



**“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”
(I Corinthians 12:7).**

An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit endows believers with spiritual gifts.

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Topic: Holy Spirit: Gifts of.

The subject of spiritual gifts is abused by some, misunderstood by many, and ignored by most Christians. Yet it is essential to effective spiritual ministry. The subject is so important that a full quarter of studies is given to it.

Spiritual gifts relate to the capacity to serve God effectively in some area of spiritual ministry. They are His personal and specific gifts to each of His dear children. Each Christian is obligated to discern, develop, and deploy his gift in Christian service. We will be effective in results and fulfilled in spirit as we exercise our spiritual gifts for the benefit of people and for the glory of God.

Yet the very mention of spiritual gifts disturbs some people. They think of extreme claims that some people make in the supposed exercise of their spiritual gifts. But there is nothing to fear in the exercise of a God-given capacity to serve Him as a teacher, a counselor, a leader, or other of those blessed serving gifts which He has conferred upon His dear children. Fear arises from a misuse of the gifts. The truth about spiritual gifts is good news for Christians who want to serve God.

The church whose members have identified their spiritual gifts, have studied to use their gifts well, and are serving God with honest hearts in the area of their gifting is a growing and ministering church in which God is glorified.

I. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE REAL (I Corinthians 12:1)

A spiritual gift is called *charisma* in the Greek text of the Bible. The term occurs seventeen times in the New Testament (sixteen times in the epistles of Paul and one time in the first epistle of Peter). Each time it is translated “gift” or “free gift.” Since *charis* means “grace,” *charisma* means “a gift of grace.”

Charisma is not a natural talent, though it may coincide with it. A natural talent comes at physical birth, while a spiritual gift comes at spiritual birth. Neither is it an acquired skill, though one can increase his skill in using a spiritual gift through study and training. Nor is it an emotion or experience, though emotions of joy commonly follow the use of one's spiritual gift to serve people in the name of Jesus. A spiritual gift is the capacity to serve God effectively in some area of spiritual service.

Spiritual gifts are in a class of “spiritualities,” things ethereal rather than material, of the Holy Spirit rather than of the flesh. They can be understood, but only by the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

To be uninformed about spiritual gifts is to fail to serve in the area in which God has gifted you. To be informed and committed to serve in the area of your gifting is to be delivered from carnality and experience the joy of effective service for God. That is why Paul wrote, “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant*” (1 Corinthians 12:1).

II. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE SACRED (I Corinthians 12:2, 3)

A. They are for the redeemed only (verse 2). The unredeemed are carried off by force by the devil. The redeemed are liberated by the Holy Spirit. Those who are controlled by the devil cannot receive or understand the subject of spiritual gifts. Only those born of the Spirit have a spiritual gift.

B. They are related to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (verse 3). The spirit which denies His Lordship is not of God. It is the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3). The spirit which confirms His Lordship is of God (1 John 4:2). So a question to be asked at the exercise of any so-called spiritual gift is this: “Does it speak of itself, an experience, or of the Lord Jesus?” To know that Jesus is “*Lord*” (sovereign, ruler, Jehovah of the Old Testament) is an insight which comes by divine revelation (Matthew 16:15-17). It is the result of the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and showing them to us (John 16:12-15). Every true spiritual gift bears witness of Him. .

C. They are distinct from the Giver. Notice references to the “gift” of the Holy Spirit and the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit. The former refers to the Spirit himself while the latter refers to the enabling for service which the Spirit confers. The promise of Acts 2:38, “*ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,*” was a promise of the indwelling Spirit and not a promise of the gift of languages. Watch for “gift” and “gifts” in Bible passages which discuss the subject.

D. They are distinct from spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and “temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and showing mercy (the list in Romans 12:6-8). Fruit of the Spirit has to do with character, what one is in Christ. Gifts have to do with service, what one does for Christ. Every Christian may have every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. But no Christian has all the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:28-30). Cultivate all the fruit and develop the gift which the Holy Spirit has given to you.

III. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE DIVERSE (I Corinthians 12:4)

Diversity means a separation between parts that are designed to be joined together. Each of the diverse things is distinct, and yet they fit together to function. A mechanic dismantles an automobile engine. How many parts there are! They are different in size, shape, and function; yet they join together to make a powerful engine. The Bible says spiritual gifts are diverse. Each differs from the others and is distinct in itself. Yet they are designed to be joined together in the spiritual body of Christ to function in ministry.

They differ in their relationship to God. The Holy Spirit confers the gifts, the Lord Jesus directs in the use of the gifts, and the Father empowers the function of the gifts (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

They differ in their recipients. One Christian receives one gift, another receives a different gift, another yet a different gift (I Corinthians 12:8-10). The Holy Spirit decides who gets which gift and sovereignly confers them (verse 11).

They differ in their duration. First Corinthians 13:8 mentions three gifts (prophecy, knowledge, and languages) which passed away on the completion of the writing of Holy Scripture.

It is our duty to recognize the diversity in spiritual gifts. Then we will not demand that we have our gift in order to be “spiritual,” neither will we

feel superior because of the gift we have received. It is enough for us to use our particular gift in cooperation with other gifts so that people may be served and God may be glorified (I Peter 4:11).

IV. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE HOLY (I Corinthians 12:4-6)

A. They are conferred by the Holy Spirit (verse 4). Regardless of which gift you may have received, the same Holy Spirit which conferred your gift conferred mine also. Notice the repetition of the phrase “*by the same Spirit*” in I Corinthians 12:8-11. Each gift is given by the Holy Spirit as He chooses. His endowment makes each gift holy.

B. They are governed by God the Son (verse 5). There are many different ways in which service is rendered, but the Lord Jesus is in charge of them all. Many times He is called the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:19). The figure is very appropriate. As the head (brain) is the control center of the physical body, so the Lord Jesus is the control center of the churches. He governs all they are and do. Colossians 2:19 teaches that it is from the Head (Jesus Christ) that the whole body is nourished and strengthened and grows with the growth which God produces. That is the consequence of all the spiritual gifts being directed by the Son.

C. They are empowered by God the Father (verse 6). There are many activities which do the work of God. But in every work the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus is performing His purposes. He produces the desired results in all our work by empowering what we do in His name. Ephesians 1:19 describes His power in terms like transcendent greatness, surpassingly great, infinite might, resistless might, and tremendously mighty power. It recognizes the Bible statement that “*power belongeth unto God*” (Psalm 62:11). That power of almighty God is at work in the children of God this present hour (Ephesians 3:20). Think of that. He is at work in you!

V. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE UNIVERSAL (I Corinthians 12:7)

What does God mean when He says, “*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man*” (verse 7)? It means each believer is given a spiritual gift by which the Holy Spirit is made manifest in his life. The word “*every*” means “the entire group taken one at a time.” You have a spiritual gift if you are trusting Jesus as your Savior. Believe it and rejoice.

No one is left out. The Holy Spirit made sovereign choices as to which believer would receive which gift. But He made a positive choice that each believer would receive some gift. It is not an indication of pride but

rather a statement of faith to say, “I have a spiritual gift whereby I can serve God effectively.” That is what the Bible says.

Simon Peter wrote that “*every man*” has received the Holy Spirit, and with the coming of the Spirit each received a spiritual gift (I Peter 4:10). It is no sign of humility to deny it. Admit that you are gifted and get busy serving God.

VI. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE PRACTICAL (I Corinthians 12:7)

God said the gifts are given to each of us “*to profit withal.*” That is an old English term which has lost its meaning today. But we must ask, “What does that mean?”

The phrase means “for the profit of all; for the common good.” It admits a great principle relating to spiritual gifts: each gift is to be administered for the good of other people. It is never to be used for the mere benefit of the one who exercises it. It is for the sake of those who receive its ministry.

A person may say, “The use of my spiritual gift makes me feel so good!” That may be true, but that is not the purpose for which the gift is to be used. The teacher does not teach because that makes him feel good, but to instruct the students that they may know and serve God. The selfishness which makes one use his gift for personal enjoyment grieves the Spirit of God. It is sin. Every spiritual gift is to be used in such a way as to meet the needs of people about us.

This introductory study has laid the foundation for the other studies in this series. It has assured you that you are gifted. You have been gifted by the choice and personal act of the Holy Spirit of God. Believe it! It is your opportunity now to discern which gift is yours, to develop your expertise in the use of that gift, and to devote the rest of your life to serving God in the area to which He has assigned you. That is the way to the full enjoyment of Christian service.

Questions

1. What is a spiritual gift?
2. How do we know spiritual gifts are real?
3. What spiritual gifts do you recognize operating in your church?
4. How are spiritual gifts related to the Lordship of Jesus?

5. How does the “gift” differ from the “gifts” of the Spirit?
6. How do the spiritual gifts differ?
7. How do we know that every Christian has a spiritual gift?
8. How are the Father, Son, and Spirit related to spiritual gifts?
9. What is the end purpose of all spiritual gifts?
10. How can you use your spiritual gift in your church?