

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Join the Conversation Part 2
TITLE: Spiritual Gifts
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We are in our series called Join the Conversation: Part 2. The first installment was aimed at engaging with those who may have some strong skepticism towards Christianity, people who might get frazzled at how some Christians think about hell, homosexuality, science, and so on. We encourage you to go listen to, watch, and share those previous sermons at our web site.

This installment has a slightly different focus: Christians in dialogue with other Christians over 'tougher questions' that are often misunderstood or interpreted differently. The purpose of this series is not to answer every single question, but to help you see the value of these discussions and then take part in them.

In this message, we start the conversation about spiritual gifts. What are they? The Bible says that every believer has them. We look at what they are and how they are used today.

For a more in-depth study, we invite you to revisit [our series in First Corinthians](#), where we spent 9 weeks studying spiritual gifts.

Some resources to take advantage of, relating to the use of spiritual gifts:

- *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views.* by Wayne Grudem
- *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* by Bruce Bugbee
- *Showing the Spirit* by D.A. Carson
- *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* by Gordon Fee

John 14:11-14:

"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

Jesus did many amazing miracles and works *through radical dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit*. We saw how his early followers (in the Book of Acts) did many amazing things by following his example.

What do we mean when we use the words “spiritual gift”?

Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities/enablers, sovereignly distributed according to the Holy Spirit’s design and grace to every Christian at salvation, to enable him or her to serve and strengthen the church, the body of Christ, effectively.

Consider these simple truths about spiritual gifts:

1. **Every believer has at least one spiritual gift.**
“To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is beneficial to all.” (I Corinthians 12.7)
2. **The Holy Spirit decides what gifts a believer gets.**
“But in all these things one and the same Spirit is at work, distributing to each one individually just as he wishes.” (I Corinthians 12.11)
3. **No one has all the gifts.**
“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (I Corinthians 12:12)
4. **All gifts are equally important in the body.**
“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” (I Corinthians 12.17-20)
5. **Your giftedness is essential for the health of the body of Christ. There is no hierarchy in the gifts. There may be different functions, but each gift is of equal worth.**
“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 that seem to be weaker are indispensable” (I Corinthians 12:20-21)
6. **It is a good thing to desire spiritual gifts.**
“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” (I Corinthians 14.1)
7. **I am to develop the gifts God gives me. Using my gifts honors God and stretches me.**
“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things; immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.” (I Timothy 4:14-15)
8. **The use of a Spiritual Gift always points to God.**
“Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” (I Peter 4.11)
9. **Spiritual Gifts can be abused and neglected.**
10. **Spiritual Gifts are not the same as natural talents.**

What are the various spiritual gifts?

You can view a chart of spiritual gifts as defined in scripture [on our website](#). As we look and study the various spiritual gifts, we are wise to consider what Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10-11**:

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Are all the gifts still for today?

There are Christians who believe that the 5 particular gifts of *prophecy, miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretation* have ceased and are no longer in use today. They label these displays of the Holy Spirit as “sign” or “foundational” gifts that authenticated the ministry and message of the Apostles. As the early church was established and as the canon of Scripture came to a close, Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**:

“As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.”

What does Fellowship Greenville believe?

We are “*sovereignists*” when it comes to spiritual gifts, meaning that because God is sovereign in all things, he is able to do what he wants, when he wants, and through whom he wants. If God wants to manifest his healing power or perform miracles through one of his children, that is up to him. It is the sovereign God who determines what gifts will be manifested. But, at the same time, we must practice discernment and wisdom when it comes to understanding and using these or any of the gifts.

Why don’t we see more of the miraculous or extraordinary gifts in use?

First, all the gifts should be understood as extraordinary because it is God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit who is putting His power on display through us. God is the one behind the expression to sanctify his people and strengthen us for the work he wants to do.

Second, if gifts are given sovereignly by the living God as he sees fit, and if he places members in the body where he sees fit, then the “gift mix” in any given congregation might not be the same as the “gift mix” in another congregation in a different setting. The Lord of the church fully knows what each local congregation needs in order to carry out His desires for that congregation.

Third, it is easy to become skeptical, especially when we see or hear of the gifts of healings, miracles, and tongues being abused. There are many places around the world where these gifts still seem to be at work where God’s Kingdom is breaking into areas of spiritual darkness.

How do I discover what gifts I may have?

One word: **P.L.A.S.T.E.R.**

1. **Pray.** Talk to the Father and ask Him to show you what gifts He has graced you with.
2. **Learn.**
 - Study the biblical passages on spiritual gifts for yourself. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4, I Peter 4.
 - Read one or more helpful books on the gifts.
 - Spend time with other Christians who know and use their gifts. Find out how they discovered their gifts.
3. **Aspire.** As you pray and learn, consider what you think you'd like to do. Philippians 2.13 tells us that God is at work in us to will and to work for his good pleasure. The feelings being stirred in you may indicate a direction to go.
4. **Serve.** Get out there and try different serving opportunities. Give them enough time to see if they excite and stir you up. Where you are energized may be an indication of your giftedness.
5. **Trust.** Listen to other believers who are willing to provide feedback about what they see going on with your serving and life. If you are being affirmed and people are being blessed, take that as probably confirmation from God. Community Groups are one of the best and safest places to learn and grow in your spiritual giftedness. People get to know you and see how you minister in that setting, and they can begin to call out of you what they see in you.
6. **Exercise.** Continue to develop your gift or gift mix by regular use and training. Ask your ministry leader how you might continue to stir up what is being manifested through you.
7. **Reproduce.** Be willing to help others who are seeking to discover what gift they may have.

For Discussion:

1. Have you ever thought about spiritual gifts before and what yours might be?
2. What opportunities in the past have you had to use those spiritual gifts?
3. If you don't know what your spiritual gift(s) are, what is one step you can take today (following the *PLASTER* model) to try to discern them?