



Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are supernatural enablement given to believers in Jesus Christ to grow and equip the Body of Christ “for the work of service” in the Church Age. Spiritual gifts are grace gifts from God. They are part of God’s grace resources provided to enable the believer to grow spiritually and in doing so, to evangelize the unbelieving world resulting in the expansion of the Body of Christ, to function as a member the Body of Christ, to produce divine good thus glorifying God and fulfilling the plan of God for their lives. Eph. 4:12-13; Eph. 4:16.

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-13, NASB)

"from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:16, NASB)

Spiritual gifts are not an ability nor a talent nor a general area of accomplishment, either real or potential. They are divine enablement. 1 Cor. 12:7-8.

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;" (1 Corinthians 12:7-8, NASB)

Spiritual gifts are not earned, never deserved, not developed, and not acquired through emotional experience. Your spiritual gift becomes operational through normal spiritual growth. All Church Age believers were given a spiritual gift by God the Holy Spirit at salvation. All believers have equal privilege and opportunity from God's grace resources they gain from Bible doctrine in the right lobe of their soul.

God the Holy Spirit in His sovereign wisdom has provided different spiritual gifts. Each believer has a different function in the Body of Christ just as different functions exist for different parts of the human body. The function of spiritual gifts depends on the filling of the Holy Spirit and the believer’s level of spiritual growth. If you are growing spiritually, your gift will automatically begin to function even if you are not aware of which gift you have.

Spiritual gifts function totally apart from emotion. Emotion neither characterizes the filling of the Spirit nor the function of spiritual gifts. We have to advance in our spiritual life before we recognize our spiritual gift. Those who do not advance in their spiritual life never come to know their spiritual gift.

Categories of Spiritual Gifts

There are two general categories of spiritual gifts - temporary and permanent. The Church Age is composed of two parts - the Pre-canon period from 30 to 96 AD and the Post-canon period, which is the remainder of the Church Age. The permanent spiritual gifts function during both the Pre-canon period and the Post-canon period. The temporary gifts operated ONLY in the Pre-canon period of the Church Age from 30 to 96 AD. After 96 AD, all temporary spiritual gifts ceased to function as a grace operation because their purpose had been fulfilled according to the Word of God. This is a very important biblical principle to remember.



If you have personally believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you have a permanent spiritual gift. There are no exceptions. Every believer is given a permanent spiritual gift at salvation.

All spiritual gifts are not listed in the Scripture, but merely representative of categorical concepts. Some gifts require education, training and preparation and are mentioned, such as evangelism, and pastor-teacher. For divine production from our spiritual gifts, we must have the filling of the Holy Spirit and for maximum production from our spiritual gift, we must have a maximum knowledge and application of Bible truth. The proper attitude to have toward our spiritual gifts is given in Romans 12:1-8.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 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." (Romans 12:1-8, NASB)

You are not to feel inferior or feel superior about your spiritual gift. How could we feel inferior if it's a gift and God the Father planned it and God the Holy Spirit disseminated it at the moment of salvation? If we feel inferior because of our spiritual gift, then we are saying that God didn't know what He was doing. God knows exactly which gifts to give, how we can best serve Him, and how we can contribute to the unity of the Body of Christ.

The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts

All spiritual gifts are a matter of grace. No gift is given based on merit of the believer. Spiritual gifts are sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit to each believer at the point of salvation. Therefore, a spiritual gift is never earned or deserved. 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." (1 Peter 4:10, NASB)

The gift given to every Church Age believer represents the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. For the first 20 year of the Church Age, spiritual gifts came from the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit. Our Lord made the first distribution on the day of Pentecost, ten days after His ascension. But since that time, the Holy Spirit makes the distribution of all spiritual gifts. Eph. 4:7-8; Heb. 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:11.

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.'" (Ephesians 4:7-8, NASB)

"God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." (Hebrews 2:4, NASB)

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



The Source of Spiritual Gifts

All members of the Godhead are the source of spiritual gifts. Since God the Father is the planner, He decided in eternity past how many of each spiritual gift would be needed to fulfill His plan. In 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God" refers to God the Father. God the Father uses the ministry of God the Holy Spirit for giving spiritual gifts. Heb. 2:4.

"And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:28, NASB)

"God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." (Hebrews 2:4, NASB)

Jesus Christ, following His ascension was involved in the initial distribution of both permanent and temporary spiritual gifts. The temporary spiritual gifts have not been operational since 96 AD. He then emptied Paradise by transferring the souls and human spirits of all Old Testament saints to the third heaven. This was a fulfillment of Isaiah 68:18. Eph. 4:7-8.

"You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there." (Psalms 68:18, NASB)

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, 'WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.'" (Ephesians 4:7-8, NASB)

They have no resurrection bodies yet as this will occur at our Lord's Second Advent where Old Testament and Tribulation believers will receive resurrection bodies. This will complete the Age of Israel. Rev. 11:18.

""And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."" (Revelation 11:18, NASB)

The Coordination of Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit gives and coordinates the spiritual gifts in the universal Body of Christ and the pastor-teacher coordinates the local church. Eph. 4:11-12.

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;" (Ephesians 4:11-12, NASB)

Bible doctrine is what makes the spiritual gifts function. The local church has three structures; the pastor-teacher, spiritual gifts of the deacon board members, and spiritual gifts in the congregation. Thus, the spiritual gifts speak of balance, coordination, production, practicality, and durability.

Balance - all spiritual gifts are necessary.

Coordination - all competition in Christ is removed.

Production - every believer has their place, their niche.

Practicality - every believer exercising their spiritual gift has confidence.

Durability - every believer contributes to the outworking of God's plan.



It is not necessary for you to recognize your spiritual gift for you to function under it. Function is dependent upon the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the erection of an edification complex, rather than a knowledge of your spiritual gift. For divine production from your spiritual gift, you need the filling of the Holy Spirit and the transfer of *gnosis* (knowledge) from the left lobe of the mentality of the soul into *epignosis* (full knowledge) in the right lobe of the soul.

Spiritual gifts are the Father's organized witness (not personal witness) to the plan of salvation. In evangelism, many more gifts are operating than the gift of evangelism. It is a divine good team effort by the Body of Christ. Heb. 2:4.

"God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." (Hebrews 2:4, NASB)

Perspective of the spiritual gifts is given in 1 Corinthians 12. Possession of a spiritual gift does not indicate merit or spirituality. "Gift" connotes grace. Paul was the worst sinner who ever lived, yet he was given several spiritual gifts. 1 Tim. 1:12-14.

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 1:12-14, NASB)

The Proper Attitude Toward Our Spiritual Gifts

What is your attitude toward spiritual gifts? Romans 12:1-2 deals with that subject of each believer being a living sacrifice. This is you as a believer being willing to do the will of God in your life, regardless where He takes you. This is thinking and doing whatever the will of God entails and thinking God's thoughts after Him - the mind of Christ enabling you to fulfill the will of God. This is a description of a mature believer. Being a mature believer is simply the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, and applying the Word of God from your soul to the issues and decisions in life.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2, NASB)

Spiritual growth enables each of us to apply unconditional *agapao* mental attitude love toward other people. This should be your attitude when using your spiritual gift. You should be willing to do God's will, whatever it might be, because you have put it to the test already and found it to be of God's will which is good and perfect.

When you are growing spiritually, then you will not feel inferior toward any spiritual gift. You will not feel superior about any spiritual gift. Why? It is a gift from the grace of God. You should find it impossible to feel either superior or inferior.

Whatever you are doing for the Lord, you must do it with unconditional love toward other people. If you do not love other people, your utilization of your spiritual gift will be hypocritical. You will just be a pretender. You might even be serving and utilizing your spiritual gifts to the maximum. As concerning production, those who serve and do a lot because they love the martyr complex, do so selfishly. That is not serving the Lord with unconditional mental attitude love.



The Team Concept of Spiritual Gifts

Just as team sports involve players each with a certain position and function, so does the Body of Christ regarding spiritual gifts. Every operational spiritual gift is necessary for the advancement of the Body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12:4.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware." (1 Corinthians 12:1, NASB)

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:4, NASB)

The function of all spiritual gifts depends on the believer being filled of the Holy Spirit and having matured spiritually to some degree. There are also many types of Christian service and many opportunities for Christian service. We all serve the same Lord, but we do not serve in the same way. 1 Cor. 12:5-7.

"And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:5-7, NASB)

The sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual gifts. He gives the believer their spiritual gift at salvation on the basis of His decision, not ours. Our spiritual gift is given from the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, not based on any personal merit. We do not acquire, attain, earn, or deserve our spiritual gift. 1 Cor. 12:11.

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

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 teaches the importance of teamwork in spiritual gifts. Believers are involved in the highest form of teamwork in the Body of Christ that has ever existed.

"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:26-27, NASB)

1 Corinthians 12:28-30 teaches the perspective of the diversity of temporary spiritual gifts during the Pre-Canon period of the Church Age. Some men were given the spiritual gift of teaching mystery doctrines that would eventually be in writing in the completed New Testament. This was not the same as the permanent spiritual gift of pastor-teacher.

"And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 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?" (1 Corinthians 12:28-30, NASB)

Paul urges the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:31 to look for the greater spiritual gifts – the permanent spiritual gifts coupled with the written completed canon of the New Testament. This combination is the “still more excellent way.”

"But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:31, NASB)

The sensational, temporary spiritual gifts of the Pre-Canon period were not the “greater gifts” mentioned



in this context (apostleship, tongues, prophecy, interpretation of tongues). The sensational spiritual gifts belong to the Pre-Canon period of the Church Age (30-96 AD). These gifts provided the New Testament verbally before the New Testament was written. Many theologians consider the temporary to be the greater spiritual gifts, but they are not. The greater spiritual gifts are permanent spiritual gifts of the Post-Canon period of the Church Age.

The Human Body Analogy of Spiritual Gifts

Certain parts of the human body are prominent with others hidden. Some spiritual gifts are prominent with others hidden. All Church Age believers are made members of the Body of Christ through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit where were are placed in union with Jesus Christ at salvation. 1 Cor. 12:12-13.

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, NASB)

In the Body of Christ, there are no racial distinctions and no social distinctions. Once you believe in Jesus Christ, you are a member of the God's family with equal privilege and equal opportunity. The body has unity with many parts functioning in concert with each other. 1 Cor. 12:14.

"For the body is not one member, but many." (1 Corinthians 12:14, NASB)

An analogy is made between the physical body in its coordination and the Body of Christ in its coordination of spiritual gifts. As these spiritual gifts are exercised, all competition is replaced with coordination, the true unity in the Body of Christ.

One part of the human body is not more important than any other part of the human body. Whether it is something obvious and used all the time such as your hands for example, they are really no more important than the pituitary gland. If you had a malfunction of this gland, it would affect every other part of the body adversely as it grows. Every part of the human body is important for the purpose that God designed it. That's the way it is with the Body of Christ.

The analogy is continued in 1 Corinthians 12:21-22. For example, the eye cannot say it doesn't need the hand. Also, the head can't say it doesn't need the feet. The head is just as important as the foot and the eyes are just as important as the hands. It goes on to say that those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are actually indispensable and the parts that are unrepresentable in public are treated with special modesty. Remember the importance of the little pituitary gland?

"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;" (1 Corinthians 12:21-22, NASB)

In the analogy, Christ is the head and shepherd of the sheep. The pastor-teacher is the under-shepherd in the local church. Eph. 5:23.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." (Ephesians 5:23, NASB)

When one spiritual gift is not functioning, the rest of the Body (in the local church) suffers. 1 Cor. 12:26.



"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26, NASB)

1 Corinthians 12:29-31 tells us that each believer is given different spiritual gifts. Paul also tells us that we are to desire the greater gifts eagerly. In other words, as you grow spiritually you will have the power of the Holy Spirit to apply believed or *epignosis* Bible doctrine and to utilize that spiritual gift. In the local church, we want to see the greater gifts. We want to see the gifts that benefit others, leading them to the Lord, and helping them to grow spiritually. Paul continues to tell them that he will show them a more excellent way. That more excellent way is the emphasis on spiritual growth in unconditional *agapao* love where dealing with others is based on the very thinking of Christ in our souls.

"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? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:29-31, NASB)

There is a great diversity of spiritual gifts. Maybe you don't have the gift of service or administration or helps. Maybe you have a talent or ability that God gave you at the moment of salvation. God knows your personality and your capabilities far better than you know yourself. He knew exactly what would be the best spiritual gift to give you in eternity past. Don't go overboard on spiritual gifts. Emphasize the spiritual life!

As you grow spiritually and identify your gift(s), use it because you have personal love for God. As a result, you will have unconditional love toward your fellow believer. You are to have the heart of a servant. Whatever your gift, let that gift function under unconditional love which is the divine love that God has for all of us. It is reproduced in your soul through spiritual growth so that you have a love that's dependent on your own strength of character, not the attractiveness of other believers.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says to those who were abusing their spiritual gifts that regardless of the spiritual gifts, no matter what God graced you out with, the all-important thing is not that spiritual gift. The all-important thing is unconditional love. We have to be Spirit-filled to have our gift function correctly and to have maximum divine good produced under our spiritual gift. We must have maximum Bible doctrine in the soul to have our gift function to the maximum intended by God.

"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. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NASB)

Misuses of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are misused in two ways. One way is to attempt to perpetuate temporary spiritual gifts of the Pre-Canon period into the Post-Canon period of the Church Age. These involve healing, miracles, tongues, or the interpretation of tongues. The second way spiritual gifts are misused is due to either arrogance about the possession of one of the more obvious gifts or an inferiority complex about the possession of one of the less obvious spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:15-21 describes both types of abuse.

"If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is



not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (1 Corinthians 12:15-21, NASB)

Many believers are arrogant because their spiritual gift functions in a more obvious way (e.g., pastor-teacher, evangelism, and administration). Others believers have an inferiority complex because their spiritual gift functions out of the lime light and are less obvious to others nearby (e.g., service, helps, exhortation, giving, showing mercy, and faith). Both arrogance and the inferiority complex are sins and are signs that these believers are out of fellowship.

Misuse of Spiritual Gifts in the Corinthian Church

The Corinthian Church emphasized and exalted spectacular gifts and related them to spirituality. Spectacular gifts are not spirituality any more than less spectacular gifts. Spirituality is not based upon spiritual gifts, but based on the filling of the Holy Spirit. It is obvious from 1 Corinthians 1:7 that the Corinthian Church abounded in spiritual gifts. It is also obvious from the rest of the Epistle that this was one of the most carnal churches that ever assembled in the name of the Lord. The Corinthians were noted for their envy, jealousy, childishness, spiritual bullying, litigation, divorce, drunkenness and other carnality activity.

"so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Corinthians 1:7, NASB)

The possession of a spiritual gift does not mean spirituality. If the Corinthians, with all their carnality could have more people with spectacular spiritual gifts, then there is definitely no correlation between possessing a certain type of spiritual gift and spirituality. It is important to distinguish between spiritual gifts and spirituality. For a spiritual gift to function, the believer with the gift must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Spirituality is a state where the Holy Spirit controls the soul of the believer or they are in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the spiritual gift only functions when the believer is in a state of spirituality.

In developing the subject of spiritual gifts, Paul had those in the Corinthian assembly who had learned this doctrine and forgotten it, or had learned this doctrine and misapplied it, or understood this doctrine in part and used it as a lever for bullying, legalism, and pseudo-spirituality, or had never understood this doctrine in the first place and were being abused by it in the second place. Because of his varied audience, Paul had to review for those who knew, take up the slack for those who did not know, and put it all together and get the point across.

Corinth was a great center for trade at that time. The Jews had captured the banking industry from the heathen priests. This drew large numbers of Jews to Corinth. Consequently, the gift of tongues was used quite extensively in Corinth. The Gentiles there had picked up tongues and were abusing it. The Corinthian Christians were probably the most carnal of all believers in the early Church. Since they were out of line in many ways, it was no surprise that they were corrupting and misusing the gift of tongues.

False teaching based on legalism and emotionalism had also infiltrated the church at Corinth, consequently we have 1 Corinthians 12 - 14 to refute the legalism and emotionalism there. These chapters were written to deal with some of the false impressions that came out of speaking in tongues. What was happening in Corinth is still happening in churches today.



One of the abuses in the Corinthian church was that there were many people speaking in tongues and they felt they were the spiritual giants in the assembly. They said the rest were peons and possibly not even saved. They were looking down their spiritual noses at the rest and saying that until they spoke in tongues they were not spiritual, or possibly not even saved.

Brother foot has an inferiority complex. Brother hand has a superiority complex. Both are ignorant of doctrine. They are both on the same team, but play different positions. One is not better than the other. The spiritual gift you possess is not the important factor. What is important is the filling of the Holy Spirit and the power on which the spiritual gift operates.