

## Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

The Bible teaches that the church works like a body (I Cor. 12:12). Each member is necessary (I Cor. 12:21-25) and each has a slightly different function (I Cor. 12:12-20). In order for the body to be complete and work as a unit, God had given each believer a spiritual gift, or a spiritual capacity to minister to others (I Cor. 12:7, 18).

The gifts are listed in    I Corinthians 12-14  
                                     Romans 12:3-8  
                                     Ephesians 4:7-16  
                                     I Peter 4:10-11

In I Corinthians 12 Paul uses 5 different words to describe what a spiritual gift is.

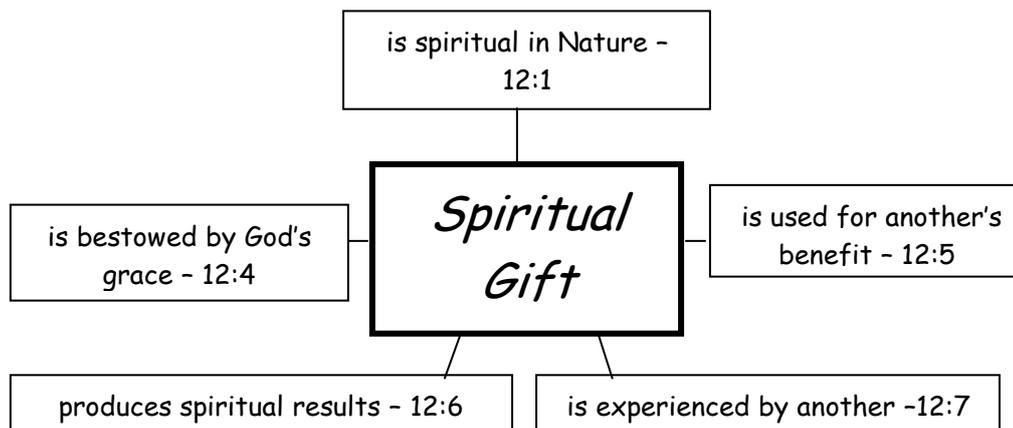
**1)** In I Corinthians 12:1 the first word Paul uses is "spiritual gift." Literally, in Greek, the word is "spirituals" and emphasizes the supernatural nature of the gift. In other words, spiritual gifts are not natural abilities given to all people (like the ability to sing, excel in sports, etc.), but are gifts of supernatural origin and are only given to believers. Of course, natural talents and abilities are also given by God and can be used for serving the Lord, but they are not spiritual gifts.

**2)** In I Corinthians 12:4 a reference to spiritual gifts is again made. Here the NIV simply translates it as "gifts." However, the word that appears here is quite different than that of 12:1. It is probably best translated as "gifts of grace." The emphasis is that the gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit as an act of grace, not because they are earned or deserved (I Cor. 12:11, 18, 28). Therefore, possessing a particular gift is not a sign of spirituality. In fact, the church of Corinth to whom Paul was writing was not a spiritual church at all (I Cor. 1:10ff.) and yet had it had many manifestations of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12-14).

**3)** Thirdly, Paul calls these gifts "services" (12:5). In other words, a spiritual gift is a supernatural endowment to be used for someone else's benefit (also see 12:7; 14:12). There is no gift intended for personal edification or private use. A natural ability enables an individual, a spiritual gift enables the church.

4) Fourthly, a spiritual gift is described as a "working" (an "effect" - 12:6). This term focuses on the spiritual results that the gift produces. For example, the gift of evangelism results in people coming to Christ. If you share your faith regularly, but few or none come to Christ, you don't have the gift of evangelism.

5) Lastly, Paul calls spiritual gifts "manifestations" (I Cor. 12:7). In other words, a spiritual gift must be heard, seen, or experienced by another to be used properly.



## **HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT**

- 1. Realize that you have at least one spiritual gift (I Corinthians 12:7, 11)**
- 2. Be zealous about trying to discover your gift (I Corinthians 14:1,2)**
- 3. Experiment- try different areas of ministry to find out what fits you**
- 4. Honestly evaluate the effectiveness of what you believe to be your gift**
- 5. Ask those who may know you what they think your gift(s) might be**
- 6. Realize there can be a combination of gifts (Paul was an apostle [I Corinthians 9:1] and also had the gift of tongues [I Corinthians 14:18])**
- 7. Realize that there are degrees in giftedness. Some may see more results than others.**

**The number, nature, and duration of certain spiritual gifts is very controversial. The following describes those gifts that are the most widely accepted.**

## **ADMINISTRATION (LEADERSHIP)**

### **Defined:**

The gift of administration is the divinely given ability to help the church grow by planning and executing procedures to accomplish the goals of ministry. Those who possess this gift are able to see the potential of the church and help people all move in the same direction.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of administration find it easy to organize and develop strategies for effective ministry.

They are able to create order out of chaos and manage both tasks and people well.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ remember that needs and people dictate the shape that organization should take
- ✓ maintain a servant's heart in trying to assist others in effectively accomplishing their ministry, not dictate a method that does not fit their needs

### **Traits**

- thorough
- responsible
- goal-oriented
- organized
- efficient

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

Romans 12:8  
I Thessalonians 5:12  
I Corinthians 12:28

## ***EVANGELISM***

### **Defined:**

The gift of evangelism is the divine enablement to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers and persuade them to believe in Christ.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of evangelism find it easy to talk about the message of salvation.

They are able to communicate the gospel clearly and persuasively.

They often seek to build relationships with unbelievers.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ clearly know the content of the gospel
- ✓ be sensitive and adapt the presentation of the gospel to the individual's needs

### **Traits**

- sincere
- confident
- candid
- spiritual

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

Ephesians 4:11

Philip was an evangelist. His success is recorded in Acts 8:12,13, 35, 40.

## ***EXHORTATION***

### **Defined:**

The gift of exhortation is the divine enablement to persuade believers to make proper moral decisions or bring them comfort. The gift is directed to the heart, conscience, will.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of exhortation have eyes to see people who are discouraged or struggling in their faith.

They are able to communicate biblical promises in a way that comforts or urges people to action and growth.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ use promises in the Word of God to bring comfort, not flattery or false hopes
- ✓ correct those in sin with love

### **Traits**

- positive
- challenging
- reassuring
- motivating
- supportive
- affirming

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

I Corinthians 12:28, 29  
Romans 12:7

Paul had this gift. Acts 18:11; 19:9-10

## **GIVING**

### **Defined:**

The gift of giving is the divine enablement to contribute finances and other resources to the work of God. The person who has this gift knows how to use money for spiritual returns.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of giving feel a burden to help those with material needs.

They often manage their lifestyle and finances to give as much of their resources as they can to others.

Provide money cheerfully and generously, trusting for God's provision.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ realize that it is a gift that greatly helps the body of Christ to function
- ✓ remember that the gift is to the Lord and the giver doesn't determine how the money is to be used
- ✓ don't be discouraged by a lack of appreciation

### **Traits**

- resourceful
- charitable
- trusts in God
- stewardship-oriented

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

Romans 12:8

## **HELPS**

### **Defined:**

The gift of giving is the divine enablement to accomplish practical and necessary tasks which free up, support, and meet the needs of others.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of helps serve behind the scenes to support the ministries of others.

See practical and tangible things to be done and enjoy doing them.

Enjoy knowing that they are freeing up others to do what God has called them to do.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ find it difficult to say “no”
- ✓ need to be responsive to leaders and not set up their own agenda
- ✓ don't be discouraged by a lack of appreciation

### **Traits**

- available
- helpful
- willing
- dependable

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

I Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7

Example: Acts 6:1-3

## ***HOSPITALITY***

### **Defined:**

The gift of giving is the divine enablement to provide food and shelter to others.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of hospitality provide an environment where people feel cared for.

Make people feel welcome.

Make people feel at ease in unfamiliar surroundings.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ should avoid thinking of their gift as just “entertaining”
- ✓ should be careful not to cause stress in their own family by inviting others over

### **Traits**

- friendly
- inviting
- caring
- warm
- gracious
- trusting

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

I Peter 4:9-10; Romans 12:13

## **MERCY**

### **Defined:**

The gift of mercy is the divine enablement to help those in distress, whether mental or physical, and be compassionate toward those who are hurting.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Notice the needy and truly empathize with them.

Express love, grace, and dignity to those expressing hardship.

Focus on alleviating pain and discomfort in suffering people.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ may find it hard to be firm because they don't want to hurt another's feelings
- ✓ may not recognize the purposes of suffering in the life of the believer
- ✓ may be critical of those who do not have the gift

### **Traits**

- empathetic
- responsive
- caring
- kind
- sensitive
- burden-bearing

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

Romans 12:8

## **TEACHING**

### **Defined:**

The gift of teaching is the divine enablement to understand the Word of God and effectively communicate it.

In contrast to exhortation, teaching focuses on the mind while exhortation focuses on the will.

In contrast to prophecy, teaching is the explanation of given revelation while prophecy is the reception of direct revelation.

In contrast to evangelism, teaching focuses on believers while evangelism focuses on non-believers.

### **Characteristics of those who possess the gift:**

Those with the gift of teaching give attention to detail and accuracy.

They are able to communicate biblical truth in a way that promotes greater understanding.

### **Effectively using the gift:**

- ✓ spend ample time studying and reflecting on the Word of God
- ✓ seek change in the listeners behavior, character and understanding, not just the impartation of facts
- ✓ could become proud of superior biblical knowledge

### **Traits**

- teachable
- perceptive
- analytical
- disciplined

### **Biblical references to the gift:**

I Corinthians 12:28, 29; Romans 12:7  
Paul had this gift. Acts 18:11; 19:9-10