayer language empowered by the Spirit to pray for things we don't know to pray for (Romans 8:26). Speaking in actual earthly languages understood by your listeners (Acts 2). Or as an angelic language in public services followed by interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:1-25)

Warning: Gifts Don't Guarantee Character

Jesus warned His disciples that false prophets would lead people astray and that some would do great miracles in His name but be denied by Him on that final day (Matthew 7:15-23).

Within these sayings of Jesus, and through experience, we need to know that gifts are given without merit. This means that sometimes the gifts a person has outpace their character.

Often, we elevate people to power and leadership based on their gifts, but Jesus was interested in their character.

Since gifts don't guarantee character, make sure to pay attention to the giver of the gift—the Holy Spirit—and weigh the character of the messenger.

Invited to Activate the Gifts in Others

Paul writes to Timothy, his apprentice:

"Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you" — 1 Timothy 4:14

The Spiritual Gifts exist for the growth and development of the Church and, as such, the proper context to learn and develop your gifts is in community.

It is on all of us to notice and call out the gifts we see in others.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up

- Spend some time talking about your experience of Spiritual Gifts. Where have you been powerfully affected by someone operating in their gifts? Where have the gifts been abused?
- How do you feel about the idea of seeking out your gifts for this season?
- Spend some time in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal your gifts to you and to move among you as you study together.

Dig In

- Reread **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**, what stands out to you about the nature of the gifts? What questions do you have?
- How do you think Spiritual Gifts differ from natural abilities?
- Read the list of Spiritual Gifts, either individual or together, what gifts do you see an abundance of at Summit? Which Gifts would you like to see.

Press In

- Find a way to spend time calling out the gifts in the members of your group. A few options:
 - Have pieces of paper for each member and tell them to put their name on the piece of paper. Pass the papers around and write the gifts you see for each person on that paper.
 - Spend time praying over each individual in your group. Ask God to reveal the gifts He is giving to them; pray for gifts you think God would like them to have. Then spend time encouraging that person.
 - Go back through the list together and as you see a gift people in your group have, call out the gifts in them.

As You Go

- Leave each other with this challenge. Which of your primary gifts do you need to find a space to serve in this week?

Another Possible Resource:

There are many 'Spiritual Gifts Assessments' available online. They often don't include all of the gifts we've listed above. However, if you'd like a starting place for further discovery, the test found at <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/> is relatively comprehensive. It does require creating a user to access.

However, the primary way we should verify our gifts is in community. Use tools like this to start a conversation, not to box yourself in.