

gift(s). A believer with the gift of mercy, for instance, may think all believers should have the same concern for those who are hurting. Or, one with the gift of faith is disturbed because others don't have as much faith as he does nor place as much emphasis on prayer. The next time someone criticizes you, ask yourself, "Are they evaluating me in terms of their spiritual gifts?" You may be perfectly normal and they are out of line.

b. In many churches a handful of workers do most of the work. This is unhealthy because it leads to bad attitudes and burnout. Needs are not met for lack of manpower and an undue burden is put on the faithful few. The base needs to be broadened; most churches can use more workers. The sad fact is that few Christians are using their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the local church. Churches are operating far below their full potential. Can you imagine what a church would be like if 50% were using their gifts? 75%? Everyone?

c. Churches can increase their effectiveness by putting people with the right gifts in the right jobs. This is the job of the nominating committee. You don't have to decide what you want to do in the local church; God has already decided that for you (1 Cor. 12:18). Your gift determines what you do best and what office you should hold.

d. Don't become a victim of your spiritual gift. Those with the gift of giving may give too much and neglect other responsibilities; those with the gift of faith may continue praying when it's time for action; those with the gift of mercy may show compassion when separation

is necessary.

e. Have you ever heard someone say, "I can worship God in the woods or out fishing in a boat on Sunday morning just as well as in the local church!" Sorry. You can't use your spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body in the woods or in a boat. Regular church attendance provides maximum opportunities to use your gifts.

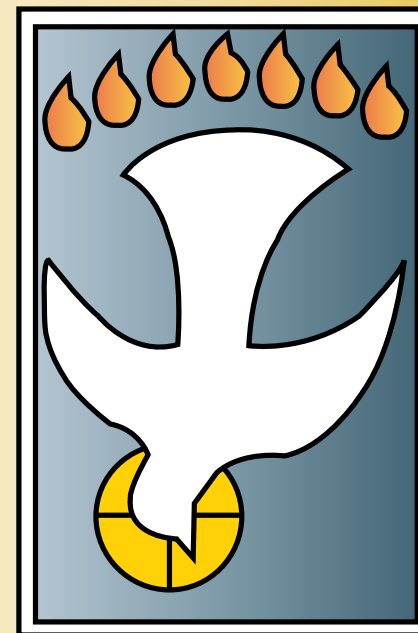
Keep this Scripture in mind:

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:10-11).



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Spiritual Gifts



As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
~1 Peter 4:10~

Spiritual gifts are grace gifts given to believers at the moment of salvation by the Holy Spirit according to His sovereign will for the benefit of the body of Christ.

1. God wants us to know about spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1).

2. Four major portions of Scripture deal with spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; Eph. 4:7–11; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

3. The New Testament mentions twenty-two different spiritual gifts.

Two—speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12:10) and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10, 30)—were temporary gifts that died out when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70. Tongues, for instance, was a sign of judgment for unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 14:22) and was no longer needed after the judgment came. Six were temporary gifts that ceased about A.D. 95 when the canon of Scripture was completed (1 Cor. 13:8–10): the word of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:9), gifts of healings (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30), miracles (1 Cor. 12:10, 29), prophecy (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10), apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11), and the word of knowledge (1 Cor. 13:8–10).

The fourteen gifts given today are called permanent gifts. They are faith (1 Cor. 12:9), distinguishings of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29), helpful deeds (1 Cor. 12:28), administrations (1 Cor. 12:28), service (Rom. 12:7), exhortation (Rom. 12:8), giving (Rom. 12:8), leading (Rom. 12:8), showing mercy (Rom. 12:8), evangelizing (Eph. 4:11), pastoring and teaching (Eph. 4:11), celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7), and hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9). It's possible that administrations and leading are the same gift. Helpful deeds and service also appear to be the same gift.

4. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts according to His sovereign will (1 Cor. 12:11).

We receive the gifts God wants us to have. There is no reason, then, to envy the gifts of others or to be disappointed with our own gifts.

5. Every believer receives at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

6. Some believers receive more than one gift.

Paul, for example, was an apostle (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1), had the gift of celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7) and spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 14:18). No doubt he also had gifts of healings, miracles, prophecy, teaching, exhortation, and evangelizing.

7. Spiritual gifts are given at the moment of salvation.

This is an inference based on two facts: (1) since every Christian has at least one gift, it follows that spiritual gifts are given at the point of salvation, otherwise some Christians would possess gifts and others would not, and (2) since spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the Church, it seems unlikely that a person would be given a gift before he becomes a member of the Church.

8. Believers do not receive the same gifts (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:29–30).

9. No one receives all the gifts (1 Cor. 12:17). This makes us dependent on one another.

10. Spiritual gifts are given in grace (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7).

11. Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7).

12. Spiritual gifts are given to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:11).

13. Spiritual gifts should be used in serving one another (Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10).

14. Spiritual gifts differ in value (1 Cor. 12:28, 31).

15. There are no unnecessary or unimportant gifts (1 Cor. 12:21–24).

16. Spiritual gifts are not natural talents or abilities.

Talents are hereditary, acquired at birth, and possessed by both believers and unbelievers. Spiritual gifts, on the other hand, are not hereditary, are acquired at the moment of new birth, and not possessed by unbelievers. Spiritual gifts are god-given supernatural abilities to do the work God has called us to do. This work is accomplished in the power of the Spirit through spiritual gifts in spiritual people. Natural talents may, however, provide opportunities to use your spiritual gifts.

17. Love is much more important than spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:1–2). What we are is always more important than what we do.

18. You're accountable to God for how you use your spiritual gifts.

An understanding of spiritual gifts will correct several problems that plague the local church.

a. Don't evaluate or criticize other Christians in terms of your own spiritual