

CHAPTER 17

Spiritual Gifts

KEY IDEA

I know my spiritual gifts and use them to fulfill God's purposes.

KEY VERSE

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

– Romans 12:4-6

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

Spiritual gifts are the source of much controversy and confusion among believers. This is interesting and something of a sad commentary, since these gifts are meant to be graces from God for the edification of the church.

> Even today, as in the early church, the misuse and misunderstanding of spiritual gifts bring division--splitting up, rather than building up--in the church.

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

Definition: *A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God's grace, for use within the context of the Body.*

The common Greek word for spiritual gift is *charisma*. Charisma comes from the root word *charis*, which in Greek means "grace."

> *Charismata* literally means "grace-gifts"—they are sovereignly and undeservedly given by the Holy Spirit. There is no basis for boasting one is better or envy because of feeling "left out" of greater gifts.

> There is a relationship spiritual gifts have to the grace of God. That is why "according to God's grace" is included in the definition.

Gifts are congregational.

> Most of the things God does in the world today are done through believers who are working together in community; both inwardly (local church ministries) and outwardly (community/world missions).

> Individual Christians disconnected from the Body are not very useful.

WHO HAS SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Not everybody has spiritual gifts. Unbelievers do not. But every Christian person who is committed to Jesus and truly a member of His Body has at least one gift. (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:7 & 18/19)

> Many Christians have more than one gift ("gift mix"). But it doesn't matter which gift, or the number of gifts, every true function of the body of Christ has a "member" to perform it, and every member has a function to perform.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DISTRIBUTES SPIRITUAL GIFTS AS HE WILLS. (I Corinthians 12:11b.)

The gifts are freely given; they can be neither earned nor purchased. (Acts 8:9–24.)

> God gives them according to His good pleasure. The gifts, even though they are given to each person, ultimately express the Spirit's sovereign action in the life of the believer and the community as a whole.

MANY EXPRESSIONS OF ONE GIFT: THE HOLY SPIRIT

On the Day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus did not receive gifts (plural), but rather they received "the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

> In the Christian's life, therefore, the motivational, ministry, and manifestation spiritual gifts described in I Corinthians 12–14 are many expressions of the one Gift—the Holy Spirit—as He reveals His presence and power.

DON'T CONFUSE SPIRITUAL GIFTS WITH...

> Natural talents: Every human being, by virtue of being made in the image of God, possesses certain natural talents. Having natural talents has nothing directly to do with being a Christian. Many atheists have natural talents but they do not have spiritual gifts. Christians also have natural talents that can be used with their spiritual gifts, but they should not be confused with Spiritual Gifts (i.e. a singer could use the gift of evangelism through their music).

> Fruit of the Spirit Spiritual gifts are not the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22–23. The fruit of the Spirit are aspects of Christ's character, which every Christian is to seek, promote, and develop.

< Spiritual Gifts are sovereign manifestations of the Spirit's power. [I Corinthians 12:11.]

< The fruit of the Holy Spirit are attributes of redeemed nature, and as fruit they may be cultivated.

< When a gift is displayed, it is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

 ^It is a visible act which can be seen or heard or felt.

< Fruit of the Spirit is an invisible grace.

The fruit of the Spirit is the foundation for the effective exercise of spiritual gifts. Gifts without fruit are worthless. In 1 Corinthians (13:1-3) Paul writes that the basic problem of the church was not gifts, it was fruit.

< Gifts are task-oriented, fruit is God-oriented.

> Christian Roles Roles are different from the fruit of the Spirit in that they involve more doing than being. They are different from the gifts of the Spirit in that they are expected of every Christian.

< Christians need to be ready to exercise any role when there is a need. We need to be willing to be prayerful, we need to continually grow in our faith, we should be hospitable when it is a task we can fulfill, we must be willing to help and serve when there is a need. But those who have the specific gift of faith, intercessory prayer, hospitality, service, etc. will be able to accomplish these tasks with greater agility and fulfillment.

DON'T CONFUSE SPIRITUAL GIFTS WITH COUNTERFEIT GIFTS

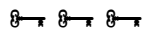
Matthew 24:24 *For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.* Matthew 7:22,23 *Speaks about those who did acts in Jesus' name, but who, in reality, turn out to be workers of iniquity.*

> No doubt Satan can and does counterfeit every gift. He is a supernatural being and he has supernatural powers. (Exodus 7 & 8) Of course, Satan's power is limited and controlled.

< Most of his deceptions come through clairvoyance, and other aspects of the occult but he can also counterfeit Gifts like wisdom, tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy... so we need to be very careful in our discernment of these gifts.

NOTE: We need to remind ourselves that God knows all about this deceitfulness and gives adequate power to His children to prevent it.

NOTE: Multi-gifted people may find that at certain periods of their ministry some of their gifts will be dominant and others subordinate. Their ranking order may vary over the years as circumstances change.



God gives spiritual gifts to those who have received salvation through Jesus Christ so that believers will grow and mature in their faith.

THE GIFTS:

The best lists of Spiritual gifts in the Bible can be found in 4 passages.

Romans 12:6-8 ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 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. 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, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Ephesians 4:7-13 ⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." ⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Peter 4:10-11 ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

A LIST OF GIFTS

Following is a list of twenty seven spiritual gifts. This is not a hard and fast number, but they are the most recognized when you look at gifts lists.

- APOSTLE:** Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28 - to be sent forth to new frontiers with the gospel, providing leadership over church bodies and maintaining authority over spiritual matters pertaining to the church (Greek Word: apostolos - 'apo'=from 'stello'=send; one sent forth)
- CELIBACY:** 1 Cor. 7:7,8 - to voluntarily remain single without regret and with the ability to maintain controlled sexual impulses so as to serve the Lord without distraction
- DISCERNMENT:** 1 Cor. 12:10 - to clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power
- DELIVERANCE:** Acts 8:5-8; 16:16-18 - to have the special ability that God gives to certain believers to cast out demons and evil spirits.
- EVANGELISM:** Eph. 4:11 - to be a messenger of the good news of the Gospel (Greek Word: euaggelistes - preacher of gospel; eu=well, angelos=message - messenger of good)
- EXHORTATION:** Rom. 12:8 - to come along side of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be (Greek Word: paraklesis - calling to one's side)
- FAITH:** 1 Cor. 12:8-10 - to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction
- GIVING:** Rom. 12:8 - to share what material resources you have with liberality and cheerfulness without thought of return
- HEALING:** 1 Cor. 12:9,28,30 - to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually
- HELPS:** 1 Cor. 12:28 - to render support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them up for ministry
- HOSPITALITY:** 1 Pet. 4:9,10 - to warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one's home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging (Greek Word: philoxenos - love of strangers; 'philos'=love; 'xenos'=stranger)
- INTERCESSION:** Ephesians 6:18 - to be able to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers, to a degree much greater than that which is expected of the average Christians.
- KNOWLEDGE:** 1 Cor. 12:8 - to seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analyzing of that data.
- LEADERSHIP:** Rom. 12:8 - to stand before the people in such a way as to attend to the direction of the body with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals
- MARTYRDOM:** 1 Cor. 13:3 - to give over one's life to suffer or to be put to death for the cause of Christ

MERCY: Rom. 12:8 - to be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion but more so caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.

MIRACLES: 1 Cor. 12:10,28 - to be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which witnesses acknowledge to be of supernatural origin and means.

MISSIONARY: Eph. 3:6-8 - to be able to minister in another culture.

PASTOR: Eph. 4:11 - to be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and feeding a group of believers entrusted to one's care.

PROPHECY: Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11 - to speak forth the message of God to His people (Greek Word: prophetes - the forth-telling of the will of God; 'pro'=forth; 'phemi'=to speak).

SERVICE: Rom. 12:7 - to identify undone tasks in God's work, however menial, and use available resources to get the job done (Greek Word: diakonia - deacon, attendant 'diako'=to run errands).

TEACHING: Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11 - to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.

TONGUES: 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27-28 - to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language or the body be edified.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:27,28 - to translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.

VOLUNTARY POVERTY: 1 Cor. 13:3 - to purposely live an impoverished lifestyle to serve and aid others with your material resources.

WISDOM: 1 Cor. 12:8 - to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations.

NOTE: When it comes to the gifts of the "supernatural" (e.g. deliverance, miracles, healing), could it be that the prophets, Jesus, and the disciples, Paul and the early Christians saw the miraculous hand of God because they spent time getting to know God and depending on God in these ways? They were well practiced in the Spiritual disciplines of meditation, solitude, prayer and fasting that resulted in God manifesting Himself through his people.

THE GIFTS ARE TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN THE BODY OF CHRIST

The person through whom a spiritual gift is manifested is not the primary beneficiary of the gift, he is the channel through whom God works to bless others.

> This offers believers the opportunity to demonstrate genuine love: meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return.

> One of the beauties of these gifts is the interdependency they generate.

< First, believers depend on God, who grants the gifts and empowers Christians to use them.

< Then, believers depend on one another to work together, using every gift in the grace God supplies, so that the Church matures and brings glory to God.

< (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Most Bible scholars classify the gifts into three categories: The *motivational* gifts are invisible evidences of God's work—they are what God does *within* a believer to equip him or her to see life from a certain perspective. The *ministry* and *manifestation* gifts are visible evidences of God's work—they are the things God does *through* the life of the believer to meet the needs of the Church. Each gift, whether it is used inwardly or publicly, is evidence of the Holy Spirit at work.

1. Ministry gifts.

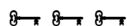
- > The ministry gifts serve to reveal the plan of God.
 - < They are characteristic of, but not limited to, full-time office or calling.
 - ^ Apostle, Prophet (Functions as God's mouthpiece, speaking forth God's Word), Evangelist, Pastor, teacher, Missionary.
 - < Those that hold these offices will probably have other gifts to compliment their office, and some who have ministry gifts often function outside the "office" in volunteer environments or outside the church.
- > Today people fill offices, but regardless of what the office is, the person who is called to fill that office should qualify for it on the basis of spiritual gift(s) God has given.

2. Manifestation Gifts.

- > The manifestation gifts serve to reveal the power of God. They are supernatural or spiritual in nature. They can be subdivided into three groups:
 - < Utterance: These gifts say something.
 - ^ Prophecy: As a manifestation gift it is for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation or consolation, although it can declare God's will in a particular circumstance, and in rare cases, predict future events. Speaking in Tongues
 - < Power: These gifts **do** something
 - ^ Interpretation of Tongues, Healing, Miracles
 - < Revelation: These gifts **reveal** something.
 - ^ Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Discerning Spirits

3. Motivational Gifts

- > The motivational gifts serve to reveal the personality of God. They are practical in nature and describe the inner motivations of the Christian servant.
 - < Prophecy: Those with the motivational gift of prophecy are the "seers" or "eyes" of the body. They have insight, foresight, and act like watch dogs in the church. They warn of sin or reveal sin.
 - < Ministering/Serving/Helps: Those with the motivational gift of serving are the "hands" of the body. They are concerned with meeting needs; they are highly motivated, doers.
 - < Teaching: Those with the motivational gift of teaching are the "mind" of the body. They emphasize accuracy of words and love to study; they delight in research to validate truth.
 - < Giving - They are alert to people's needs; they give cheerfully and always give the best that they can.
 - < Exhortation/Encouragement - They encourage other believers and are motivated by a desire to see people grow and mature in the Lord. They are practical, positive and seek positive responses.
 - < Administration/Leadership - see the overall picture and set long-term goals; they are good organizers and find efficient ways of getting work done.
 - < Mercy - The "heart" of the body. They are sensitive to feelings and needs.



When the Creator forms us in the womb, he molds and shapes our personality and abilities, and he also gives us talents to use for our personal satisfaction and the benefit of the world. ...These talents and skills can certainly be used for God's glory, but millions of people use them only for personal glory. When a person becomes a Christian, God repurposes the innate talents he created in that person at birth to be used to accomplish God's purposes through his church. But it is also true that God

deposits a spiritual gift (or gifts) in a person when the Holy Spirit takes up residence in him or her. This gift, along with the uniqueness of their personality and the talents given at their birth, are used for a high and eternal purpose. - Randy Frazee



KEY QUESTION: WHAT GIFTS AND ABILITIES HAS GOD GIVEN ME TO SERVE OTHERS?

WHY DOES IT MATTER IF WE IDENTIFY OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Being able to label your spiritual gift(s) is not of utmost importance. Using your gifts is what matters. Identifying your spiritual gifts, however, can help you in a number of ways.

> Once you know your spiritual gifts, you will be able to engage in training or ministry experiences that will better develop your gifts.

In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul tells Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God" which was in him. Initially a spark may go unnoticed. If it makes contact with fuel and oxygen it can be stirred up into a major fire. Similarly, a spiritual gift may be that small spark inside of us that needs to be developed and nurtured to reach its full potential. If a fire is neglected it will die out. Likewise, gifts need to be used if we are to evidence them. The best way to develop gifts, to fan them into flame, is to use them. -MINITools.COM

> You will know what to look for and can avoid pitfalls someone with that spiritual gift can fall into. The problem is not with the spiritual gift, but us.

< If we are not walking in the Spirit, it will be too easy for us to let ourselves fall into pride if we have certain gifts. Romans 12:3 states "*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.*"

> When you discover what spiritual gifts you have been given, you will have a point of reference for plugging into ministry where you can be most effective.

< God has given us certain gifts as an indicator of how He wants us to serve – what He has given us to do. If we never identify our spiritual gifts, we might have a "hit or miss" approach to ministry.

< Spiritual gifts are a key component of your ministry profile.

> You will be able to use your knowledge to encourage others in their gifting.

< If you are able to define and identify characteristics of the various spiritual gifts, you will not only be able to discover the gifts you have been given but also help confirm other people's gifting.

< Having the confirmation of fellow believers encourages them to see how God is working in their lives and pursue their best fit in ministry.

FOUR FUNDAMENTAL PREREQUISITES TO DISCOVERING YOUR GIFT(S)

Before beginning to take steps toward finding your gift, four fundamental prerequisites need to characterize your life:

> First, you have to be a Christian. Spiritual gifts are given only to members of the Body of Christ.

< If you have a question in your mind, ask yourself honestly whether you can say that you have become a new creature in Christ; that old things are passed away and that everything is become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17) If the answer is "no", postpone trying to discover your spiritual gift.

NOTE: If the answer is no, please talk with the group leader, pastor, or another Christian Leader to help you find salvation in Christ.

> Second, you have to believe in spiritual gifts. This becomes a question of faith. You must believe that God has given you a spiritual gift before you start the process of discovering it. You should have a sense of gratitude and joyful anticipation in discovering your gift.

> Third, you have to be willing to work. God has given spiritual gifts for a reason. He has a job He wants you to do in the Body of Christ. God knows whether you are serious about working for Him. Don't just want to discover your gift for the fun of it.

< Determine in your heart to use your spiritual gift for the glory of God and for the welfare of the Body of Christ. Then He will help you.

> Fourth, you have to pray. (James 1:5-6). Ask God for wisdom. He wants you to discover your gift.

FIVE STEPS TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT:

STEP ONE: EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES

It is difficult to discover a spiritual gift if you do not know what to look for ahead of time. Become familiar enough with the gifts that God ordinarily gives to the Body of Christ so that when you come across your gift, you will recognize it.

> Here are five ways to approach this first step:

< *First, study the Bible.* Read the major passages on spiritual gifts often. Use several different versions. Find examples of good people in the Bible and how these gifts might have worked.

< *Second, learn your church's position on gifts.* There is not universal agreement among churches and denominations about which gifts are in operation today. When you learn what it is, you will be able to work within the parameters to explore the possibilities.

< *Third, read extensively.* Read other books. Put it together with what you are learning from the Bible and formulate your opinion.

< *Fourth, get to know gifted people.* Seek out and talk to Christians who have discovered, developed and are using their spiritual gift(s).

< *Fifth, talk about it in conversation with other Christians.* Someone else may recognize your gift before you do.

STEP TWO: EXPERIMENT WITH AS MANY GIFTS AS YOU CAN

Look for the needs and identify what needs to be done. Be available for any task around the church. It is also important to answer the question: "Which gifts *don't* I have?" This may help in your discovery.

> Use a Gifts Inventory: One of the best ways to determine which gifts to experiment with first is to take an inventory.

< Although a gifts inventory should not be considered the final word on discovering gifts, it does point in helpful directions.

STEP THREE: EXAMINE YOUR FEELINGS

The same God who gives spiritual gifts also oversees the way each one of us is made up in our total being. And He knows that if we enjoy doing a task we do a better job at them than if we do not enjoy it.

> Part of God's plan is to match the spiritual gift He gives us with our temperament in such a way that if we have a gift we will feel good using it.

> Discovering spiritual gifts is opening the way for an age in which serving God can be fun.

“Somewhere the idea has found deep entrenchment in Christian circles that doing what God wants you to do is always unpleasant; that Christians must always make choices between doing what they want to do and being happy and doing what God wants them to do and being completely miserable.” - RAY STEDMAN

STEP FOUR: EVALUATE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

The spiritual gifts are task oriented. If God has given you a gift, He has done so because He wants you to accomplish something for Him.

> Gifted people get results. If you experiment with a gift and consistently find that what it is supposed to do does not happen, you probably have discovered another one of the gifts God has not given you.

STEP FIVE: EXPECT CONFIRMATION FROM THE BODY

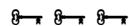
If you think you have a spiritual gift and you are trying to exercise it, but no one else in your group or church thinks you have it—you probably do not. It needs to be confirmed.

> You might find a conflict between step 4 concerning your feelings and step 5 concerning confirmation. Feelings are important, but they are not infallible.

> Confirmation from the Body is a check on all steps.

< The gifts are given for use within the Body so they must function.

< It also builds in a system of accountability.



SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Although the term “spiritual gift” isn’t found in the Old Testament, we see clear evidence of the Holy Spirit working through people during this time. In the Old Testament the unique empowering of the Spirit was given to individuals (oftentimes only temporarily) primarily to enable them to carry out the special responsibilities God had given them. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, the first king of Israel, to empower him to accomplish his task given to him by God. Saul repeatedly disobeyed the instruction of the Lord until God finally intervened and commissioned Samuel to anoint a new king for Israel.

See 1 Samuel 16:1-23 (pgs. 269-270 in BELIEVE). For the full story of Saul see chapters 8-15 in 1 Samuel.

Occasionally in the Old Testament, spiritual gifts were used for the sake of outsiders. In these situations, God used miraculous signs to reveal himself as the one true God. For instance, while the Israelites were living in exile under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, God empowered Daniel with the ability to interpret complex dreams.

See Daniel 2:1-47 (pgs. 271-274 in BELIEVE).

THE PROMISED GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the New Testament, when Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples, he knew he would soon be put to death. Wanting them to be encouraged and prepared for life without him walking by their side, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit — who would empower them with hope and guidance and the ability to get through the difficult days ahead. (See John 14:15-31, pgs. 274-275 in BELIEVE).

Jesus’ last words to his disciples before he ascended to heaven instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Ten days later the Holy Spirit arrived on the Jewish celebration of

Pentecost (i.e. fifty days after Passover), the disciples were filled with incredible boldness and the church was born.

FROM Acts 2:1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ... ¹¹ ...—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ...

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ... ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

The Holy Spirit had been active before Pentecost and had worked in creation (Gen. 1:1-2), in OT history (Jud. 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13), and in the life and ministry of Jesus. But from this point on, the Spirit would dwell in people and not just come on them. His presence would be permanent, not temporary.

This event marked a new age, the "last days," in which God would bring to completion his plan of salvation for humanity.

> Jesus had finished the work of redemption—nothing more had to be done except to share the gospel with the world.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

In many ways, what happened at Pentecost is being experienced to a much greater degree today in countries other than America. Why? Because who needs the gift of healing when we have Blue Cross and Excedrin PM? Who needs a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge when we have computers? I believe many of the blessings our society enjoys medically and technologically have shut us off from what the Lord does elsewhere miraculously as a picture of what's to come prophetically.

What is your response to the above quote?



KEY IDEA: I KNOW MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND USE THEM TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSES.

PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are given with a purpose. God wants to redeem this broken world, and he has chosen to use us, the church, to do it. Whereas in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit temporarily came upon followers of God to enable them to fulfill specific tasks, the New Testament clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers and that all believers have spiritual gifts. And since the New Testament refers to specific gifts, it seems safe to assume that God wants us to identify our gifts in order to best use them.

Romans 12:4-8

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

The variety of the body is evident from the various gifts God has given the church.

> Christians should concentrate on and give their energies to the gifts God has given them, whatever the gift(s) may be.

FROM 1 Corinthians 12:4-31

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.

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, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

... ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

24 ... God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

We individually may have different gifts, ministries and ways of working, but it is God that is working.

- > The source of our gifts is God.
- > The administering of our gifts is from God.
- > The energy to use our gifts is from God.
- > The gifts may be ours but they are not about us; they are about what God desires to accomplish in and through us.

Because members are different they need each other.

- > Members promote unity as they discover their dependence on one another.
- > Diversity in the body is an evidence of the wisdom of God.
 - < Each member needs the other members – no member can afford to become independent.
 - < There is to be no division because division in diversity leads to disunity.

STEWARDSHIP OUR GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are tools that are meant to be used. The divine task of restoring broken people to God has been imparted to us, and we must put these tools to work. In the parable about the bags of gold, Jesus illustrated this principle for his disciples.

See Matthew 25:14-30 (pgs. 279-280 in BELIEVE).

The bags of silver represent opportunities to use our abilities—our gifts.

- > If five bags were given to a person with minimal ability, he/she would be destroyed by the heavy responsibility.
- > If only one bag were given to someone of great ability, he/she would feel humiliated or unused.
- > God assigns work and opportunity according to ability.
 - < We have been given our gifts and assigned our tasks according to the abilities that God has given us.

Christians are stewards of their spiritual gifts. Stewardship carries with it an important dimension of accountability.

- > Every spiritual gift we have is a resource we must use and for which we will be held accountable. The resource that stewards have been given must be used to accomplish God's purpose.
- > Gifts can be abused. When this happens, gifts tend to become ends in themselves. They can glorify the user rather than the Giver, and benefit the individual rather than the Body. The Corinthians had fallen into this trap, and Paul writes 1 Corinthians 12-14 in an attempt to straighten them out.

When you became a member of the body of Christ, you joined a community of people who are under the authority and guidance of God himself. The contribution of your gift will accomplish his purposes for the advancement of the kingdom. Our spiritual gifts are to be practiced out of a heart of grace, humility, and faith. We are commissioned to discover what God has gifted us with and to use it for his glory and the benefit of the world. - RANDY FRAZEE

Our gifts must be fueled with loving intentions. Spiritual gifts that are driven by selfish ambition and pride will sputter and fail. Church leaders are a gift to the church, and as they use their spiritual gifts, other believers will be equipped to steward theirs — resulting in the body of Christ being built up and individual believers becoming mature.

FROM Ephesians 4:1-16

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

...¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁵ ... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

All Christians are ministers. Some assume that the “ministry” belongs only to professional church staff. But ministry belongs to everyone in the body of Christ. All have been gifted to carry out the work of God.

Contrary to what many think, the church does not exist primarily to evangelize. It exists to build the saints so that they, in turn, will do the work of the ministry. -JON COVSON



KEY APPLICATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE IN THE WAY I LIVE?

FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

- We seek to serve, using our gifts to glorify God and help others.
- We value and respect the gifts of others as together we serve God’s purposes.
- We come to see that using our gifts for God gives us a purpose bigger than ourselves.

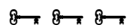
As with biblical community, spiritual gifts strongly affect your relationship with God and with others.

... Why would God only give us one or two of these gifts rather than give every gift to us all?
... The answer connects us back to biblical community. He wants us to rely on each other and cooperate with each other. Our limitations in the gifts create a need for interdependence, for our brothers and sisters to share with the community their gifts, as well as to keep us humble, because we cannot reach the world alone.

As a seeking, hurting world watches us cooperate and move in unison to meet needs, they will be drawn to want to experience the life-changing power of shunning the “every man for himself” attitude and embracing the “every soul matters” mission of Jesus.

Since the Holy Spirit has given these gifts, he will guide us as to their use. He knows exactly what is needed, when it is needed, and where it is needed. Therefore, listening to and obeying the Lord become vital responses for using spiritual gifts. This ongoing process continually strengthens and hones our connection to the Father.

You have been given a gift, and God plans to use your gift to change the world.



SUMMING IT UP

God wants you to discover your spiritual gift, He will give you all the help you need. Just ask and believe that He will. He will unlock the possibilities for the ministry He has already placed within you.

> Knowing your gift(s) will give you an understanding of the unique and indispensable ministry you have been called to accomplish. You will discover a significant part of your purpose for being on this planet.

> Knowing and using your gift(s) will play a substantial role in building up other Christians and leading them into maturity.

> If you fail to develop or use your gift your Church family may actually be hurt because they will be deprived of the unique ministry that only you could perform.

