

## The Spirit's Gifts

God formed every creature on this planet with a special area of expertise. Some animals run, some hop, some swim, some burrow, and some fly. Each has a particular role to play, based on the way it was shaped by God. The same is true with humans. Each of us was uniquely designed, or "shaped," to do certain things.

Before architects design any new building they first ask, "What will be its purpose? How will it be used?" The intended function always determines the form of the building. Before God created you, He decided what role He wanted you to play on earth. He planned exactly how He wanted you to serve Him, and then He shaped you for those tasks. You are the way you are because you were made for a specific ministry.

Not only did God shape you before your birth, He planned every day of your life to support His shaping process. David continues, "Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." (Psalm 139:16) This means that nothing that happens in your life is insignificant. God uses all of it to mold you for your ministry to others and shape you for your service to Him.

God never wastes anything. The Bible says you are "wonderfully complex." You are a combination of many different factors. By identifying and understanding these factors you can discover God's will for your life.

Ministry is using what God has uniquely given you to uniquely serve Him and the needs of others. The above five factors will help you determine where you can best serve Him with joy, fulfillment, and fruitfulness. Praying for your set of spiritual gift(s), heartfelt passions, abilities, personality, and life experiences will help you understand how God has designed you to uniquely serve.

God takes ordinary people and accomplishes extraordinary things through them!  
"The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church." 1 Cor. 12:7

Many of us have heard of spiritual gifts, but we are not quite sure we understand them. A spiritual gift is a special ability, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer at their conversion, to be used to minister to others and therefore build up the Body of Christ. Although spiritual gifts are given when the Holy Spirit enters new believers, their use and purpose need to be understood and developed as we grow spiritually.

A spiritual gift is much like a muscle; the more you use it, the stronger it becomes. A Few Truths About Spiritual Gifts:

1. Only believers have spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 2:14
2. You can't earn or work for a spiritual gift. Eph 4:7
3. The Holy Spirit decides what gifts I get. 1 Cor 12:11
4. I am to develop the gifts God gives me. Rom 11:29
5. It's a sin to waste the gifts God gave me. 1 Cor 4:1-2 and Mt 25:14-30
6. Using my gifts honors God and expands me. John 15:8

## Unwrapping My Gifts

God desires you to know the spiritual gift(s) He has chosen for you. "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7,8)  
Learning more about His gift(s) to us, and the many ways we can use those gifts within the church is a life-long process.

The Bible does not lock us into tight restrictions as to the number of spiritual gifts or even their definitions. The four major lists of gifts are found in Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27 -31, Eph. 4:11- 12, and 1 Peter 4:9-11, and there are other passages that mention or illustrate gifts not included in these lists. One person can have many gifts.

This list can serve as a helpful guideline, giving us ideas about the kinds of gifts God gives...The key is to find the areas in which the Holy Spirit seems to supernaturally empower your service to others.

## Identifying Spiritual Gifts

Although there is a great deal of disagreement over spiritual gifts among different denominations, most Bible scholars classify these gifts into three categories: ministry gifts, manifestation gifts, and motivational gifts.

### Ministry Gifts

The ministry gifts serve to reveal the plan of God. They are characteristic of a full-time office or calling, rather than a gift that can function in and through any believer. The ministry gifts were once presented to me through a five-finger illustration that I've never forgotten: (movie-Soul Food)

**Apostle** - An apostle establishes and builds churches; he's a church planter. An apostle may function in many or all the ministry gifts. He is the "thumb," the strongest of all the fingers, able to touch every finger.

**Prophet** - Prophet in the Greek means to "forth tell" in the sense of speaking for another. A prophet functions as God's mouthpiece, speaking forth God's Word. The prophet is the "index finger," or pointer finger. He points to the future and points out sin.

**Evangelist** - An evangelist is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. He works for the local church to bring people into the body of Christ where they can be discipled. He may evangelize through music, drama, preaching, and other creative ways. He is the "middle finger," the tallest one who stands out in the crowd. Evangelists draw a lot of attention, but they are called to serve the local body.

**Pastor** - The pastor is the shepherd of the people. A true shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The pastor is the "ring finger." He is married to the church; called to stay, oversee, nurture and guide.

**Teacher** - The teacher and the pastor are often a shared office, but not always. The teacher lays the foundation and is concerned with detail and accuracy. He delights in research to validate truth. The teacher is the "pinky finger." Though seemingly small and insignificant, he is

designed specifically for digging into tight, dark places, shining light and picking apart the Word of truth.

### **Manifestation Gifts**

The manifestation gifts serve to reveal the power of God. These gifts are supernatural or spiritual in nature. They can be further subdivided into three groups: utterance, power, and revelation.

**Utterance** - These gifts say something:

**Prophecy** - This is the "forth telling" of the inspired Word of God primarily to the church, for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation, or consolation, although it can declare God's will in a particular circumstance, and in rare cases, predict future events.

**Speaking in Tongues** - This is a supernatural utterance in an unlearned language which is interpreted so that the entire body will be edified. Tongues may also be a sign to unbelievers. Learn more about speaking in tongues.

**Interpretation of Tongues** - This is a supernatural interpretation of a message in tongues, translated into the known language so that the hearers (the entire body) will be edified.

**Power** - These gifts do something:

**Faith** - This is not the faith that is measured to every believer, nor is it "saving faith." This is special, supernatural faith given by the Spirit to receive miracles or to believe God for miracles.

**Healing** - This is supernatural healing, beyond natural means, given by the Spirit.

**Miracles** - This is the supernatural suspension of the natural laws, or an intervention by the Holy Spirit into the laws of nature.

**Revelation** - These gifts reveal something:

**Word of Wisdom** - This is supernatural knowledge applied in a godly or correct way. One commentary describes it as "insight into doctrinal truth."

**Word of Knowledge** - This is supernatural knowledge of facts and information that can only be revealed by God for the purpose of applying doctrinal truth.

**Discerning of Spirits** - This is the supernatural ability to distinguish between spirits such as good and evil, truthful, or deceiving, prophetic versus satanic.

### **Motivational Gifts**

The motivational gifts serve to reveal the personality of God. These gifts are practical in nature. They describe the inner motivations of the Christian servant.

**Prophecy** - Those with the motivational gift of prophecy are the "seers" or "eyes" of the body. They have insight, foresight, and act like watch dogs in the church. They warn of sin or reveal

sin. They are usually very verbal and may come across as judgmental and impersonal; they are loyal to truth over friendship, serious, dedicated.

**Ministering/Serving/Helps** - Those with the motivational gift of serving are the "hands" of the body. They are concerned with meeting needs; they are highly motivated, doers. They may tend to over commit but find joy in serving and meeting short-term goals.

**Teaching** - Those with the motivational gift of teaching are the "mind" of the body. They realize their gift is foundational; they emphasize accuracy of words and love to study; they delight in research to validate truth.

**Giving** - Those with the motivational gift of giving are the "arms" of the body. They truly enjoy reaching out in giving. They are excited by the prospect of blessing others; they desire to give quietly, in secret, but will also motivate others to give. They are alert to people's needs; they give cheerfully and always give the best that they can.

**Exhortation/Encouragement** - Those with the motivational gift of encouragement are the "mouth" of the body. Like cheerleaders, they encourage other believers and are motivated by a desire to see people grow and mature in the Lord. They are practical and positive, and they seek positive responses.

**Administration/Leadership** - Those with the motivational gift of leadership are the "head" of the body. They have the ability to see the overall picture and set long-term goals; they are good organizers and find efficient ways of getting work done. Although they may not seek leadership, they will assume it when no leader is available. They receive fulfillment when others come together to complete a task.

**Mercy** - Those with the motivational gift of mercy are the "heart" of the body. They easily sense the joy or distress in other people and are sensitive to feelings and needs. They are attracted to and patient with people in need, motivated by a desire to see people healed of hurts. They are truly meek in nature and avoid firmness.