

## DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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**I. Definition of a Spiritual Gift:** The normal New Testament word for a *spiritual gift* is **charisma** (*charismata* in the plural). Precisely stated, a Spiritual gift is a divine, supernatural ability given by God to enable a Christian to serve and to minister. More simply put, a spiritual gift is a special tool for ministry.

### **A. *Charisma* has the following uses in the New Testament:**

1. In some passages it means God's gift of **salvation**. An example of this usage is found in the statement, "...the free gift (*charisma*) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

2. In other cases the term refers to **blessing**, **encouragement**, or **comfort**. For instance, Paul uses the term in this way when referring to God's favor: "You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing (*charisma*) granted us in answer to many prayers" (II Corinthians 1:11).

3. Still another important use of the term *charisma* relates to a special ability to **minister** with effectiveness and power. When used in this context the term *charisma* is best translated

“spiritual gift.” It is this third use that concerns us in this study.

**B. Scriptural References:** The following are the most significant references of the terms *charisma* and *charismata*:

- “Having *gifts* that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...” (Romans 12:6);
- “Now there are varieties of *gifts*...” (I Corinthians 12:4);
- “Earnestly desire the higher *gifts*” (I Corinthians 12:31);
- “Do not neglect the *gift* you have...” (I Timothy 4:14);
- “I remind you to rekindle the *gift* of God that is within you...” (II Timothy 1:6);
- “As each has received a *gift*, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (I Peter 4:10).

**C. Spiritual Gifts vs. Talents and/or Fruits:** Spiritual gifts should be distinguished from human **talents** which can operate without divine assistance. Moreover, spiritual gifts should be distinguished from spiritual fruits: The fruits of the Spirit describe moral virtues (see Galatians 5:22, 23), while

Spiritual gifts relate to enablings or abilities that equip Christians for service (see Romans 12:6-8; I Peter 4:10).

## **II. Importance of Knowing Your Spiritual Gifts**

Sometimes the question is asked, “Can spiritual gifts operate through me if I am not aware of my spiritual gifts?” The answer is, “Of course they can.” (Christians in the Middle Ages, for example, did not have an adequate theology of spiritual gifts, yet the gifts of the Spirit certainly flowed through many of their lives.) Most assuredly, one can manifest spiritual gifts without understanding or even being aware of them. However, there are many good reasons for our knowing and understanding our gifts. We stand in a much more favorable position to become effective disciples when we identify and develop the spiritual gifts God has given us.

### **A. Reasons to Identify Your Spiritual Gifts:**

1. *Helps you determine **God’s will** for your vocation.* A knowledge of your gifts will provide a context for making career and ministry decisions regarding what not to attempt as well as what to enter into with confidence.
2. ***Mobilizes*** the entire church for mission. Since a small percentage of the church consist of clergy and more than

ninety percent of the church consists of non-clergy, the church obviously must equip and encourage every Christian to minister in his or her respective sphere of influence.

3. *Assist you in setting **priorities** for study, growth, and ministry.* Since each of us has a limited amount of time to develop our potential, it seems clear that we should develop ourselves in the areas of our special gifts.

4. Gives each Christian a sense of **dignity** and self-worth. Every Christian is an important part of the total church. There are no “second class” citizens in the Christian community because each person constitutes a vitally significant number of the body of Christ.

5. *Enables you to **receive** the gift ministries of others.* When Christians become more knowledgeable of their own spiritual gifts and those of other Christians, they can more easily function harmoniously as the Body of Christ, both giving and receiving ministries.

6. *Fosters **unity** among fellow Christian believers.* As the members of the church function inter-dependently (not independently), an awareness of spiritual gifts leads them to respect one another as they live together in the common life of the Spirit.

**B. Spiritual Gifts Identified:** Although various biblical writers refer directly or indirectly to spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul supplies us with the most systematic listing of the Spirit’s gifts. The chart below shows four principle passages where Paul makes specific reference to spiritual gifts.

Romans 12:6-8	I Corinthians 12:4-11	I Corinthians 12:28	Ephesians 4:11
Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophecy
Teaching		Teaching	Teaching
Serving			
Exhortation			
Giving			
Giving Aid			
Compassion	Healing	Healing	
	Working Miracles	Working Miracles	
	Tongues	Tongues	
	Interpretation of Tongues	Interpretation of Tongues	
	Wisdom		
	Knowledge		
	Faith		
	Discernment		
		Apostleship	Apostleship
		Helps	
		Administration	
			Evangelism
			Shepherding

### **C. Spiritual Gifts Described**

The following is a brief definition of each of the spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament:

1. **Administration** is a gift that enables one to provide leadership and guidance in matters of organization and administration. The administrator serves by recognizing and coordinating the abilities and gifts of other members of the group, institution, or church.
2. **Apostleship** is the ability to communicate the Christian message across cultural (and frequently linguistic) barriers and plant a Christian church where there is no knowledge of the gospel. The term in Greek (*apostolos*) and Latin (*missio*) means “a sent one” or a messenger.” The rough modern equivalent is a pioneer missionary.
3. **Compassion** transcends both natural human sympathy and normal Christian concern, enabling one to sense in others a wide range of emotions and then provide a supportive ministry of caring.
4. **Discernment** is the ability to read or hear a teaching or to consider a proposed course of action and

then determine whether the source behind the teaching or action is divine, human, or satanic.

5. **Evangelism** is the special ability to lead unconverted persons to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. Persons with this gift are able to help others to a life-changing decision which moves them to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
6. **Exhortation** is the ability to call forth the best within others through the ministry of understanding, encouragement, and counsel. The gift equips one to lift up and strengthen others by helping them to move from their problem to a resolution of that problem.
7. **Faith** is the special ability to “see light at the end of the tunnel,” even though others are unaware of divine possibilities in a situation. This gift results in one’s having extraordinary confidence in God, and it enables that person through prayer to tap God’s resources in behalf of others.
8. **Giving** empowers one in an extraordinary way to understand or discern the material or financial needs of others and then meet those needs generously. The more

- one uses this gift the more God prospers one so that the person with this gift is enabled to give still more.
9. **Giving aid** literally means in the Greek “he who provides leadership in giving aid.” This gift equips one to see practical needs and co-ordinate the resources and abilities of others so that those needs are met.
  10. **Healing** enables one to function as an instrument of God’s grace in the lives of others. The gift of healings (double plural in Greek text) extend to the healing of the body, the mind, and the emotions.
  11. **Helps** is a gift that leads to practical ministries to others, which relieve them, in turn, to perform still wider ministries.
  12. **Miracles** refer to the superseding of natural law. In the Book of Acts this gift most frequently relates to healing and to exorcism (i.e., Acts 19:11-12).
  13. **Prophecy** is the ability to present God’s word with clarity and power. The primary ministry of this gift is not prediction or foretelling; it principally has to do with declaration of forthtelling.

14. **Teaching** is the ability to understand and communicate the Christian faith so as to make truth clear to others. The end result of this gift is the maturing of Christian believers so that they may be more effective Christian disciples.
  
15. **Tongues** enable some Christians to praise God either in another language not yet learned (Acts 2) or in ecstatic utterance which is not an earthly language (I Corinthians 14). In either case one's prayer is addressed to God, not to other people (I Corinthians 14:2).
  
16. **Tongues, Interpretation Of:** The interpretation of tongues is required if speaking in tongues is exercised publically. This gift enables one to interpret to others the intent or meaning of what was uttered to God by the one being interpreted.
  
17. **Serving** is a task-oriented ministry that results in the supplying of material and temporal services to others in the Body of Christ, thereby freeing them to perform still other ministries.
  
18. **Shepherding** is the ability to give pastoral leadership to an individual or to a community of Christian believers. The primary function of this gift is to

feed, guide, and nurture other Christians with sensitivity and sacrificial concern.

19. **Word of Knowledge** is knowing a fact or truth about a person or a situation as it is directly revealed by the Holy Spirit.
  
20. **Word of Wisdom** relates to a special illumination that enables one in a specific instance to grasp divine insight regarding a fact, situation, or context.