



“Spiritual Gifts”: Unity and Diversity in One Body

SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH

The Old Testament prophet Joel prophesied about spiritual gifts:

“Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.” (Joel 2:28-29 NLT)

The apostle Peter quoted from that prophecy from Joel in his great sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) ... as he explained to the amazed listeners *how* the group of believers were speaking in many different languages:

“And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. ... Then Peter stepped forward with the other apostles and shouted to the crowd ... “What you see this morning was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel.” (Acts 2:4,14,16 NLT)

Clearly, the Holy Spirit gave that small group of believers a great gift, needed at that time, to establish the church. Jews from many lands *heard* the gospel in their own language (Acts 2:5-6) and three thousand of them were baptized that very day (Acts 2:41). This miraculous and powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit occurred in Jerusalem ... and the news of it, “*went viral.*”

PAUL TEACHES ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Since there was division in the Corinthians church, In Chapter 12 Paul begins with an emphasis on *the oneness* of the church. He pointed out four wonderful bonds of spiritual unity.

- 1) *We confess the same Lord (vv. 1-3)*
- 2) *We depend on the same God (vv. 4-6)*
- 3) *We minister to the same body (vv. 7-11)*
- 4) *We have experienced the same baptism (vv. 12-13)*

Related to the subject of irregularities in the worship of the Corinthian church, was a question on the nature of spiritual gifts and their exercise in the public assembly.

It was the Spirit who gave birth to the body at Pentecost and who ministers in and through the body. In the Corinthian church, unfortunately, the members were grieving the Holy Spirit by the carnal ways in which they were using spiritual gifts. They were like children with toys instead of adults with valuable tools, and they needed to mature.

Spiritual gifts had become symbols of spiritual power, causing rivalries in the church because some people thought they were more “spiritual” than others because of their gifts. This was a terrible misuse of spiritual gifts because their purpose is always to help the church function more effectively, not to divide it. We can be divisive if we insist on using our gift our own way without being sensitive to others. We must never use gifts as a means of manipulating others or promoting our own self-interest.

Believers have different gifts, and some believers have more than one gift. All spiritual gifts come from God ... and their purpose is to build up Christ's body, the church.

Here Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit gives “***different kinds of spiritual gifts***” (12:4) to be used in serving the church and building up the body of Christ. NOTE: This chapter *does not* give an exhaustive list of all spiritual gifts (also see Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:9-11).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: A Brief Summary

1 Corinthians 12 lists several spiritual gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the building up of the Church and the common good. Below are the spiritual gifts mentioned in the chapter, along with their general definitions:

1. Word of Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8)

- Wisdom refers to insight into doctrinal truth. This gift refers to the ability to apply deep, godly insight into practical situations. It is the ability to know how to act in specific circumstances according to God's will.

2. Word of Knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8)

- Knowledge refers to the ability to apply doctrinal truth to life. This gift involves understanding and insight into God's truths and mysteries. It is a supernatural understanding that goes beyond natural reasoning, often revealed through the Holy Spirit.

3. Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9)

- Faith as a spiritual gift is an unusual measure of trust in God beyond that naturally exercised by most Christians. This is not the basic saving faith ... but a special, deep trust in God's power to do the impossible. Those with this gift have *an unshakable confidence* in God's ability to accomplish His will.

4. Gifts of Healings (1 Corinthians 12:9)

- The “Gifts of Healings” are mentioned *in the plural* ... as there are many types of healings (mental, physical and spiritual). Healing is the ability to restore health (Acts 3:7; 19:12) and also to hold off death itself temporarily (Acts 9:40; 20:9-10). This gift enables someone to bring healing to those who are sick or injured, either physically or emotionally, or spiritually ... through prayer or laying on of hands, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Miraculous Powers (or Working of Miracles) (1 Corinthians 12:10)

- This gift refers to the ability to perform supernatural acts that go beyond natural laws, such as casting out demons or causing dramatic changes in circumstances through God's power.

6. Prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10)

- Prophecy is the ability, like that of the Old Testament prophets, to declare a message of God for His people. Prophecy involves speaking messages from God to encourage, warn, or instruct others. It can include foretelling future events, but more often, it speaks to bringing forth from God's word to current situations ... in light of God's will.

7. Distinguishing Between Spirits (or Discernment of Spirits) (1 Corinthians 12:10)

- The Gift of Discernment is the ability to distinguish between spirits is the gift to differentiate the Word of God proclaimed by a true prophet from that of a satanic deceiver. This gift allows a person to distinguish between the influence of the Holy Spirit, evil spirits, and human spirits. It helps to identify the source of different teachings or actions.

8. Speaking in Tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10)

- The Gift of Tongues refers to the ability to speak an unlearned, living language (Acts 2:11). This gift allows someone to speak in languages that they have not formally learned. Also it refers to a language used as a form of personal prayer.

9. Interpretation of Tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10)

- The Gift of Interpretation is the ability to translate an unlearned, known language expressed in the assembly (1 Cor 14:27). This gift involves understanding and interpreting the message spoken in tongues (a known language) so that the congregation can understand and be edified.

10. The Gift of Helps (Serving, Ministry) (1 Corinthians 12:28)

- The spiritual gift of service, or ministering, covers a wide range of activities in its application. It refers to any act of service done in genuine love for the edification of the community. The Holy Spirit endows some believers with this gift to fill the many gaps of ministry and meet the needs of the church as it fulfills the Great

Commission. The goal is to energize the church and free up others to use their gifts to the fullest.

11. The Gift of Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28)

- With this gift the Holy Spirit enables certain Christians to organize, direct, and implement plans to lead others in the various ministries of the Church. This gift is closely related to the gift of leadership ... but is more goal or task oriented and is also more concerned with details and organization.

12. The Gift of Exhortation (Romans 12:8)

- The spiritual gift of exhortation is often called the “gift of encouragement.” The primary means of exhortation is to remind the hearer of the powerful and amazing work of God in Christ, particularly in regard to the saving work of Jesus in the atonement. The Spirit of God gives this gift to people in the church to strengthen and encourage those who are wavering in their faith.

13. The Gift of Giving (Romans 12:8)

- The Holy Spirit imparts this gift to some in the church to meet the various needs of the church and its ministries, missionaries, or of people who do not have the means to provide fully for themselves. The goal is to encourage and provide, giving all credit to God’s love and provision. Those with this gift love to share with others the overflow of blessings God has given them. They are also excellent stewards and will often adjust their lifestyles in order to give more to the spread of the Gospel and the care of the needy.

14. The Gift of Mercy (Romans 12:8)

- The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of mercy to some in the church to love and assist those who are suffering, and walk with them until The Lord allows their burden to be lifted. All Christians are called to be merciful because God has been merciful to us. Those with this gift have great empathy for others in their trials and sufferings. They are able to come alongside people over extended periods of time and see them through their healing process. They are truly and literally the hands and feet of God to the afflicted.

15. The Gift of Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9-10)

- The spiritual gift of hospitality is a special grace from the Holy Spirit that empowers individuals to welcome others with open hearts and offer practical support, mirroring Christ's welcoming nature, and fostering community and fellowship. The gift of hospitality involves a unique ability to create environments of warmth, grace, and love, making others feel welcomed and cherished. Hospitality is a powerful tool for ministry and evangelism, opening doors for deeper conversations about faith and God. It's a way to demonstrate love, compassion, and generosity, reflecting the character of God.

16. The Gift of Leadership (Romans 12:8)

- The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of leadership to some in the church to care for God's people and lead them into deeper relationship with Christ and each other. They base their success on how well they help others succeed and grow in their spiritual walk with Jesus. They are able to accomplish many different tasks and objectives as they lead ... but they will always lead relationally and with a deep concern for the well-being of others. The spiritual gift of leadership is closely related to the gift of administration ... but it is more people oriented than task oriented in its application.

17. The Gift of Teaching (Romans 12:7)

- The Holy Spirit gives certain people the spiritual gift of teaching so that they would help the church fulfill her ministry as "a pillar of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Without this gift, the church would quickly fall into error and sin. Teachers are there to make sure that doesn't happen. They hate when Scripture is abused and used out of context or with ill intent. They love the truth and speak the truth in love. They teach and explain biblical truths clearly and effectively, they will never hide it or withhold it.

18. The Gift of Apostleship (Ephesians 4:11)

- Apostles were those sent by God with a special mission to spread the Gospel and establish new churches. They are foundational leaders in the early Church. The office of Apostle was held by a limited number of men chosen by Jesus, including the twelve disciples (Mark 3:13-19) and Paul (Romans 1:1). The requirements for the office of Apostle included being a faithful eyewitness of Jesus' ministry and His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 9:1), and being called by Jesus Himself (Galatians 1:1). The Apostles were given authority by Jesus to do many different things to establish the church, including writing Scripture and performing miracles.

19. The Gift of Pastor / Teacher (Ephesians 4:11)

- The spiritual gift of pastor or pastor/shepherd is one that carries many different responsibilities. This gift is closely related to the spiritual gifts of leadership and teaching. In the Biblical context, shepherds had several different responsibilities to their sheep and ultimately, to the owner of the sheep. The Holy Spirit gives the spiritual gift of pastor to some in the church to humbly teach them, guide them, protect them, and to lead them in the mission that God has for His church, namely the Great Commission.

20. The Gift of Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11)

- All Christians are called to evangelize and reach out to the lost with the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20) ... *but some are given an extra measure of faith and effectiveness in this area.*

Evangelists are given the unique ability by the Holy Spirit to clearly and effectively communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. They are burdened in their hearts for the lost and will go out of their way to share the truth with them.

Evangelists are able to overcome the normal fear of rejection and engage non-believers in meaningful conversations about Jesus. Their gift allows them to communicate with all types of people and therefore they receive a greater response to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. They continually seek out relationships with those who don't know Jesus and are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit to approach different people.

21. The Gift of Celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7, 17; Matthew 19:11)

- The spiritual gift of celibacy is to supernatural ability to live to a freely chosen, positive response to God ... to live a life without marriage and sexual activity, enabling individuals to dedicate themselves fully to the Lord and His service.

Individuals with this gift are often described as being able to:

- Remain single without regret.
- Control sexual impulses.
- Serve the Lord without distraction.
- Devote themselves completely to ministry.
- Use other spiritual gifts more effectively.
- Find joy in spending time alone with the Lord.

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