

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" is one of the least understood, and most misunderstood, teachings in the New Testament. Churches have divided over the differing views of spiritual gifts. Some churches fearfully and wrongfully totally disregard spiritual gifts and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, while others fearlessly and wrongfully regard spiritual gifts and their view of the ministry of the Holy Spirit over sound biblical teaching. Which side is right? Neither. God's Word teaches about spiritual gifts and gives instruction on how to practice them. God's Word teaches about the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit. We must carefully observe what the Bible says about this, and humbly submit to its authority. This is a secondary issue in the sense that our salvation does not depend on this doctrine, but it is not an unimportant issue either. Between the unbiblical extremes, there are a number of legitimate views.

We will not attempt to settle the matter in this introductory study! However, like my German farmer preacher ancestor John Leatherman was known to say "... if a stone is too heavy, let it lie. But one should dig around the stone to see if some of the meaning could be worked loose."

The Bible teaches about spiritual gifts in four places: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4 and Ephesians 4. We are going to take a look today at 1 Corinthians 12. The Corinthian church was ignorant and divided over spiritual gifts, and Paul wrote this section of the letter to set them straight.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13:8

- 1 Now concerning spiritual [gifts,] brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.
- 2 You know that when you were pagans, [you were] led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.
- 3 Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except

OBSERVE

A theme of 1 Corinthians is to correct problems in Christian conduct that was dividing the body of Christ in this city. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul dealt with problems regarding public worship. He taught about the roles of men and women in God's design, and how that applies to church, and specifically, public worship. He also gave instructions about how the Lord's Supper, also known as communion, was to be practiced. Then he deals in chapter 12-14 with yet another problem area, spiritual gifts.

Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and have the group say aloud and mark "gifts" and also "Spirit."

by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all [persons.]

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another [various] kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and [yet] has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

List what you observe about "gifts."

In verses 8-11, Paul lists some of the gifts. List them below.
Leader: Read vv8-11 again and have the group mark each gift described the same way they marked the word "gifts" before.

List what you observe about the "Spirit."

What connection do you see between spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit?

DISCUSS

The Greek word translated "gifts" is *charisma*, which means undeserved favor. In the NT it is only used in the context of gifts and graces imparted from God. Some Christians describe themselves as *charismatic*, as do certain denominations.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not [a part] of the body," it is not for this reason any the less [a part] of the body.

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not [a part] of the body," it is not for this reason any the less [a part] of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now there are many members, but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22 On the contrary, it is much truer

Would you say, based on this passage, that only certain Christians have received *charisma*? Explain.

Therefore, is it true that all Christians are *charismatic* by biblical definition if not by denomination?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 again and have the group say aloud and circle "varieties" and "same." Then connect each pair of circles with a line.

What do you learn about gifts, ministries and effects from this passage? Do you see a relationship between them? What is the role of the Spirit, the Lord (Jesus Christ) and God (Father)?

Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:7 and say aloud and circle "manifestation of the Spirit."

The Greek word translated "manifestation" is *phanerosis*, which means to make manifest, to make clearly visible, to plainly set forth.

So, spiritual gifts are described how?

Based on this verse, who is given spiritual gifts?

Based on this verse, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;
23 and those [members] of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly [members come to] have more abundant seemliness,
24 whereas our seemly [members] have no need [of it.] But God has [so] composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that [member] which lacked,
25 that there should be no division in the body, but [that] the members should have the same care for one another.
26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if [one] member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.
27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.
28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, [various] kinds of tongues.
29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not

OBSERVE

Lets probe into what "the common good" means in this context.

Leader: Read 1 Corinthian 12:11-30 and say aloud and mark "body" one way and mark "members" another way.

DISCUSS

Using the human body to describe the body of Christ, where do we fit into this analogy?

What does this teach about spiritual gifts and the body of Christ?

Apply this to our Forum group.

In verse 29-30, what do we learn about spiritual gifts?

OBSERVE

Are spiritual gifts the same as physical abilities and skills, for we consider them gifts from the Lord as well? Teaching is a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7). If a person is a gifted teacher in the sense of knowing how to prepare a lesson and communicate it effectively, does this mean they have the spiritual gift of teaching?

[workers of] miracles, are they?
30 All do not have gifts of healings,
do they? All do not speak with
tongues, do they? All do not interpret,
do they? But earnestly desire the
greater gifts. And I show you a still
more excellent way.

13:1 If I speak with the tongues of
men and of angels, but do not have
love, I have become a noisy gong or a
clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have [the gift of] prophecy,
and know all mysteries and all
knowledge; and if I have all faith, so
as to remove mountains, but do not
have love, I am nothing.

3 And if I give all my possessions to
feed [the poor,] and if I deliver my
body to be burned, but do not have
love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, [and]
is not jealous; love does not brag
[and] is not arrogant,

5 does not act unbecomingly; it does
not seek its own, is not provoked,
does not take into account a wrong
[suffered,]

6 does not rejoice in
unrighteousness, but rejoices with the
truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Leader: Read 1 Peter 4:10-11 (turn forward to page 6) and have the group say aloud and mark "whoever speaks" and "whoever serves."

There are "speaking" gifts (teaching, prophesy, wisdom, exhortation, leading, etc.) and "serving" gifts (helps, service, mercy, giving, etc.)

What does this passage teach about good stewardship of a speaking gift?

If a talented teacher is not faithfully teaching the Word of God, is he employing that gift properly?

What does this passage teach about good stewardship of a serving gift?

If a very helpful person is serving in their own strength, striving, getting burned out, is he employing that gift properly?

Lets look at Paul and his gift of teaching as an example. It is obvious that Paul had this gift for he was always teaching.

Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-7 (turn forward to page 6).

How does Paul describe his preaching style? Does he sound like a polished, impressive platform speaker?

Did he rely on his own ability? Why or why not?

8 Love never fails; but if [there are gifts of] prophecy, they will be done away; if [there are] tongues, they will cease; if [there is] knowledge, it will be done away.

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 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 Corinthians 2:1-5

1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of

Compare and contrast “wisdom” in verse 1 and “wisdom” in verses 6-7. What is the difference?

Leader: Ask a member to read Luke 10:38-42 out of his Bible.

Based on our discussion about Paul, do you think Martha is exercising the gift of serving? Why or why not?

DISCUSS

Now, after having studied these verses, how do you answer the question posed earlier? Are spiritual gifts the same as physical abilities and skills? If a person is a gifted teacher in the sense of knowing how to prepare a lesson and communicate it effectively, does this mean they have the spiritual gift of teaching? If a person is always serving, does this mean they have the gift of serving?

So how does one discern whether a gift is in operation or not?

Leader: Ask a member to read John 16:13-14 from his Bible.

The focus of the Holy Spirit is on what and whom?

Therefore, since the Holy Spirit is the distributor of spiritual gifts, and these gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit for the common good, how might we recognize whether a spiritual gift is truly being exercised or not?

According to 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8, what is the more excellent way? *Leader: Read this section and have the group say aloud and mark “love.”*

wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.
6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;
7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden [wisdom,] which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

What is required for a person to be able to truly *agape* love another person? *Leader: Ask someone to read aloud Romans 5:5.*

How does this relate to spiritual gifts? Are they on-call like a talent or a skill?

In today's study, we have just "dug around this heavy stone a bit," this subject of spiritual gifts, and "broken loose some of the meaning." For a complete list of the gifts, and additional instruction on the subject, see Romans 12 and Ephesians 4.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

- Spiritual gifts are **Spirit-given abilities** to perform certain functions on behalf of the church. The Lord Jesus calls men to the ministries where they will exercise their spiritual gifts. God the Father is responsible for producing the results, which are spiritual and supernatural.
- **Every Christian has been given at least one** spiritual gift.
- **Spiritual gifts are not talents.** A talent can be a channel for exercising spiritual gifts, but a talent apart from the spiritual gift does not accomplish the work of God.
- Spiritual gifts **must be exercised in love.** Without love, they profit nothing.

APPLICATION

So how do we discover our spiritual gift(s)?

1. Grow up spiritually. (1 Peter 2:2) Every spiritual gift is also something that every believer is supposed to be doing. For example, we should all be able to teach (husbands are supposed to teach their wives and children, older women are supposed to teach younger women) yet, not everyone is called to a teaching ministry. We should all serve and help others, yet not everyone is called to a helps ministry. Study what the Bible teaches on spiritual gifts.
2. Pray and ask God to reveal them to you. He wants you to know and use them, for the body of Christ will lack what you are supposed to provide.
3. You will be drawn to your spiritual gifts. You will be drawn to meet the needs associated with this gift, it will not feel burdensome, you will love the responsibility. The supernatural will be natural to you.
4. Other people will help you recognize your gift(s), and it will always profit the body of Christ.
5. There will be spiritual fruit.

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