

How to Identify and Effectively Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Romans 12:3-8

Paul taught, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us... let [us] use [them] in proportion to [our] faith," The spiritual gifts are found in three separate passages in the New Testament (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12–14; and Ephesians 4:11-16). The lists are not exactly identical. Some overlapping occurs. According to 1 Corinthians 12:6, God the Father pours in the power, Jesus the Son assigns the ministry, and God the Holy Spirit gives out the gifts as He deems necessary for the proper functioning of the church body.

The gifts may be organized in several ways. We will use the most common grouping.

Establishing Gifts (Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:29): Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor-Teachers. These gifts are used primarily for planting and growing churches.

Supporting Gifts (Romans 12:6-8): Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Encouragement, Giving, Administration/Leadership, and Mercy. These gifts are used primarily to organize and administrate the church so that it may best carry out its responsibilities.

Ministry Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 27-31): Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Helps, Administration, Leadership, Distinguishing Spirits, Speaking in Tongues, and Interpreting Tongues. These are the tools that the Holy Spirit utilizes for the ongoing ministry of the church.

It goes without saying that congregations are **spiritually impotent** when the members do not freely and responsibly allow the Holy Spirit to manifest God's ministry and power through the gifts He has given. Here are a few guidelines on how to identify and unwrap your spiritual gift(s).

14 Common Questions about Identifying and Using Your Spiritual Gifts:

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 21 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; and Mercy.

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 desirable than others?

Yes. Prophecy is an important gift (1 Corinthians 14:1). The relative value of spiritual gifts is to be tested by their usefulness to the church as a whole. Paul 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.

13. Do spiritual gifts tests line up with Scripture?

Kathy Howard talks about a popular way that believers attempt to discover their spiritual gifts in her article, "Why You Need to Beware of Spiritual Gifts Tests."

A "spiritual gifts test" is a manmade tool meant to help believers discern their spiritual gifts. The believer answers a series of questions designed to discover his or her specific gifts. When kept in the proper perspective, the test can be a helpful tool, but we must remember it is limited. How can a human tool effectively measure the infinite workings of the Spirit of Christ?

At their best, spiritual gifts tests may identify spiritual gifts and natural talents. But at their worst, since they cannot distinguish between them, the tests could actually encourage believers to "serve" according to our natural talents rather than relying on the power and equipping of the Holy Spirit.

So, while I think spiritual gifts tests can be useful, we must remember their limitations and proceed with caution. The following three cautions can help us properly use this tool:

14. Does the Holy Spirit still give believers the gifts of tongues and prophecy?

“Clearly God's word presents tongues as a gift that God's spirit gives to people sometimes. And there are a lot of questions I can't answer about it, but what I can say is I don't think we have an exhaustive list of gifts. I don't think there are those that operate it and [others] that don't. I think what we can say, is that God the Holy Spirit will build up his church and he will give us all the gifts we need to that end. He is sovereign, we don't need to worry about it.”

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/how-to-identify-and-effectively-use-your-spiritual-gifts.html>