

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There has been much confusion in the Body of Christ regarding spiritual gifts. Some say they are not for today, some say only some people have them, others say everyone has them. What is the truth? For our purposes here, we will assume that we all agree that the gifts are for today. Let's look at what Scripture shows us.

There are gifts listed in three different places in the New Testament, and each list is a bit different.

1. Ephesians 4:8-13, NIV – *"This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

These "doma" gifts are commonly referred to as the "five-fold ministry" gifts, and they come directly from Jesus. The purpose of these gifts is to equip the rest of us, so that we (meaning everyone in the church) can grow and mature, able to do the ministry to which we have been called. These people are hand-picked (called) by Jesus as a gift to the rest of the church. These gifts become a part of who the person is, but if the person walks away from the Lord, the gift will leave (since the gift belongs to the Body, and they are no longer in the Body.) Some have used these gifts as a means to "lord-over" the flock, but really they are to be servants of the flock that they are called to. A very small portion of the church are called to walk in these gifts, and their purpose is to train the rest of us to do ministry. We tend to expect these people to be doing all the ministry they are in, such as a pastor is expected to visit all the sick and widows. But they are not called to be the ones doing the ministry, the rest of us are to do that! Their job is to train and motivate us to get out there and do the ministry.

Let's take a look at each of these five gifts:

- Apostle – this is the fathering/mothering gift to the other four gifts, and their purpose is to raise up leadership and to mentor them, to help them reach maturity
- Prophet – their primary job is to teach people how to hear the voice of God (remember, they are to equip the rest of us), not just to prophesy
- Evangelist – their job is to inspire and motivate us to get out there and share the gospel
- Pastor – their job is to bring out the fathering and mothering hearts in each of us, inspiring us to love others in practical ways
- Teacher – they inspire us to learn, to study, to grow, and to ask the right questions

2. Romans 12:3-8, NIV – *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

These verses list gifts that Father God bestows on everyone (“each of us”). Paul seems to be saying in these verses, “Everyone has one of these gifts, and each are different. Make sure you don’t become prideful because of your gift.” Then for each gift, “If you have this gift, then this is how you should be using it.” It’s like these gifts are a part of us, a part of our personality. We didn’t do anything to deserve them, and we can’t get rid of them. They are a part of who we are. 1 Peter 4:10-11, NIV – *“Each one should use whatever gift **he has received** to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”* Many people who have the gift of prophecy believe they are a prophet, but if they are not out there teaching and training others how to prophecy, it is this gift of prophecy, not the “doma” gift of prophet. This is also true of teaching.

3. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 – *“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*

These verses list the gifts that are given by Holy Spirit *“just as he determines.”* These are gifts that come and go as the need arises. They do not reside permanently in people. Anyone can operate in any of these gifts at any time, and they are always to be used for “the common good.” If someone is using any of these gifts to condemn or tear down someone, they are not using them properly.

Let's look at what each of them are:

- Word of wisdom – contrary to what is normally taught, we believe that this is supernatural knowledge about the future
- Word of knowledge – supernatural knowledge about the past and/or present; often combined with the gift of healing
- Faith – supernatural confidence, enablement, or empowerment; knowing that you can do something or that something will happen that is out of the ordinary
- Healings – includes all parts of us – spirit, soul, and body; can be physical healing, but also emotional, deliverance, etc.
- Miracles – anything supernatural that does not fall into one of the other categories, such as raising the dead; the interruption of the laws of the natural world; examples from Jesus include turning water to wine, walking on water, multiplying the bread, and so on
- Prophecy – a word spoken to another person that edifies, comforts, and exhorts; is often combined with another gift, such as wisdom or knowledge
- Discerning of spirits – the ability to recognize spirits, both godly and ungodly; it includes all kinds of spirits – Holy Spirit, Angelic spirits, Human spirit, and Demonic spirits
- Speaking in Tongues – this is different from having a prayer language (Acts 10:46, Jude 1:20), this gift is speaking out in a different language in a group of people, and should always be followed by interpretation (unless the language is understood by others, as in Acts 2:4-12), see 1 Corinthians 14:5
- Interpretation of Tongues – follows Speaking in Tongues

From these lists we can see that there are a small number that are called to the five-fold ministry gifts, more people permanently carry certain gifts, but everyone can operate in the gifts that Holy Spirit gives as He wills.

Thank you, Dr. Jonathan Welton, for bringing this teaching, many of whose points I have included in this essay. You can find him at Weltonacademy.com.

