

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

Definition

- A spiritual gift is a Holy Spirit-given capacity for service within the church
 - The Means: the Holy Spirit is the One who gives these gifts
 - The Purpose: they are given to enable the believer to serve other believers
 - The Sphere: they are to operate within the body of Christ, the church
- It is important to note the distinction between gifts and talents: A talent is a human and natural ability given at birth
- It may be in the area of music, speech, organization, etc.; but no natural talent, however great it might be, can be used by its owner to glorify God until it is sanctioned by the Holy Spirit
- When this occurs, the talent then may become a gift

- To illustrate this, consider an individual who is a brilliant and talented musician
- His ability is acclaimed by millions, but the performer is not a Christian and thus his talent can never be used by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God
- But assume the man hears the gospel and accepts Christ as Savior...now the Holy Spirit may determine to transform the man's natural talent into a supernatural gift
- As there is no specific gift of music as such, the musician's new efforts for Christ would probably fall under that of exhortation, which is a listed gift

Spiritual Gifts were Given when the Spirit was Given

- In the Old Testament, believers were not indwelt with the Holy Spirit, but a few received the Spirit for accomplishing tasks

Exodus 31:2-3 ~ See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,

1 Samuel 10:6; 11:6 ~ Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man...Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.

- While some were given unique abilities by the Holy Spirit, this was not true for most Old Testament believers
- Only when the Spirit was given as Pentecost did believers receive gifts of the Spirit

Acts 1:4-5, 8 ~ He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 2:33 ~ Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Every Believer Possesses Spiritual Gifts

1 Peter 4:10 ~ As **each one** has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Ephesians 4:7 ~ But to **each one** of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

1 Corinthians 12:7 ~ But to **each one** is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good

1 Corinthians 12:11 ~ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to **each one** individually just as He wills.

- Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit and, because that is true, every believer possesses gifts of the Spirit

No Believer Possesses All the Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:29-30 ~ All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

- This is why every believer using their gift within the body of Christ is so important
- All the gifts are necessary in the body of Christ, so each believer exercising his/her gift is necessary for the expression of all the gifts in the body

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

To Glorify God

Revelation 4:11~ Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created

To Edify the Church

1 Corinthians 12:7 ~ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good**.

1 Corinthians 14:12, 26 ~ So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound **for the edification of the church**...Let all things be done for **edification**.

Ephesians 4:12 ~ for the **equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

1 Peter 4:10 ~ As each one has received a special gift, employ it in **serving one another**, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

- Gifts are given for the edification and building up of the body of Christ
- When believers use the spiritual gifts they have been given, they minister to each other; in doing so, the body of Christ is built up and encouraged

DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God Sovereignly Distributes Them

1 Corinthians 12:11 ~ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as **He wills**.

- God the Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses what gifts to give each individual
- God knows best what gifts each believer needs...we don't decide what gift we have
- Nor, should we pray for a certain spiritual giftedness
- More importantly, we are to recognize what gifts God has sovereignly given and use them to edify the body and glorify Him

God Gives a Variety of Gifts

1 Peter 4:10 ~ As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold (multi-colored) grace of God.

1 Corinthians 12:4 ~ There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit.

- Does anyone have the same spiritual giftedness as someone else?
- A good way to think about this is that spiritual gifts are like an artist's palette – Individual gifts are the pure colors which are mixed for each person to a unique mixture of spiritual giftedness.

ABUSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Not Using Them

1 Timothy 4:14 ~ Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

2 Timothy 1:6 ~ And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

- See 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 on the importance of all the gifts

Trying to Use Gifts Not Given to Us

- In 1 Corinthians 14, the Corinthians were trying to speak in tongues, gifts that were not their sovereign gifting

Not Using the Gifts in Love

1 Corinthians 13:1 ~ If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

- Perhaps the greatest abuse of all is the use of gifts without love
- Love for others and a deep desire to be believers maturing, growing, and being sanctified must be the overriding motivation in the use of the gifts
- Using the gifts for personal gain, recognition, or any other wrong motivation gives evidence of self love rather than love for Christ and His bride
- Love is the attitude that is necessary in all ministry in the church since selfless love is more concerned with giving than receiving (something the Corinthians had backwards)

THE NUMBER OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- In two main passages, the Apostle Paul lists the separate spiritual gifts for us: Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
- Ephesians 4:11-12 is not a list of spiritual gifts – rather, it identifies gifted men (who have a particular gift mix)
- These lists are exhaustive—all spiritual gifts fit in here
- Illustration: The spiritual gifts that are listed are the “primary colors” that the Holy Spirit sovereignly mixes in each believer’s life for the exact ministry He has ordained for them.

Romans 12:6-8 ~ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 ~ For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Permanent Gifts

Knowledge (1 Cor 12:8)

- A special gift of understanding the word of God—the truth part of teaching
- Significant insight into the meaning of the Word

Wisdom (1 Cor 12:8)

- If the definition of the gift of knowledge is correct, then the gift of wisdom would refer to that supernatural ability to rightfully apply and spiritually employ that information gathered through the gift of knowledge.
- This refers to Scripture applied
- These first two are usually connected with exhortation/teaching

Faith (1 Cor 12:9)

- The special Spirit given capacity to trust God-
- This person has a special capacity to cling to God’s promises—to depend on him.
- People with this gift are used by God to instill faith in others.

Discerning of spirits (1 Cor 12:10)

- This gift is the supernatural ability to distinguish between demonic, human, and divine spirits in another person...both Peter and Paul possessed this gift.
- It could be one of the temporary gifts in light of the unique apostolic role and the need to determine what was truly God’s revelation at this time

Prophecy (1 Cor 12:10; Rom 12:6)

- Two parts
 - 1) Foretelling –Acts 11:27-28 – Agabus prophesied that there would be a great famine over the whole world
 - a) must be consistent with God’s word
 - b) must come true
 - 2) Forthtelling—Declaring the Word of God---1 Corinthians 14:1-3—Prophecy edifies

Helps/Service (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28)

- The supernatural ability to render practical help in both physical and spiritual matters
- Examples: Dorcas/Tabitha

Teaching (Rom 12:7)

- The supernatural ability to communicate and clarify the details of the Word of God in such a way that God's people understand and apply the truth
- This is usually tied with the gift of exhortation as well as a love for studying the Word of God

Exhortation (Rom 12:8)

- The special ability to call people to change—to respond to the word of God
- God uses this person in a special way to motivate change in other people's lives
- This can be public (connected with teaching) or it can be private—one to one exhortation

Giving (Rom 12:8)

- This is the supernatural ability to accumulate and give large amounts of one's finances to the glory of God
- A great example of this is the Macedonian believers who gave liberally (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

Leadership (Rom 12:8)

- The supernatural ability to clearly identify the Lord's will and then motivate and guide others in that direction for God's glory
- This involves equipping, wisdom, and a strong grasp on the Word of God
- This is not a dictator or the world's idea of a strong natural leader
- Usually this is a team leader who relies on shared giftedness in a church

Mercy (Rom 12:8)

- The special ability to express compassion and empathy for others
- It is obvious who has this one—they minister deeply to those who are hurting (2 Cor. 2:2-4)

Temporary Gifts

- Reasons we know that some of the gifts (like healing, ability to perform miracles, tongues, etc.) were temporary:

1. 1 Corinthians 13:8 Says Tongues Will Cease

1 Corinthians 13:8 ~ Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away

- Both uses of the verb "will be done away," referring to prophecy and knowledge, are in the passive voice, meaning that something will cause them to cease (i.e. "the perfect" described in verse 10, namely the eternal state)
- The verb "will cease," referring to tongues, is in the middle voice, meaning that they will cease by themselves prior to "the perfect" coming
- Vine's notes that this word "cease" means "to stop, to make an end, [and] is used chiefly in the Middle Voice in the N.T., signifying to come to an end, to take one's rest, a willing cessation (in contrast to the Passive Voice which denotes a forced cessation)"

2. Tongues Were Only for a Very Unique Time

- Tongues and other miraculous abilities were revelatory gifts given to unique people at unique times in history for the purpose of confirming the revelation being given
- We know of only three times in history when these gifts were given and used:
 - a. Time of Moses
 - b. Time of Elijah and Elisha
 - c. Time of Christ and the Apostles
- During these three times, God was giving His revelation, His Word, and in order to confirm that the message being spoken was from God, men were given these unique abilities
 - a. Moses = Pentateuch
 - b. Elijah/Elisha = Prophets
 - c. Christ/Apostles = New Testament
- Specifically, in the New Testament, these revelatory gifts were used to confirm the apostolic message and establish the foundation of the church

Ephesians 2:19-20 ~ you...are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*

2 Corinthians 12:12 ~ The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles

- Once the message of the Gospel was confirmed and the foundation of the church was laid, tongues and other miraculous gifts were no longer necessary and ceased to serve any purpose
- A point came when the revelatory gifts were already looked on as something in the past

Hebrews 2:3-4 ~ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will"

- Thus, tongues were given to aid in ushering in a new era by confirming the message of the apostles
- Once the transition from Old to New Covenant occurred, tongues and miraculous signs were no longer necessary

3. Only the Earliest Epistles Mention Tongues

- Tongues are only mentioned in Acts and 1 Corinthians, both written early in the New Testament
- Two other books, Romans and Ephesians, both written later, describe spiritual gifts, but fail to mention tongues
- No other New Testament book mentions tongues
- If tongues were still in effect when these later books were written, one would think that they would be mentioned
- Tongues ceased to be an issue of record or practice in the early church, as the Scripture was being written

4. Paul Had Lost Miraculous Abilities

- Philippians 2:25-27 "But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus...because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him..." (written 62 AD)

1 Timothy 5:23 ~ No longer drink water *exclusively*, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments (written 65 AD)

2 Timothy 4:20 ~ but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus (written 67-68 AD)

- After the need for revelatory gifts had passed, Paul encountered many people who were sick, but he was apparently unable to heal them

5. Five Conditions are Necessary for Tongues to be Biblical

a. Tongues must be a known language

Acts 2:6-11 ~ they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God'

1 Corinthians 14:7-11 ~ Yet *even* lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no *kind* is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me"

b. There must be an unbeliever present

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 ~ In the Law it is written, 'BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,' says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers

- One of the purposes of tongues was to show God's judgment on unbelieving Israel for their disobedience and to show that God's work now encompassed the Gentiles as well

c. There must be an interpreter present

1 Corinthians 14:13 ~ Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 ~ If anyone speaks in a tongue...let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God

d. Tongues must be spoken in the church, in an orderly fashion, with only two or three speaking

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 ~ I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, **in the church** I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue

1 Corinthians 14:23 ~ If therefore **the whole church** should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?

1 Corinthians 14:26 ~ What is *the outcome* then, brethren? **When you assemble**, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 ~ If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be* by **two or at the most three**, and *each in turn*, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent **in the church**; and let him speak to himself and to God

e. It must be done for the edification of the body, not personal edification

1 Corinthians 12:7 ~ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good

1 Corinthians 14:12, 26 ~ So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church...Let all things be done for edification

- Are these 5 conditions met when tongues are used today?

6. Not All of Acts is Normative

- True, some converts mentioned in Acts did speak in tongues
 - Jews at Pentecost – Acts 2:4, 11
 - Cornelius and his household – Acts 10:46
 - John's disciples – Acts 19:6
- However, many converts in Acts did not speak in tongues
 - Ethiopian eunuch – Acts 8:25-40
 - Lydia – Acts 16:14-15
 - Philippian jailer – Acts 16:30-34
- Just because something happened in Acts does not mean that it was normative then, nor does it mean that it is normative for today
- No consistent pattern for the use of tongues is evident in Acts

HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT?

1. Pray for wisdom in discerning your gift mix
2. Evaluate what you desire to do and what brings you joy – often the Spirit matches your spiritual gifts to your natural desires and abilities
3. Get involved in ministry - try new things and explore various ministries to see what is involved
4. Evaluate which areas of spiritual service seem to most fit your gifting
5. Evaluate the fruit that results when you use your gifts
6. Consider the affirmation from others – the ultimate test of our ministry for Christ is its impact upon other people