

# Spiritual Gifts

## FAQ<sup>1</sup>

### 1. What is a spiritual gift?

A spiritual gift is a God-given ability, distributed to individual Christians by the Holy Spirit that allows him/or her to work through their lives to help the church execute its mission on earth.

### 2. What is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

Natural talents are physical abilities to do special things. Some natural talents might be musical ability, carpentry, mechanical aptitude, and artistic skills. Spiritual gifts are spiritual abilities to do certain things. Natural talents are often the vehicle through which spiritual gifts can be used. For example, a Christian vocalist may have the spiritual gift of evangelism being expressed through the vehicle of musical talent.

### 3. Are spiritual gifts the best sign of spirituality?

No! Christ-like maturity is primarily indicated by the manifestation of the Fruit of the Spirit, not by the presence of spiritual gifts (Galatians 5:22-23).

God may choose to shine forth in a spiritually immature baby Christian. However, that does not make the baby spiritual. A spiritual child may say excitedly, "I got the gift of tongues last night and now I'm spiritual!"

But, Jesus said: "For by their fruit you shall know them" (Matthew 7:16).

Satan can imitate and counterfeit spiritual gifts, but he is baffled in trying to imitate the Fruit of the Spirit.

### 4. Does every believer have a gift?

Yes! Every believer has at least one gift (1 Corinthians 12:6-7, 11). All believers are to evaluate themselves in terms of their God-given gifts (Romans 12:3)

### 5. How many gifts are there? What are they?

According to 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-29; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Corinthians 7:7, there are **at least** 22 spiritual gifts. They are as follows: Apostles; Prophets; Pastor-Teachers; Evangelists; Prophecy; Teaching; Wisdom; Knowledge; Faith; Miraculous Powers; Healing; Distinguishing between Spirits; Speaking in Tongues; Interpretation of Tongues; Helps; Service; Administration; Encouragement; Giving; Leadership; Mercy and Celibacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Barrier, Roger. "How to Identify and Effectively Use Your Spiritual Gifts." *Crosswalk.com*, Salem Web Network, 25 Apr. 2018, [www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/how-to-identify-and-effectively-use-your-spiritual-gifts.html](http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/how-to-identify-and-effectively-use-your-spiritual-gifts.html). Accessed 4 November 2018.

## **6. When does the believer receive his/her gift?**

There is no clear-cut Biblical teaching as to when the believer receives his/her gift. However, it seems that the gift comes with the Giver and is bestowed at conversion (2 Timothy 1:6).

## **7. Can a believer have any gift he or she wants?**

No! (1 Corinthians 12:29-31). The Holy Spirit gives out gifts as he sees fit (1 Corinthians 12:7, 8-9, 11). This is why there is no prescribed way to get a gift. However, if we are faithful with the gift, or gifts, that the Holy Spirit has already given us, he invites us to pray for another (1 Corinthians 12:29-31).

## **8. Do spiritual gifts come ready to operate?**

No! It often takes time for gifts to mature and develop into their full effectiveness. Spiritual gifts come "in the rough." Every believer is obligated to mature his/her gift. Each Christian should have an opportunity to use his/her gifts interdependently with others (Romans 12:4-6).

## **9. If a person doesn't have the gift of evangelism, is he/she excused from trying to win people to Christ?**

Of course not! The absence of gifts does not take precedence over clear-cut biblical demands. For example, we are all commanded to be liberal in our giving. Just because a Believer does not have the gift of giving does not mean that he/she can say, "Never pass me the offering plate again. I don't need to tithe. I don't have the gift of giving." We are all commanded to share the gospel with others whether we have the gift of evangelism or not.

## **10. Can spiritual gifts be lost?**

Yes! Gifts which are not used or developed can apparently be lost (like the appendix in the human body). Jesus' parable of the talents illustrates the danger of neglecting the gift that the Holy Spirit has bestowed. To do so means censorship and rebuke by the Master Himself (Matthew 25:14-30).

## **11. Are some gifts more important than others?**

Yes! Prophecy is the most important. Speaking in tongues is the least. All the others fall somewhere in between (1 Corinthians 12:31). The relative value of spiritual gifts is to be tested by their usefulness to the church as a whole. Paul's wrote that due to the interdependent nature of all of the gifts, there should be no spiritual pride associated with any of these gifts.

## **12. Can spiritual gifts be misused?**

Yes! For example, Paul described the use and misuse of the gift of tongues in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14). For example, Paul taught that speaking in tongues without someone in attendance with the gift of interpretation will only bring confusion to the church family and ridicule from unbelievers.

## Definitions and Descriptions

There are many spiritual gifts and there is not a complete list of ways that God uses His people. This list is intended as a guide to help believers study the topic of spiritual gifts.

### Administration / Helps

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:28, Titus 1:4-5

**Definition:** To steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others.

**Examples:** Clerical, Communications, Support Staff

**Related Gifts:** Leadership

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of administration is *kubernesis* meaning “to steer,” or “to rule or govern.” This is someone who guides and directs a group of people toward a goal or destination, like a ship’s captain.

Those with the gift of administration or helps are task-oriented and move a project or task towards completion. These are the people who get stuff done, regardless of how menial the job might seem.

### Discernment

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:10, Hebrews 5:14; Acts 5:3-6; 16:16-18; 1 John 4:1

**Definition:** To clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power.

**Examples:** Apologetics, Doctrine, Spiritual Warfare

The Greek word for the gift of discernment is *diakrisis* which describes being able to distinguish, discern, judge or appraise a person, statement, situation, or environment. This gift is also known as the gift “distinguishing between spirits.”

Those with the gift of discernment are enabled by the Holy Spirit to recognize and determine if something is from God, Satan, the world, or the flesh. Someone with this gift helps the church watch out for false teaching.

### Evangelism

**Key Passages:** Ephesians 4:11, Acts 8:5-12, 26-40, 21:8, Matthew 28:18-20

**Definition:** To be a messenger of the Gospel.

**Examples:** Missions, Outreach, Cross-cultural, Witnessing, Sharing the Good News

The Greek word for evangelists is *euaggelistes* which means “one who brings good news.”

In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus calls all Christians to reach the lost and to spread the good news of the Gospel. What differentiates the spiritual gift of evangelism from the Great Commission is that those with the gift have an extra dose of effectiveness and faith.

Evangelists, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can effectively and clearly communicate the Gospel to others. They are passionate about the lost and will do whatever is necessary, often putting themselves outside of their comfort zone, to share the truth with the lost. The fear of rejection that most of us fear when talking to non-believers is overcome by the Spirit in these individuals. They tend to seek out relationships with unbelievers and they can communicate with a diverse group of people.

## **Exhortation / Encouragement**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:8, Acts 11:23-24; 14:21-22; 15:32

**Definition:** To come along side of someone with words of encouragement, comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be.

**Examples:** Counseling, Speaking, Worship, Discipleship, Small Groups, Equipping, Support Groups, Celebrate Recovery

The Greek word for the gift of encouragement is *parakaleo* which means to beseech, exhort, call upon, to encourage and to strengthen.

A person with this gift tends to remind others of God's power and the salvation they have in Jesus Christ. The Spirit uses this gift to uplift those who might be doubting their faith. They can be motivators but also challenge and rebuke others to help them mature spiritually. The goal is to build up the body of Christ to fulfill its earthly mission.

## **Faith**

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 11:1-40

**Definition:** 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.

**Examples:** Faith, Prayer, Leadership, Intercessory Prayer

The Greek word for faith is *pistis* which implies a certainty, confidence, trust, and assurance in the object of their faith—God.

To some extent, each believer has some faith, but those with this spiritual have an unusual boldness because of their deep trust and faith in God. Those with this gift help build up the church's confidence in God. They believe God is good and sovereign and they place their full trust in Him. They expect God to do great things, so when God does, they are rarely surprised. They take God at his Word.

## **Giving**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:8, 13, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-15; Acts 4:32-37, Galatians 4:15, Philippians 4:10-18

**Definition:** To share what material resources you have with liberality and cheerfulness without thought of return.

**Examples:** Benevolence, Stewardship, Practical Assistance to Others

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of giving is *metadidomi*. It means “to impart” or “to give.” In Romans 12:8 this word appears with: *haplotes*. The word *haplotes* means “sincerely, generously and without pretense or hypocrisy.”

These joyful givers are grateful when they can help meet a need. They are happy to help financially, and they share the overflow of what they have received from God. They have no expectation of being paid back. The Spirit uses givers to provide for the many needs of the church and its people, ministries, and missions.

## **Healing**

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30, James 5:13-16

**Definition:** To be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

**Examples:** Doctors, Nurses, Counseling, Prayer, Intercessory Prayer

**Related Gifts:** Faith, Miracles

The phrase *charismata iamatōn* in the Greek is literally translated “gifts of healings.”

Those with the gift of healing are enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit. They have faith that He can heal, and they are active participants in the healing process. However, the gift does not come with any guarantee of healing.

Healers tend to be compassionate towards the sick and hurting. They pray over them often and they believe that God can heal if He chooses to. Their primary concern is spiritual in nature—they care more about spiritual healing and wholeness of the individual’s relationship with Christ than the physical or emotional healing.

## **Hospitality**

**Key Passages:** 1 Peter 4:9-10

**Definition:** To warmly welcome people, even strangers, into one’s home or church as a means of serving those in need of food or lodging.

**Examples:** Visitation, Meals, Hosting Small Group, Greeter

The Greek word *philoxenos* used in 1 Peter 4:9-10 means “love of strangers”.

Someone with the gift of hospitality warmly welcomes people, even strangers, into one’s home or church as a means of serving those in need—especially those in need of food and lodging.

## **Knowledge**

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:8; Romans 15:14; 2 Corinthians 2:14

**Definition:** To seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analyzing of that data.

**Examples:** Preaching, Teaching, Speaking, Christian Education, Lay Leaders

**Related Gifts:** Pastor, Teaching, Leadership

The spiritual gift of knowledge is also known as the “word of knowledge” or “utterance of knowledge.” The Greek word for this gift is *gnosis* meaning “knowledge and understanding”.

Those with this gift seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible and then they want to help others by sharing this knowledge in specific situations. This person tends to be well-versed in the Bible, has memorized many Scriptures, and they can communicate those truths to others effectively and at the right time. The gift of knowledge helps believers rely on the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus in all situations and circumstances.

## **Leadership**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; 5:17

**Definition:** To set the direction of the body with such care and diligence to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals.

**Examples:** Leadership, Pastor, Shepherd, Executive, Vision

**Related Gifts:** Administration, Apostleship, Evangelism, Knowledge, Pastor/Shepherd

The Greek word for leadership is *proistemi*. It means to lead, to assist, to protect and to care for others.

Those with the gift of leadership care for God’s people and equip them to live in deeper relationship with Jesus and others. Their primary concern is helping others succeed and grow in spiritual maturity. They tend to be more big-picture or visionary focused instead of caught up in the details. They also go to great lengths to protect those under their care.

## **Mercy**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:8, Matthew 5:7; Luke 10:30-37; James 3:17; Jude 22-23

**Definition:** To be sensitive toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, 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.

**Examples:** Benevolence, Caring, Helping Others, Visitation

**Related Gifts:** Healing, Giving

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of mercy is *eleeo*. It means to be patient and compassionate toward those who are suffering or afflicted.

While all Christians are called to be merciful because God has been merciful to us (Matthew 18:33; Ephesians 2:4-6), those with this gift are more empathetic. They are concerned with both the spiritual and physical well-being of those who are suffering. They are in it for the long haul and are sensitive to the feelings and circumstances of others. They can quickly spot someone who is not “fine”. They tend to be good listeners.

## **Miracles**

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; Acts 1:8; Galatians 3:5

**Definition:** To be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which witnesses acknowledge to be of supernatural origin and means.

**Examples:** Prayer, Intercessory Prayer

**Related Gifts:** Faith, Healing

The Greek phrase *energemata dynameon* literally translates “workings of powers.” The double plural most likely means that these gifts were diverse and were not permanently available at the will of the gifted believer, but instead were given by the Spirit for a specific time or circumstance.

Jesus and the Apostles performed many miracles. Miracles were given by God to the church to reveal the presence and glory of God among His people and to create a sense of awe and wonder and Godly fear. The purpose of the miracle was to bring many to faith in Jesus and glorifying God, as well as greater faith and boldness within the church (Acts 4:29-31; 9:35, 42).

Those with the spiritual gift of miracles often have a heightened sensitivity to the presence and power of God through His Holy Spirit. They have a special measure of faith and desire for God to reveal Himself and draw many to faith in His Son Jesus Christ. They take care not to draw attention to themselves or have a following of people but are constantly pointing others to Jesus. Those with this gift understand that God is Sovereign, and He can work when and how He desires, but they make sure they are available and listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

This gift is often accompanied by prayer and strong petition by these individuals for God to reveal His glory to people. They do not claim power themselves, but always give credit and glory to God for His mighty works. Often God will deliberately humble them to keep them relying on His grace and pointing to His Son, rather than miracles.

## **Pastor/Shepherd**

**Key Passages:** Ephesians 4:11; Jeremiah 3:15; Acts 20:28; John 10:11-18

**Definition:** To be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and feeding a group of believers entrusted to one's care.

**Examples:** Pastor, Shepherd

**Related Gifts:** Administration, Leading, Teaching

The Greek word for pastor is *poimen* and simply means shepherd or overseer. The gift of pastor is directly linked to the gift of teaching in Ephesians 4:11 and elsewhere.

Pastors are called shepherds because their calling and gifting are much like those who care for sheep. They are called and gifted to care for the spiritual well-being of a local body of God's people. Pastors are first and foremost servants of God and the church. They are given a mixture of abilities by grace that allows them to serve the needs of an entire community.

The goal of the pastor is to reveal the glory of God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to a people who need God's grace for life. The primary way the pastor will do this is by teaching the Word of God to the church. The role of a pastor is one of humility and service as he is reminded daily of his overwhelming need of God's grace for the task at hand.

## **Prophecy**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:1-5, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 4:10-11

**Definition:** To speak forth the message of God to His. Must be done through God's power.

**Examples:** Speaking, Prayer

The Greek word for the gift of prophecy is *propheteia* which is the ability to receive a divinely inspired message and deliver it to others in the church.

This gift is different from the Old Testament Prophets who spoke the authoritative Word of God directly. In the New Testament, this role was given to Apostles and not prophets.

The spiritual gift of prophecy is a unique gift. These messages can take the form of exhortation, correction, disclosure of secret sins, prediction of future events, comfort, inspiration, or other revelations given to equip and edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:3-4, 24-25). They are spoken in human words through a human mind which is why they must be tested against the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21).

Those with the gift of prophecy are sensitive to both the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the church. They should be humble and continually study the Scriptures in order to test the revelations they receive before speaking them. When they do speak, they should allow and encourage others to weigh what is said against the Scriptures.

## **Serving / Ministering**

**Key Passages:** Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 28, Acts 20:35; 2 Timothy 4:11; Revelation 2:19

**Definition:** To identify undone tasks in God's work, however menial, and use available resources to get the job done.

**Examples:** Clerical, Communications, Serving Others, Practical Assistance, Behind the Scenes (Tech)

**Related Gifts:** Giving, Helps, Hospitality, Mercy

The spiritual gift of service, or ministering, covers a wide range of activities in its application. There are two Greek words for this gift:



1. *Diakonia* means “to wait tables”. It is most often translated in the Bible as “ministry.” It refers to any act of service done in genuine love for the edification of the community.
2. The word *antilepsis* is translated “helping”. It has a similar meaning: to help or aid in love within the community.

Those with this gift do not seek recognition or a position in the “spotlight,” they just love to help out. They are content with serving in the background knowing that their contribution will bless the church, display the love of Christ to the world, and bring glory to God.

## Teaching

**Key Passages:** Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7; James 3:1

**Definition:** To instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.

**Examples:** Teaching, Bible Study Teacher, Christian Education, Equipping, Discipleship, Curriculum Development, Writing

**Related Gifts:** Apostle, Evangelists, Pastor, Prophecy

The Greek word for those with the spiritual gift of teaching is *didaskalos*. From the root of this word we get our English word, “didactic.” The word *didasko* means to teach, instruct, instill doctrine, explain, and expound.

Those with the spiritual gift of teaching love to study the Word of God for extended periods of time. They consume the Scriptures as food for their hearts, souls and minds with the expressed purpose of knowing Him and then making Him known to others. They want to know what God has revealed of Himself and what He requires of us. They take great joy and satisfaction in seeing others learn and apply the truth of God’s Word to their lives. They love to see how the Gospel is woven throughout the Scriptures and how it glorifies and magnifies Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of those who love Him by grace.

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 will never hide or withhold it. On the contrary, they desire to demonstrate God’s love while revealing His truth to the world without fear.

## Tongues / Languages

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30, 14:4, 39, Acts 2:4, Acts 19:6

**Definition:** To speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language or the body be edified.

**Examples:** Bi-lingual Teacher

**Related Gifts:** Interpretation of Tongues

The spiritual gift of tongues is more accurately called the gift of languages. The Greek word for tongues is *glossa*, which literally means “tongue.” When it is used in the New Testament addressing

the subject of spiritual gifts it carries the contextual meaning of “languages.” Speaking in tongues is the utterance of prayer or of a message glorifying God, typically spoken to God (1 Corinthians 14:2), in a language that is unknown to the one speaking it.

A few points about the gift of tongues:

- Not every believer receives this gift. The gift of tongues is not a requirement or a necessary sign of salvation. See 1 Corinthians 12:30.
- Tongues can be human languages such as those heard in Acts 2 but may be languages no one understands. However, tongues edify the person speaking and not the church, unless someone interprets what is said. See 1 Corinthians 14:1-5.
- Tongues should be orderly and controlled by the one speaking. See 1 Corinthians 14:27-28, 33, 39-40.
- No tongues should be spoken in the church gathering without interpretation. See 1 Corinthians 14:27-28.
- Tongues should not be forbidden but it should be done orderly. See 1 Corinthians 14:39.

The Holy Spirit gives some believers the spiritual gift of tongues to glorify God and, with the help of an interpreter, to edify the church. This gift is dealt with extensively in the Scriptures and its use should not be discouraged. That said, it should be used properly with pure motives and intentions, of course in the power and prompting of the Holy Spirit.

## **Interpretation of Tongues**

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:1-28

**Definition:** To translate the message of someone who has spoken in tongues.

**Related Gifts:** Prophecy, Tongues

The Greek word for interpretation is *hermeneia* and simply means to interpret, explain, or expound some message that is not able to be understood in a natural way.

[There is much dispute in the church by Biblical scholars about the gift of tongues, whether it is speaking in a foreign language that the speaker did not previously know or if it is an unknown tongue or language or “special language”.]

The spiritual gift of interpretation of tongues is found alongside the gift of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12:10.

This is a revelatory gift, meaning that God “reveals” the meaning of the words or message being spoken and allows the interpreter to communicate its meaning to those who need to hear it. When this happens in the church two things happen: the church is edified, and God is glorified.

The spiritual gift of interpretation is given by the Holy Spirit to certain individuals to reveal messages from God. Speaking in tongues is for the building up of the church. Like the gift of prophecy, tongues that are interpreted have the effect of encouraging and blessing the church to love and serve God more deeply and effectively.

## Wisdom

**Key Passages:** 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, 2:1-16, 12:8; Colossians 1:9-10, 2:1-3; James 3:13-18

**Definition:** 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.

**Examples:** Counseling, Mentoring, Crisis Intervention, Advice, Discipleship

**Related Gifts:** Discernment, Knowledge

The Greek word for wisdom is *sophia* and it refers to the intimate understanding of God's Word and His commandments which results in holy and upright living. In the context of 1 Corinthians 12:8, it means to speak to the life of an individual or to a specific situation with great understanding and a righteous perspective, with the goal of guiding others toward a life of holiness and worship.

The Holy Spirit gives some the spiritual gift of wisdom to impart the truth and understanding to believers. Wisdom doesn't end with knowledge but is expressed in transformed hearts and lives.

Those with the gift of wisdom have a deep understanding of the holiness of God and the lack of holiness in their own hearts. They can recognize this in others as well and have the compassion and boldness to share that truth with them. They can take from their own life experiences and share what God has taught them through those things. They can easily recognize where a decision or action may lead, and they warn against those decisions that may be harmful or unfruitful. They can often see through the confusion of a situation and can give direction that would help an individual or group obtain a God-glorifying goal. The church needs those with the spiritual gift of wisdom to guide her through uncertain or difficult times.

## References

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