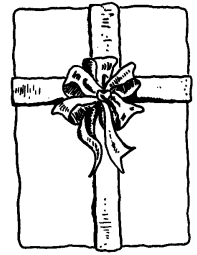


Journey To Your Spiritual Gift



LESSON 1 . . . Five Questions about Spiritual Gifts

Let's suppose someone who loves you buys you a very thoughtful, gift. It is a gift that will make your life more meaningful, exciting, and enjoyable. The giver beautifully wraps the gift and gives it to you. However, you are not interested or appreciative enough to even open the gift. Think how hurt and disappointed the giver of the gift would be!

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Now, think how God must feel if you do that very same thing with your spiritual gift! Because of His great love for you, God has gone to much trouble and the extreme expense of the Cross to give you a carefully chosen spiritual gift. What does Paul write is God's desire for all believers concerning spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1b)?

Because many believers are *uninformed*, or "ignorant," about spiritual gifts, they either ignore them or abuse them. Understanding spiritual gifts and their purpose requires answering **five** questions.



1. What is a spiritual gift?

Basic information about spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. "Spiritual" gifts are so-called because they are given by the Holy Spirit. What does 1 Corinthians 12:4 reveal about spiritual gifts?

The word *varieties*, or "diversities," means these gifts are many and differ in function. However, since the Holy Spirit is the Source of all spiritual gifts, there is unity in the diversity.

The word translated *gifts* (CHARISMA, car'-is-mah) means "gifts, or endowments, of grace." Spiritual gifts can be called "grace-gifts." Like salvation, our undeserved, spiritual gifts come from God. A spiritual gift can be defined as "a divine ability given by grace through the Holy Spirit to make each believer and the church more like the Lord Jesus Christ." How does 1 Corinthians 12:11 explain spiritual gifts?

An often-asked question is: “What is the difference between a talent and a spiritual gift?” A talent performs, but a spiritual gift ministers. A talent glorifies the person, but a spiritual gift glorifies God. Spiritual gifts make us ministers, not performers.



2. Who has spiritual gifts?

How is this question answered in 1 Corinthians 12:7, where spiritual gifts are called *the manifestation of the Spirit*?

The word *manifestation* means there is evidence of the Spirit’s presence in the life of a believer. This *manifestation*, or spiritual gift, is given to *each* believer so we can minister to one another.

Every true Christian has at least one spiritual gift. It is usually in seed form, and therefore, must be nurtured and developed. Even if you have no idea what your gift is, as you obey God’s commands in the Bible to encourage, serve, witness, share, study God’s Word, pray, etc., the Holy Spirit will help you gradually discover your spiritual gift.

So, every Christian has a spiritual gift assigned to him or her from the Holy Spirit, as He sovereignly chooses.



3. How many spiritual gifts are there?

Our great God is a God of variety and diversity. Just look at the people around you. Each looks a little different; each has a unique fingerprint, voice, and personality. God’s love of variety and diversity is also seen in His spiritual gifts. There is diversity in each gift because they often refer to categories of gifts, not just a single gift. At least twenty gifts, or categories of gifts, are listed in six passages in the New Testament. We will list them below, without duplication.

There are **seven** gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8: ^[1]*prophecy* (preaching), ^[2]*service*, or “ministry,” ^[3]_____ (12:7b), ^[4]*exhortation*, ^[5]*giving*, ^[6]*one who leads*, or “he that ruleth” (leadership), also called *administering*, or “governments” (1 Cor. 12:28), and ^[7]*mercy*.

Eight others are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: ^[8]*wisdom*, ^[9]*knowledge*, ^[10]*faith*, ^[11]_____ (12:9b), ^[12]*miracles*, ^[13]*discern*
guish between spirits, or “discerning of spirits” (discernment), ^[14]*tongues*,
and ^[15]*interpretation of tongues*. Also, 1 Corinthians 12:28a lists **one** not
previously mentioned: ^[16]*apostles*.

Two additional spiritual gifts are found in Ephesians 4:11: ^[17]*evangelists*

and ^[18] *shepherds and teachers* (pastor/teachers). Then, in 1 Peter 4:9, there is also **one** gift that is to be used *without grumbling*. What is it?

[19]

In recent years, I have included **one** other gift. In 1 Corinthians 7:8, Paul tells us that he is single. He also writes, *I wish that all were as I myself am* (7:7a). However, what does he write in the rest of that verse?

This is called the gift of ^[20] celibacy, or singleness. We will examine it more closely later in this study.

There are at least twenty different gifts listed in these passages. Some include *hospitality* with the gift of *service*, or “ministry.” However, in this study we will list them separately.

The diversity of gifts can be divided into three categories: **serving gifts** (service, leadership, giving, mercy, hospitality, faith, discernment, and singleness), **speaking gifts** (knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, exhortation, pastor, teacher, apostle, and evangelist) and **sign gifts** (miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation of tongues).

As mentioned, these are categories of gifts that are revealed in the lives of believers in different ways. For example, the gift of teaching may be revealed in large groups, small groups, classrooms, or in the form of religious writing or other media. The gift of exhortation or encouragement may be exercised through music. Our God is a God of variety, so the gifts manifest themselves in many different ways.

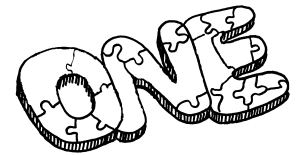


4. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Peter writes, *As each has received a gift* (1 Pet. 4:10a). Then, what does he write is the purpose for all spiritual gifts (4:10b)?

Spiritual gifts are only to be used *for the common good* (1 Cor. 12:7). Therefore, they should never be used for selfish purposes nor to dominate the spotlight, but *to serve* others.

Not only does God give *each* of us at least one spiritual gift, but He also gives us an example of how to use it. Jesus is our Ultimate Example of how each spiritual gift is to be used. The purpose of every spiritual gift is to maintain *unity of the faith*, enable believers to grow in *the knowledge of*



the Son of God and to *mature* in the Lord (Eph. 4:13). What else is the goal of spiritual gifts, according to the last phrase of Ephesians 4:13?

That means we are to become fully developed followers of Christ. God gives different gifts to various believers so the composite of the gifts in the local church will manifest Christ in His totality. In some way, every gift magnifies a loving characteristic of Christ. God gives us spiritual gifts because He wants every believer individually, and the church collectively, to be just like Jesus Christ.



5. Can spiritual gifts that are not used be lost?

Christians who have been saved for years but have not discovered and used their spiritual gifts sometimes worry their gifts have been lost. However, what does Romans 11:29 declare?

Although in that verse Paul is discussing the earthly destiny of Israel, it reveals a spiritual principle. *The gifts and the calling of God* are not subject to recall. This is true of salvation (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 6:23b) and of spiritual gifts. Because spiritual gifts are grace gifts, they are not given nor are they retained by works. They are unconditional gifts. Gifts cannot be lost, but they can be wasted!

Discovering, developing, and using your spiritual gift is a divine responsibility. This is because of what exhortation of Paul in Ephesians 4:1c-d?

God has given you at least one spiritual gift, and when you use it, you are living in a manner *worthy* of your *calling*. A “journey to your spiritual gift” is essential to fulfilling God’s will for your life. To begin this “journey,” you must know the answer to these five questions:

- 1. What is a spiritual gift?**
- 2. Who has spiritual gifts?**
- 3. How many spiritual gifts are there?**
- 4. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?**
- 5. Can spiritual gifts that are not used be lost?**