
Adult Bible Fellowship

Kitwe Church

Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts



MANY GIFTS, **ONE SPIRIT**
discovering your spiritual gifts

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What Are Spiritual Gifts and How do they Relate to My Spiritual Life?”

It is an unfortunate fact that there is much confusion and false teaching today about the purpose and present use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are many people who desire to walk closely with the Lord through His Holy Spirit as He intended, but there are others who are disobeying Scripture and teaching false doctrines about the Holy Spirit and His role in our lives.¹

EXPLANATION: What is the primary purpose of this lesson?

The purpose of this lesson is to give the disciple a basic understanding of what gifts the Holy Spirit makes available to the Church and how those gifts are to be properly used.

EXPECTATION: How will these teachings help me to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ?

- By obeying His command to be taught of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26

- By obeying His command to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

- By obeying His command to submit to the Scriptures rather than to experience.

1 Peter 1:15-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

I. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit gives many different gifts to the believer to serve Christ effectively and to help His Body (the local church) operate correctly.

1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11

- A. The identity of Spiritual Gifts (8-10; Ro. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11; I Pt. 4:11)
There are at least sixteen spiritual gifts listed in Scripture. These spiritual gifts can be classified as follows:

¹ Much of this lesson was taken from the Spiritual Gifts: Discipleship Lesson 09, Brackenhurst Baptist Church.

1. Support Gifts (Eph. 4:11)
 - a) Apostleship (Eph. 4:11)
 - b) Prophecy (Ro. 12:6; Eph. 4:11; I Pt. 4:11; I Co. 12:8)
 - c) Evangelism (Eph. 4:11)
 - d) Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:11)
 - e) Teaching (Ro. 12:7)
 2. Service Gifts
 - a) Administrations (Ro. 12:8)
 - b) Exhortation (Ro. 12:8)
 - c) Faith (I Co. 12:9)
 - d) Giving (Ro. 12:8)
 - e) Helps (ministry - Ro. 12:7)
 - f) Showing Mercy (Ro. 12:8)
 3. Sign Gifts
 - a) Distinguishing of spirits (I Co. 12:10)
 - b) Miracles (I Co. 12:10)
 - c) Healings (I Co. 12:9)
 - d) Tongues (I Co. 12:10)
 - e) Interpretation of tongues (I Co. 12:10).
- B. The definition of Spiritual Gift
1. Divine enablement for ministry
 2. God-given skills and abilities gifted to a person when they accept Christ as their Savior.

II. Are all of these gifts still in operation today?

No. At least seven of these gifts were miraculous in nature. The purpose of these miraculous gifts was to provide evidence that the person performing the miraculous gift was indeed serving God. In the early Church there was no completed Scripture as we know it. All that the listeners could use to verify that these people were indeed of God was the few pieces of Scripture that they did possess and along with a sign from God that these people were authentic. God used the miraculous gifts to verify His Word.

John 3:2; 20:30; Romans 15:18; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4; Mark 16:20

- A. The miraculous sign gifts (temporary).

These were apostleship, prophecy, miracles, healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and knowledge. The sign gifts were given primarily to validate the authority of the message of the apostles prior to the writing of the New Testament. Afterward, this miraculous proof was no longer needed, for the Scriptures themselves reveal the true from the false.

- B. The other gifts (permanent).

These gifts are still in operation in the Church today and **EACH BELIEVER POSSESSES AT LEAST ONE** of these gifts.

III. How are these gifts to be used?

We will examine each of these gifts (and offices) so that the believer may understand how each of the gifts relates to him in his spiritual life.

- A. **Apostleship** - Those who personally saw Christ, were commissioned by Him, and were instrumental in the founding of the early Church. These men were endued with special power to function in a unique office for a special time - the beginnings of the Church. Note the special requirements for apostleship:

1. A witness of the resurrected Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:1; Acts 1:22

2. A personal calling from Christ.

Acts 1:8; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1

Obviously this gift or office is no longer in operation today. The apostles were never told to pass on their office to other men and no man has the authority to claim this office.

- B. **Prophecy** - The supernatural ability to (1) “**forth-tell**” (preach) a revelation from God, and (2) to “**foretell**” (predict future events), with authority. Prophets were the mouthpiece of God in a time when the Scriptures were still being written down. They were known by their characteristic phrase “*Thus saith the Lord*” (see *Zechariah 1:3*). This was part of God’s way of completing the Scriptures. If someone claims to be exercising this gift today, remember:

1. You should **TEST** anything that claims to be prophecy.

1 John 4:1; 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

2. The Old Testament called for the **TEST OF FULFILLMENT**. If the prophecy did not come true, the person was identified as a false prophet and was killed (stoned).

Deuteronomy 13:1-3, 5; 18:18, 20-22

3. Many modern day “prophets” claim that their gift is of a different sort than the Old Testament prophetic revelation and therefore not subject to the same tests. The Bible makes no such distinction.
4. Many of the “prophecies” today are spurious because they either repeat Scripture (which makes them unnecessary), or are given for selfish motives such as the desire for personal fame or gain.

2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3-4

5. A person who believes that biblical prophecy continues today in either of its basic forms is expressing belief that revelation continues today. This is patently false.

Ephesians 2:20; 2 Peter 1:21

6. Prophecy is the revelation of the Word of God and we have God’s revelation today in the Bible. We are told that we are not to add to or take away from the Scriptures.

Proverbs 30:5-6; Ezekiel 13:7; Revelation 22:18-19

- C. **Miracles** - A supernatural ability to perform events outside and beyond the laws of nature. Miracles were always used in the Scriptures for a sign to verify the credentials of the one performing the wonder. In fact the Greek word for miracle - *sameion* - is the word from which we get our English word “*sign*”. Again there is no need for this gift today as the Bible carries its own credentials. That is not to say that God does not perform miracles today, but rather that He does not use specially gifted people to perform them.

Acts 2:22; 19:11; Hebrews 2:3-4

- D. **Healing** - A supernatural ability to cure human ills, whether of physical, mental, or demonic origin. Again this gift was given to attest to the authority and power of the one doing the healing. Some things to remember concerning the biblical gift of healing:

1. The healings were instantaneous, total and permanent.

Acts 3:1-11; 9:32-34; 14:4

2. Even people with organic and congenital illnesses were healed.

Acts 3:1-11; 5:14-16

3. Those who healed, healed anyone they attempted to, regardless of their faith.

Acts 5:14-16; 28:8-9; 13:11-12

4. Paul healed people, but there were some that he chose not to (or could not) heal. E.g. Timothy (*1 Timothy 5:23*), Epaphroditus (*Philippians 2:26*), Trophimus (*2 Timothy 4:20*).
5. Even the dead were raised to life again.

Acts 9:36-42

While God may still choose to heal people today, He no longer gives the gift of healing to any one person. There is no longer any need for healing to be a sign to people. The Scriptures have been completed and God is revealing Himself through the Scriptures, not through any modern “miracle” of healing.

- E. **Tongues** - Until the completion of the New Testament God used the gift of tongues to act as a sign to the unbeliever (both Jews and Gentiles) and as a means to edify the believers. These tongues were always natural earthly languages that could be interpreted or understood by those who were fluent in that language. As such, tongues were also a means of authenticating the gospel. There were very strict rules governing the use of this gift and it was classed as the least of all the gifts of the Spirit.

Note the following:

1. From the beginning this gift was only concerned with the Spirit-given ability to speak in a **NATURAL**, earthly language that was not the speaker’s own language.
 - a) *Romans 8:26* is talking about the Holy Spirit Himself praying to God on our behalf **in a voice that nobody can hear!** This verse is **NOT** saying that our own spirit inside of us is praying to God!
 - b) *1 Corinthians 13:1* is **NOT** saying that Paul was able to speak with the tongues of angels! This verse is a conditional statement. Paul is saying, “**IF** I were able to speak in the language of angels and I did not have love I would sound like a meaningless noise to you.” The truth is Paul could not

speak in that language, but he was using that possibility to illustrate the importance of charity (love).

- c) In *1 Corinthians 14* Paul often refers to an “*unknown*” tongue. In the King James Version you will see that the word “*unknown*” is in italics meaning that the word does not occur in the original Greek, but has been supplied by the translators to clarify the meaning of the sentence. Paul is saying in each one of these verses that the purpose of the unknown tongue (a foreign language) was to glorify God. In the same chapter he also says that speaking in the unknown tongue does not edify the listeners (unless someone can interpret the language - see the next gift below). The one doing the speaking was to pray that there would be someone there to interpret the foreign language to those around him.

2. There were many strict rules that governed the use of this gift. *1 Corinthians 14* lists many. Here are some of them...

- a) If there was nobody there to interpret the tongue then the people were to be silent (*1 Corinthians 14:28*).
- b) There was only to be one interpretation (*1 Corinthians 14:27*).
- c) Not more than three people were to speak in tongues in any given meeting (*1 Corinthians 14:27*).
- d) There was not be any confusion in the churches (*1 Corinthians 14:33*).
- e) Women were not permitted to speak at all in the churches in the sense of preaching or teaching and tongues was included in this (*1 Corinthians 14:34*).

3. While the gift of tongues would have been an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament **NOWHERE** commands all believers to speak in tongues and **NEVER** teaches that speaking in tongues will follow the filling of the Holy Spirit.

F. **Interpretation** (of Tongues) - This gift is very closely related to the above gift, but involves the supernatural ability to interpret (translate) an unknown tongue into an understandable language. This person was edifying the listeners by allowing them to hear what the person speaking

in tongues was saying. Obviously since the gift of tongues is no longer active today, this gift is also inactive.

- G. **Knowledge** - The supernatural ability to receive by revelation a portion of the Word of God. This is no longer necessary today because the canon of Scripture is completed and we have the completed revelation of God.
- H. **Discernment** - The supernatural ability to distinguish between human, divine, and demonic spirits in or through another person. This would have been essential before the Scriptures were completed.

This is the last of the temporary “sign” gifts.

- I. **Wisdom** - The supernatural ability to understand, rightfully apply and spiritually employ the truth found in the Scriptures.
- J. **Giving** - The supernatural ability to give large portions of one’s resources or finances to the glory of God.
- K. **Exhortation** - The supernatural ability to motivate people and spur them on to spiritual growth and service.
- L. **Ministering** (helps) - The supernatural ability to render practical help in both physical and spiritual matters.
- M. **Mercy** - The supernatural ability to minister to the sick and afflicted out of a heart of compassion and love.
- N. **Ruling** (administration) - The supernatural ability to organize, administer, and promote the various affairs of the local church. A local church will not grow beyond a certain point unless it employs the ministry of those individuals empowered with this gift.
- O. **Faith** - The supernatural ability to believe and expect great things from God.
- P. **Evangelism** - The supernatural ability to point sinners to Christ and to burden believers about soul-winning. All believers are to witness for Christ whether they have this special gift or not. Timothy, for example, was not an evangelist, but he was to do this work (see *2 Timothy 4:5*).
- Q. **Pastoring** - The supernatural ability to preach and teach the Word of God and to feed and lead the flock of God. Note, not all teachers are called to be pastors, but all pastors are teachers.

- R. **Teaching** - The supernatural ability to communicate and clarify the details of the Word of God. While no one can present a better gospel than that in the Bible, there are those who can teach that gospel better.

IV. **Basic questions.**

- A. How do I know that certain of these gifts have ceased?

As mentioned before the answer to this question lies in the nature of the gifts themselves. Scripture tells us that some of these gifts would cease in operation.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

1. The time of ceasing would come when the Scriptures were completed... *“when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Corinthians 13:10).*

The phrase *“that which is in part”* in *1 Corinthians 13:10* refers to partial revelation. The gifts of prophecy and knowledge dealt with the giving of revelation. This means that the context of *verses 8-13* of *1 Corinthians 13* must be the giving of revelation. This includes *verse 10* which refers to the coming of the completed revelation.

Note: the original tense of the Greek word for *“cease”* in *verse 8* means that tongues will cease in and of themselves.

- B. Why would Charismatics claim to have gifts that they do not have?

There may be several reasons why these people are claiming to have gifts that they cannot possibly have.

1. They may have a strong emotional desire to belong; or to feel that they are needed or useful in some way.
2. Traditional churches may be boring for them or they may have little interest in actually studying the Bible.
3. They may have had some false teaching and they may have been misled into thinking this way.
4. They may be more committed to experience than to the Scriptures themselves (e.g. family or church heritage).

- C. If they do not have these gifts then where are they getting the power to perform the things that they do?

Again there may be several possible reasons for this:

1. They may be making things up out of a desire to please others or to be accepted into the group. Normally the emotional pressures exerted on people in situations like these are strong and may cause people to set aside rational thinking for the sake of conformity.
2. It is also possible that Satan himself could be deceiving them. The Scriptures tell us that we should not be amazed that Satan and his ministers can transform themselves into “*angels of light*” (2 *Corinthians 11:14-15*). The false workers of the devil could mimic the miracles of the children of God.

- D. Is it possible that people who have been deceived into thinking that they may have some of the miraculous sign gifts are saved?

It is very possible that they may be truly saved and have simply fallen under the sway of some false teaching. But it is also possible that they may not be saved and may have just had some emotional or spiritual “experience” instead of being truly converted.

- E. What other unscriptural teachings are to be found amongst these people?

There are several other unscriptural teachings that pervade many churches who believe they still practice the sign gifts.

1. The “**PROSPERITY**” gospel teaching. This is the teaching that God never wants any of His children to be sick or in poverty. Various Scriptures are twisted in support of this ungodly philosophy, but the truth is that Scripture nowhere teaches this doctrine. Very closely aligned to this is the “**name it and claim it**” teaching. This is the idea that God will give His children whatever they want if they just name it. Nowhere are we told in the Bible that we can “order” God around.
2. Being “**SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT**”. This teaching claims that when the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer it will be manifested by that person falling backward in a comatose state. Again there is no support for this in Scripture. People never lose control in the presence of the Lord and you will never see anyone falling over backwards. In the Bible people most often bow down on their faces in worship before the presence of God.

3. The so-called “**DELIVERANCE**” ministries. While Scripture teaches that it is possible for people to be possessed by demons, we are never commanded to make the deliverance of these people a primary ministry or focus of the church. This teaching places an undue emphasis on the spirit world at the expense of an emphasis on Christ. While we are to be aware that our adversary is walking around like a roaring lion (*1 Peter 5:8*), we are nowhere in Scripture commanded to follow him or his demons around trying to war against them. People who engage in this ministry “rebuke” the devil in the “name of Jesus” and try to “bind” him and his demons. Again, Christians are never commanded in Scripture to engage in these activities. We should prayerfully ask the Lord to protect us from the attacks of Satan. And we should pray for people who are under his power; we should preach the Word to them. Christians should be spending the bulk of their time on familiarizing themselves with the Word of God and letting God take care of the rest.

- F. Is it wrong to speak about God in a way that makes people think that He spoke to me or influenced me in some way?

Christians often speak in terms that may cause people to think that God has spoken to them or told them something. They will often use phrases like “God spoke to me” or “God burdened my heart”. This is not necessarily wrong, as in most cases these people are referring to how God has influenced them through their reading of the Scriptures or through the advice or influence of other Christians. But in some cases, people make the claim that God spoke audibly to them. This claim is often made by some leading Charismatic proponents such as Kenneth Hagin, Benny Hinn, Paul Crouch, etc. This is contrary to Scripture.

1. Peter told us that the written Word of God was more sure than any experience of the revelation of God (*2 Peter 1:19*).
2. Some in Scripture who did receive revelation from God in visionary form were sick for many days afterward (*Daniel 8:27*).
3. The canon of Scripture is complete (*Proverbs 30:5-6*).

V. Key memory verses.

- A. *1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 28*
- B. *Romans 12:6-8*
- C. *Ephesians 4:11*

VI. Popular Teaching

In many churches today, some popular teachings are:

- A. A Christian does not get all of the Holy Spirit at salvation.
- B. The presence of the Spirit in your life will be evidenced by your ability to speak in tongues.
- C. All of the gifts and the abilities that the apostles had are available to the believer today.
- D. The revelation of God's Word is not completed in the canon of Scripture, but is ongoing through modern prophecy and visions.

From the Bible principles taught in this lesson, you should understand that these teachings are false, and why.

VII. What good books or material can I read to get more information about this subject?

Here is a list of books that will help you if you are looking for more information on this subject.

- A. **Signs of the Apostles** by Walter J. Chantry (Banner of Truth)
- B. **Christianity in Crisis** by Hank Hanegraaff (Harvest House)
- C. **The Agony of Deceit: What some TV Preachers are Really Saying** edited by Michael Horton (Christian Art)
- D. **Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church becomes like the World** by John F. MacArthur, Jr. (Grace to You)
- E. **Charismatic Chaos** by John F. MacArthur, Jr. (Grace to You)
- F. **The Final Word: A Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues and Prophecy today** By O. Palmer Robertson (Banner of Truth)
- G. **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit** by C.R. Vaughan (Banner of Truth)
- H. **Pentecost Today** by Iain Murray (Banner of Truth)

Credits and sources used.

Besides the books quoted above some of the material used in this booklet is adapted from:

- I. **Wilmington's Guide to the Bible** by H.L. Wilmington (Tyndale House)
- J. **Testing Today's Prophecy** by Joel James (Grace Fellowship)

Write any questions you may have concerning the subjects in this lesson.



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