



# What Are The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit?

**A Summary:** Revd Paul A. Carr

**Introduction:** Spiritual Gifts can be put into three main categories: Gifts of Manifestations; Gifts of Service and Gifts of Ministry. Some believe there are seven, some nine, some list twenty three and others suggest that you cannot limit God with what he gives - that's a viewpoint that I would share. In this handout, I want to spend some time briefly highlighting some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and what they could mean to you and what their function is in the life of the church. No-one will have all of these or possibly even more than one - though some people do have more to function in a particular area of ministry and service - they are all designed to work in conjunction with, and to compliment, each other. As you read through this handout, think of people you know who may have one of these gifts and be encouraged. Have a good look at yourself and see what gifts the Lord has given you and be encouraged. Think about those who have ministered to you with any of these gifts and give and affirm their gifting and encourage them in their use.

**Apostleship** (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11): Some Christians are given special abilities with which to perform the functions of the office apostle. The gift of apostleship was granted to the original 12 apostles, then others after them, including Paul (Acts 1:26, Romans 1:1, Acts 14:14, Romans 16:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:6). Though today we don't have people who could claim to be apostles in the original sense - those who had been eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ (Acts 21:26) there are those who may function much like an apostle. In a general sense, an apostle is one who is gifted by the Holy Spirit with the special ability to give leadership to a number of churches and to show supernatural wisdom and authority in spiritual matters that relate to those churches.

**Prophecy** (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28): This gift is one of the most misunderstood of all the gifts. Many people consider it the ability to foretell the future, and it can be, or by forth telling the word of God to the church through preaching and teaching. A prophet, Biblically, is someone who speaks God's words to a nation and usually involved repentance and to return to God. Most Christians who have this gift find that it takes much time, hard work and reliance on the power and control of the Holy Spirit to develop this gift. On a note of caution, a prophetic gift conforms what the Bible says.

**Evangelism** (Ephesians 4:11): Out of love for the Lord and in obedience to His command, all believers are to be witnesses for Him as a way of life. The supernaturalness of this gift lies in our motivation that is prompted by the Holy Spirit to want to share Christ and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, open minds to the gospel when it is shared. All Christians should share Christ with others. I believe evangelism is a special ability given by the Holy Spirit to certain believers, in different and varying quantity. While some are given this special ability, the Bible teaches that the Church is commissioned to preach the gospel throughout the world (Matthew 28:19, 20), and that the Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would indwell all believers for the specific purpose of witnessing for Him (Acts 1:8). Those who are more gifted in evangelism should devote even more time to seeking to reach others for Christ.

**Pastoring** (Ephesians 4:11): The office of Pastor, as listed in Ephesians 4, indicates that certain members of the body of Christ are given special abilities by the Holy Spirit to pastor or "shepherd" the members of the Church. This gift gives the ability to care for the interests of those believers whom God has committed to that person's care. The gift of pastoring, however, is not limited to those who hold the church office of pastor. A lay person who has a strong desire to disciple or shepherd a group of people, such as a home group leader etc., may well have the gift of pastoring. All too often the entire responsibility of pastoring in a local church is limited to the office of pastor. Among the most dynamic local churches I have seen are those in which the gift of pastoring is recognised among the laity and its practice encouraged.

**Teaching** (1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11): The gift of teaching is the supernatural ability to explain information to members of the body of Christ in such a way that they will be edified and able to apply it in their lives. Again, as with many of these *Grace gifts*, this gift develops with maturity. Only the spiritual gift of teaching can bring about righteous results in the lives of others. This is true for two reasons:

- Firstly, the Christian's ability to teach is supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit. Since God is holy, any gift of His would be holy and could not be used in an unholy fashion, if properly exercised in the power and control of the Holy Spirit.
- Secondly, for the Christian, the gift of teaching is the supernatural ability to teach *truths*. Since truth is ultimately from God, it can have only a beneficial impact on the life of the hearer when properly applied.

**Leadership** (Romans 12:8): The gift of leadership is the special ability given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ for the purpose of setting goals and motivating and directing the activities of others in working together toward accomplishing those goals. An individual who has the gift of leadership but not of administration would do well to have supportive staff who are gifted in administration. Otherwise, a leader will emerge who will establish goals and motivate people to work together to reach those goals only to fail because of poor planning, organisation, direction and controls. Likewise, a well-organised local church which lacks a leader may flounder from misdirection or stagnancy, and its people may become frustrated and unfulfilled because of the slow rate or lack of progress in the life and growth of the church.

**Wisdom** (1 Corinthians 12:8): Is a natural ability that is generally developed over a long period of time by all people. The spiritual gift of wisdom, while usually acquired as a Christian matures spiritually, can also be instantaneous in nature. The gift of wisdom is a gift that clearly discerns the mind of Christ in applying specific knowledge to specific needs that arise within the body of Christ.

**Knowledge** (1 Corinthians 12:8): Is another spiritual gift that is also a natural talent. Everyone is born with the natural ability to discover certain information and form ideas from that information. But the Christian who has the spiritual gift of knowledge has a supernatural ability to discover, accumulate, analyse and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the body of Christ.

**Faith** (1 Corinthians 12:9): All believers are given faith in some measure and for certain reasons. Every believer is given the ability to have faith in Christ for his salvation. Each Christian is also to live by faith. Beyond that, faith is a spiritual gift that the believer may develop and apply in virtually every area of life. This gift is the special ability to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God as they relate to the growth and well-being of the body of Christ.

**Discerning of Spirits** (1 Corinthians 12:10): This gift is the supernatural ability of certain believers to discern whether things said and done by others are true or false, are of God or of satan, are of the Holy Spirit or of the flesh. I believe that discernment of spirits is an ability which is learned over a period of time.

**Healing** (1 Corinthians 12:8, 28): This gift does not suggest that the holder of the gift is given supernatural powers over disease etc. Rather, it means that an individual is given the privilege of being the vessel through which God's works of healing take place. Doctors and those in the medical profession may acquire certain skills and develop natural abilities in the areas of medicine, but the healing itself is a miraculous wonder of the life process which is uniquely controlled by God. Many Christian doctors have natural and acquired abilities which are complemented by the gift of healing.

**Miracles** (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28): This gift is the supernatural ability given to certain believers through whom the Holy Spirit performs acts by means outside the ordinary laws of nature. Jesus himself performed many miracles as did the early disciples.

**Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28): This gift is the supernatural ability to speak to others and/or to God in a language never learned by the speaker. Like all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of tongues has been given to the Church in order to glorify Christ and to build up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14vs26). Unhappily, however, tongues has often become a divisive issue among all too many Christians. Let me stress two biblical principles: 1) the gift of tongues must always be exercised in accordance with the guidelines set out in 1 Corinthians 14; 2) those who have this gift must exercise it in love and humility and we must accept with love those who have this gift.

**Interpretation of Tongues** (1 Corinthians 14:13): The gift of tongues may or may not be accompanied by the giving of another closely related gift, the interpretation of tongues. Whenever the gift of tongues is exercised in the presence of others, the person speaking in tongues is to pray also for the gift of knowing what he has said, so that he can tell people afterwards. Sometimes, other Christians have a supernatural ability to interpret what someone else has said.

**Helps, Service and Mercy** (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7-8, Ephesians 4:12): The spiritual gifts of helps, service and mercy are similar in many respects. All three are given for the building up of the body of Christ, but they differ slightly. The gift of helps is characteristically more task-oriented. The gift of service is more people-oriented. The gift of mercy is extended usually to the infirm, the elderly or those who are unable to care for themselves.

**Administration** (1 Corinthians 12: 28): This is a special ability given by the Holy Spirit to enable Christians to understand the goals/objectives of a particular group within the Body of Christ and to make and carry out plans for realising those goals/objectives. Sometimes this spiritual gift can be confused with the gift of leadership. While some leaders might also have the gift of administration, all do not. Conversely, not all who have the gift of administration have the gift of leadership.

**Exhortation** (1 Corinthians 12:10): This gift is the special ability given by the Holy Spirit to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister to groups or to individuals, on a short-term basis, words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel. The result of such counselling to other members of the body of Christ is that those exhorted will feel helped and healed. Another term for exhortation would be to "build up" one another in Christ. Hebrews 3:13 tells us to do just that: "Exhort one another daily." Each of us is told to exercise this special ability, and therefore each of us is assured that the Holy Spirit will empower us with this gift.

**Giving** (Romans 12:8): Over the years, I have seen the gift of giving demonstrated over and over again. This gift is the supernatural ability to acquire money for the purpose of giving it to others for the sole purpose of carrying out the work of God. It may be those who have a successful business and are able to direct something of that into the Lord's work or those who are well paid and are able to use their money in the same way.

**Common Grace Gifts:** If we believe that God is the God of creation, then it follows that all the gifts and talents people possess have their origins in God's grace. We call these natural talents or Common Grace Gifts. For instance, it might be a musical ability or flower arranging or gift of the gab or cooking or gardening or sport or DIY. I believe that natural gifts/abilities become supernatural gifts/abilities when they are given over to God and the Holy Spirit is allowed to use them to God's glory.

**Saving Grace Gifts:** Saving grace gifts, on the other hand, are not natural talents and abilities but are gifts given by God for service - such as: Teaching; Leadership; Prophecy; Intercession etc. Some people think they are one and the same but talents like musical ability, artistic skills, athletic excellence are not spiritual in nature and can be possessed by non-believers.

**Total Availability To God:** As we have seen, many of the spiritual gifts are similar in nature, and many times individuals may have two or more gifts that greatly complement one another. Again, I want to say that knowing and understanding what our spiritual gifts are important, but primarily be available/open to God at all times and in every way to build up the body of Christ.

Remember too that spiritual gifts are not a mark of spirituality, they are a *Grace Gift*. That was obvious in the Corinthian church, one of the most carnal churches of all, and one in which there was a wrongly motivated overemphasis on Spiritual gifts. We can know that we are living Spirit-filled lives, not by the manifestation of spiritual gifts but when the fruit of the Spirit, primarily love, becomes increasingly evident in our lives.

**Identifying Spiritual Gifts:** Identifying our Spiritual gifts is not nearly as difficult as some would imagine. The most obvious clue is the success of your attempts! The areas in which you are most successful are likely to be those areas in which you are gifted and vice-versa!

- Our own personal desires can frequently indicate the gifts we have or the gifts the Lord wants to give us. If we have a passion for people to come to a saving faith in Jesus, maybe the gift of evangelism is what you have.
- The counsel of others is also a very important factor. You may be in a 'job' because that's where you want to be, yet, if it is clear to others that you are not fulfilling the gifting, or the potential, that you could in another role, then you need to take heed of that advice and, even if it means backtracking and changing direction, be prepared to exercise the special gift that God has given you.
- If we don't use our 'God given' abilities to serve God they'll die and become useless. Use them, and your abilities will grow. You know the old saying: *Practise makes perfect ...*

**Putting Spiritual Gifts into Practise:** Some people have a difficult time understanding how you can develop a gift that is supernaturally empowered. Yet, if a teacher can grow in the gift of teaching and an evangelist can grow in the gift of evangelism, why is it difficult to believe that someone can grow in the gift of healing or prophecy? There are, I believe, several things important factors involved in developing the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us.

- Be sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life and do not bear a grudge against another believer (1 John 1:9, Ephesians 4:30-32).
- Believe that the gifts are for today's church, otherwise you won't have the faith to exercise them or pray for them.
- Believe that gifts are given to all Christians rather than just a 'specially chosen' few.
- Pray for specific gifts for yourselves and others: *You do not have because you do not ask*, James 4:2.
- Use them on a regular basis - this will involve a leap of faith and some risk. If at first you don't succeed ...
- Learn to know the Spirit's voice and his presence (Hebrews 3:7-11).
- Read the what the scriptures have to say about Spiritual gifts and read about people who are/were involved in a supernatural ministry.
- Sunday Services are not the best place to start developing your gift, but your house group/prayer group is!
- Be patient. Don't despise the day of small beginnings.

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