

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

CESSATION, CONTINUATION, OR CAUTIONIST

We exist to bring Glory to God by making mature everyone who believes.

Service outside the gospel makes no sense and far more difficult . . .

Atheism, Agnostic, and Secular

Evolution is the underlying belief system. When this beliefs system serves other people it is attacking and assaulting its own fundamental belief system.

Other faith's . . .

We do not serve to earn the favor of God. We serve others because we have been served by Christ.

Motivation Matters

There are basically five motivating fuels for service.

1. Compassion
2. Guilt. . . We feel guilty and so in the service of others we expunge ourselves of guilt.
3. Forced. . . Such as a customer service rep
4. Pride. . . It's a way that we elevate ourselves over others. It's never private service but public. What are those people are the homeless shelter going to do without. You need to try it sometime and quit spending all that money on yourself.
5. Positioning . . . I do these things so that people will do other things for me.

PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES (4:11)

- **Shepherd**
 - **ENSURE (4:12)**

A pastor that does not do the work of the ministry to which God has called him, namely equipping, fails to do that for which God has shaped him. Therefore, he is not shepherding and if not shepherding then all of his sheep are endangered.

Sheep that are not shepherd will wander, be wounded, become weary, and will be at risk of being wasted.

Shepherds have been given the task of building up the flock of God. People will never be built up by those tasks, which are the means for building, if they are done by those who should be equipping them for that task.

Ministry is a means of sanctification which leads to maturation; "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro

by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” (Ephesians 4:13–14, ESV)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17, ESV)

- **EQUIP (4:12)**

A pastor that does not equip his people to do the works of ministry endangers the health and vitality of his congregation and church.

He is called to equip that is to say; to make ready, to furnish for service or action by appropriate provisioning.

- **EXAMPLE**
 - **PERSONAL**

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7, ESV)

- **PERFECT**

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” (Ephesians 5:1, ESV)

PARISHIONER RESPONSIBILITIES (4:12)

- **Saints**

- **ENDEAVOR**
 - **To DISCOVER your S.H.A.P.E.**
 - **To DEVELOP your S.H.A.P.E.**
 - **To DISPLAY your S.H.A.P.E.**
- **ENCOURAGE**

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,” (Hebrews 10:24, ESV)

Consider: be concerned about, to study, to weigh.

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)

- **EXAMPLE**

Study Christ. . . No one person possesses all of the gifts but Christ. As we study his life we see every gift operational so let us study and follow His example.

INTENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- **Gifts are DIVERSE (4:11, 1 Corinthians 12:4; 18-20)**
 - **MAINTAIN unity (4:3)**
 - **DIVERSITY pushes us to DEPENDENCY (1 Corinthians 12:21-26)**
 - **For MATURITY (4:13)**
 - **DEPENDENCY promotes DEVELOPMENT (1 Corinthians 12:21-26)**

- **It MAKES us like Christ (4:13)**
 - **DEVELOPMENT produces DISCIPLES**
- **Gifts are DIFFICULT (4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:1)**
 - **They must be EQUIPPED.**
 - **Gifts are for others EDIFICATION (1 Peter 4:10)**
 - **Gifts are for Christ GLORIFICATION. (1 Peter 4:11)**
 - **Gifts are for our MATURATION. (1 Peter 4:10)**

INSTRUCTION concerning spiritual gifts

- **Gifts must be DELINEATED**
 - 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 28-30
 - Romans 12:6-8
 - Ephesians 4:11
 - 1 Peter 4:11

How many different gifts are there then? It simply depends on how specific we wish to be. We can make a very short list of only two gifts as Peter does in 1 Peter 4:11: “whoever speaks” and “whoever renders service.” In this list of only two items Peter includes all the gifts mentioned in any other list because all of them fit in one of these two categories. On the other hand, we could take the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king, and have a list of three kinds of gifts: prophetic gifts (in this broad sense) would include anything that involves teaching, encouraging, exhorting, or rebuking others. Priestly gifts would include anything that involves showing mercy and care for those in need or involve interceding before God (such as praying in tongues). The kingly gifts would involve anything having to do with administration or government or order in the church.

So, you are gifted, but I want you to see this, and this is important. You’re gifted. See, some of you have never heard that. You’ve never heard, you know, “You have a meaningful, valuable, purposeful contribution to make. You can do things that matter and help people who need you. And there is a need there with your name written on it.”

Other classifications of gifts are gifts of knowledge (such as distinguishing between spirits, word of wisdom, and word of knowledge), gifts of power (such as healing, miracles, and faith), and gifts of speech (tongues, interpretation, and prophecy). Then again we could make a much longer list, such as the list of nineteen gifts which we shall examine this morning. But even that list does not include all the possible gifts (no list includes a gift of intercessory prayer, for instance, which may be related to a gift of faith but is not the same as a gift of faith; no musical gifts are included on any list either, and neither is any gift of casting out demons, even though Paul must have known that some Christians were more effective in that area than others). And if we wished to divide up different kinds of service or administration or evangelism or teaching, then we could quite easily have a list that included fifty or even a hundred items.

The point of all of this is simply to say that God gives the church an amazing variety of spiritual gifts, and they are all tokens of his varied grace. In fact, Peter says as much: “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace”

(1 Peter 4:10; the word “varied” means “having many facets or aspects; having rich diversity”).

The practical outcome of this discussion is that we should be willing to recognize and appreciate people who have gifts that differ from ours and whose gifts may differ from our expectations of what certain gifts should look like. Moreover, a healthy church will have a great diversity of gifts, and this diversity should not lead to fragmentation but to greater unity among believers in the church. Paul’s whole point in the analogy of the body with many members (1 Cor. 12:12–26) is to say that God has put us in the body with these differences so that we might depend on each other. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor. 12:21–22; vv. 4–6). It runs counter to the world’s way of thinking to say that we will enjoy greater unity when we join closely together with those who are different from us, but that is precisely the point that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 12, demonstrating the glory of God’s wisdom in not allowing anyone to have all the necessary gifts for the church, but in requiring us to depend upon each other for the proper functioning of the church.

So, you are gifted, but I want you to see this, and this is important. You’re gifted. See, some of you have never heard that. You’ve never heard, you know, “You have a meaningful, valuable, purposeful contribution to make. You can do things that matter and help people who need you. And there is a need there with your name written on it.”

- **Gifts must be DEFINED**

1. Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8) - if you have this gift, you love giving timely, helpful insight.
2. The gift of knowledge—1 Corinthians 12:8. Okay, if you have this gift, you love to study.
3. Gift of faith. If you have the gift of faith—this is 1 Corinthians 12:9—you love tough or impossible situations.
4. Number four, there’s the gift of healing. This is in 1 Corinthians 12:9. If you have this gift, you love to pray for those who are sick.
5. There’s also the gift of miracles—1 Corinthians 12:9. You love to pray and see God show up in power to do extraordinary, amazing things that reveal his power and his might and his majesty.
6. Discernment—1 Corinthians 12:10. You love truth and holiness. This is where you can discern teaching. Those with the gift of discernment are like an early warning system for the church.
7. Gift of apostles—1 Corinthians 12:28, and it said it here in Ephesians 4:11. They love leading a movement. We’re not talking here about the eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, who were chosen by him to write the books of the New Testament. What we’re talking about is not those with the office of apostle, but the gift of apostle. These would be missionaries, church planters, cross-cultural missionaries, and that would include those who work across multiple churches, right?
8. Gift is teaching. This is Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and we saw it here as well in Ephesians 4:11. If you have the gift of teaching, you love to impart biblical truth.

You love that. What makes you so excited is when you teach something, and they got it.

9. The next one on the list—helps and service. And I put these together because I think they're basically synonymous. Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and 1 Peter 4:11—helps and service. You love coming alongside people. You're not the one who has this massive global vision; you're the one who comes and says, "Where can I help?"
10. Administration, if you have the gift of administration—this is 1 Corinthians 12:28—you love stewarding resources. Some of you have that gift of administration. Your life verse is in 1 Corinthians: "Do everything in a fitting and orderly way." For you, you're like label maker, files, charts and graphs. You like to organize things.
11. Gift of evangelism. If this is you, you love non-Christians. You love them, and you love talking to them about Jesus, and you love seeing them meet Jesus.
12. The gift of shepherding, or pastor, or counseling. It says it here in Ephesians 4:11. Sometimes you do become a pastor, there's a pastoral office, but this is also a pastoral gift. What this means is that you love to help people, you love to care for people, you love to nurture people, you love to invest in people.
13. Then there's also the gift of encouragement—Romans 12:8. If you have this gift, you love motivating people.
14. Gift of giving. That's Romans 12:8. If this is you, you love meeting needs. You love to give.
15. Gift of leadership—Romans 12:8. You love mobilizing people for a cause.
16. Gift of mercy—Romans 12:8. If you have the gift of mercy, you love hurting people.
17. Hospitality—Romans 12:13. You love welcoming in strangers and entertaining them.
18. gift of tongues—1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 1 Corinthians 12:29–30. There's a private gift where you pray in the language of angels, Paul says, and that's a private, personal time for you to connect with the Lord. Then there's also a public ability to communicate the gospel of Jesus in a language that you don't know. So, you speak one language; somebody else speaks another language. Jesus wants them to get saved, so he allows you to speak their language, because the word "tongue," literally translated, means "language."
19. Lastly, there is prophets and/or prophecy—Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and we just saw it in Ephesians 4:11. you love to either speak or write the truth of God's Word. You're not writing the Bible, but you're taking what the Bible says and not just imparting the information but doing so in a very forceful way that elicits a response.

- **Gifts must be DETERMINED**

In the case of individuals who do not know what their gifts are, they can begin by asking the Lord through prayer and other believers. In addition, each individual believer who does not know what his or her gifts are should do some self-examination.

- What interests and desires and abilities does he or she have?
- Can others give advice or encouragement pointing in the direction of specific gifts?
- Has there been blessing in the past in ministering in a particular kind of service?

In all of this, the person seeking to discover his or her gifts should pray and ask God for wisdom, confident that it will be given according to his promise, "If any of you lacks

wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting” (James 1:5–6).

- Sometimes God will grant this wisdom in terms of more accurate insight into one’s own abilities.
- At other times it may come through advice from others or through seeing increased blessing in one area of ministry.
- And Paul indicates that in some cases there may be prophecy that gives indication of a specific gift, for he says to Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you through prophecy with the laying on of hands of the council of elders” (1 Tim. 4:14, author’s translation).

- **CAUTION**

- Your spiritual gift is not where your IDENTITY is found.

Your gift is not your identity. I’m not a preacher; I’m a Christian who preaches. You’re not an administrator, you’re not a leader, you’re a Christian who administrates or a Christian who leads.

Paul says over, and over, and over, thirty-some times in the book, “In Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ.” He does it in this section as well. Let me just be very clear: you’re not what you do; you’re what Jesus has done. You’re not what you do; you’re what Jesus has done.

Then what you do is in relationship with Jesus. I think Jesus had all the spiritual gifts. He could do everything, alright? He’s perfect. So whatever gift you have, you could look to Jesus and say, “Okay, how did he use this capacity that’s like mine? What does it look like?” And then Jesus gives you a gift that looks like one of his abilities, and then he sends the Holy Spirit to empower you to do a little bit of his ministry.

- **CLARITY**

- **Your spiritual gift gives clarity to your MISSION within the body of Christ but it should not be mistaken for MATURITY.**

We must recognize that spiritual gifts are given to every believer (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10). Even immature Christians receive spiritual gifts from the Lord—this was certainly evident in the Corinthian church, which had an abundance of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7), but was still very immature in many areas of doctrine and conduct. Paul says, “But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1).

So spiritual gifts are not necessarily a sign of spiritual maturity. It is possible to have remarkable spiritual gifts in one area or another but still be quite immature in doctrinal understanding or in Christian conduct, as was the case at Corinth. Indeed, on occasion even unbelievers are able to prophesy and cast out demons and do miracles, for Jesus says that at the last day many will say to him, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast

out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” But Jesus will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (Matt. 7:22–23). It is not that Jesus knew them once and later did not know them; he says, “I never knew you.” They were never Christians, yet they performed many remarkable works. So we must not evaluate spiritual maturity on the basis of spiritual gifting. Maturity comes through a close walk with Jesus, and results in obedience to his commands in everyday life: “He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:6).

Why then does the Holy Spirit give us spiritual gifts? They are given for the work of ministry and are simply tools to be used for that end. They should never be a source of personal pride on the part of those who possess them, nor should they be thought of as a mark of maturity.

Spiritual gifts are not acquired based on maturity but are agents of maturity.

We should strive simply to excel in loving others, caring for their needs, building up the church, and living a life of conformity to the pattern of Christ’s life. If we do that, and if God chooses to give us spiritual gifts that equip us for those tasks, then we should thank him for that, and pray that he would keep us from pride over gifts that have been freely and graciously given, and which we did not earn.

- **Gifts must be DEVELOPED**

Paul says that if we have the gift of prophecy, we should use it “in proportion to our faith” (Rom. 12:6), indicating that the gift can be more or less strongly developed in different individuals, or in the same individual over a period of time. This is why Paul can remind Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have” (1 Timothy 4:14), and can say, “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you” (2 Timothy 1:6). It was possible for Timothy to allow his gift to weaken, apparently through infrequent use, and Paul reminds him to stir it up by using it and thereby strengthening it. This should not be surprising, for we realize that many gifts increase in strength and effectiveness as they are used, whether evangelism, teaching, encouraging, administration, or faith. Apollos had a strong gift of preaching and teaching, for we read that he was “mighty (or powerful) in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). And Paul apparently had a frequently used and very effective gift of speaking in tongues because he says, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18).

All of these texts indicate that spiritual gifts may vary in strength. If we think of any gift, whether teaching or evangelism on the one hand, or prophecy or healing on the other, we should realize that within any congregation there will likely be people who are very effective in the use of that gift, perhaps through long use and experience, others who are moderately strong in that gift, and others who probably have the gift but are just beginning to use it.

This variation in strength in spiritual gifts depends on a combination of DIVINE and HUMAN influence. The divine influence is the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit as he “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11).

The human influence comes from experience, training, wisdom, and natural ability in the use of that gift. It is usually not possible to know in what proportion the divine and human

influences combine at any one time, nor is it really necessary to know, for even the abilities we think to be “natural” are from God (1 Cor. 4:7) and under his sovereign control.

But this leads to an interesting question: How strong does an ability have to be before it can be called a spiritual gift?

- How much teaching ability does someone need before he or she could be said to have a gift of teaching, for example?
- Or how effective in evangelism would someone need to be before we would recognize a gift of evangelism?
- Or how frequently would someone have to see prayers for healing answered before he or she could be said to have a gift of healing?

Scripture does not directly answer this question, but the fact that Paul speaks of these gifts as useful for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:12), and the fact that Peter likewise says that each person who has received a gift should remember to employ it “for one another” (1 Peter 4:10), suggest that both Paul and Peter thought of gifts as abilities that were strong enough to function for the benefit of the church whether for the assembled congregation (as in prophecy or teaching), or for individuals at various times in the congregation (as helps or encouragement).

- **SPIRITUAL GIFTS INTERROGATED**
 - **THE PERMEATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Probably no definite line can be drawn in this matter, but Paul does remind us that not all have every gift or any one gift. He is quite clear in this in a set of questions that expect the answer no at each point: “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” (1 Cor. 12:29–30) The Greek text clearly expects the answer no to every question. Therefore, not all are teachers, for example, nor do all possess gifts of healing, nor do all speak in tongues.

But even though not all have the gift of teaching, it is true that all people “teach” in some sense of the word teach. Even people who would never dream of teaching a class will read Bible stories to their own children and explain the meaning to them—indeed, Moses commanded the Israelites to do this very thing with their children (Deut. 6:7), explaining God’s words to them as they sat in their house or walked on the road. So we must say on the one hand that not everyone has the gift of teaching. But on the other hand we must say that there is some general ability related to the gift of teaching that all Christians have. Another way of saying this would be to say that there is no spiritual gift that all believers have, yet there is some general ability similar to every gift that all Christians have.

- We can see this with a number of gifts. Not all Christians have a gift of evangelism, but all Christians have the ability to share the gospel with their neighbors.
- Not all Christians have gifts of healing, but nevertheless every Christian can and does pray for God to heal friends or relatives who are ill.

- Not every Christian has the gift of faith, but every believer has some degree of faith, and we would expect it to be growing in the life of an ordinary Christian.

We can even say that other gifts, such as prophecy and speaking in tongues, not only vary in strength among those who have the gift, but also find a counterpart in some general abilities that are found in the life of every Christian. For example, if we understand prophecy to be “reporting something that God spontaneously brings to mind,” then it is true that not everyone experiences this as a gift, for not everyone experiences God spontaneously bringing things to mind with such clarity and force that he or she feels free to speak about them among an assembled group of Christians. But probably every believer has at one time or another had a sense that God was bringing to mind the need to pray for a distant friend or to write or phone a word of encouragement to someone distant, and later has found that that was exactly the thing that was needed at the moment. Few would deny that God sovereignly brought that need to mind in a spontaneous way, and, though this would not be called a gift of prophecy, it is a general ability to receive special direction or guidance from God that is similar to what happens in the gift of prophecy, although it is functioning at a weaker level.

- **THE PERMANENCY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Spiritual gifts are permanent however; some important qualifications must be made, because there are some senses in which gifts are not permanent. Some gifts, though perhaps exercised fairly frequently, still cannot be exercised at will. Effectiveness in the gift of healing, for example, depends on God’s sovereign will in answering prayer for healing. Similarly, prophecy depends on the giving of a spontaneous “revelation” (1 Cor. 14:30) from God, and simply cannot be exercised at will. The same could even be said about the gift of evangelism: It is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to bring regeneration and enable someone to believe, so the evangelist may pray and preach, but only God can give the harvest of souls.

In other cases, some particular gift may be given for a unique need or event.

Another sense in which a gift may be non-permanent is if a person neglects his or her gift, and perhaps grieves the Holy Spirit or falls into serious doctrinal or moral error (as Samson did in the Old Testament, for example). In such a case the gift may be withdrawn. Certainly Paul warned Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have” (1 Tim. 4:14), and we may perhaps also learn from the parable of the talents, in which Jesus says that “to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Matt. 25:29).

Moreover, we must remember that the Holy Spirit is still sovereign in distributing gifts: he “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). The word here translated “apportions” is a present participle, which indicates continuing activity over time, and we could paraphrase, “The Holy Spirit is always continuing to distribute or apportion gifts to each person individually just as he wills to do.” This means that, although it is ordinarily the custom of the Holy Spirit to continue to empower the same gift or gifts in people over time, nonetheless, there is a continual willing and deciding of the Holy Spirit to do this or not, and

he may for his own reasons withdraw a gift for a time, or cause it to be much stronger or much weaker than it was.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 indicates that the present spiritual gifts which we have are only for this age, and will be superseded by something far greater. Therefore in that sense no gift is “permanent” since every gift will be rendered useless at the time of the Lord’s return.