

# SPIRITUAL GIFTS - 1

## 1. Introduction

The first thing to say is that we are all 'paddling in the shallows' regarding a full appreciation of God's purpose for his Church. Spiritual gifts are only a part of what he wants to see happening in the Body of Christ ... don't allow them to get out of proportion!

## 2. What ARE 'Spiritual Gifts'?

The New Testament talks about 3 general types of gift in the Church. There is some overlap between the types, but it should be helpful to see different ways in which the Lord is at work:-

a) 'Grace Gifts'. See **Romans 12:6-8**. All these are gifts are demonstrations of the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives . . . The Spirit at work WITHIN us.

b) 'Spiritual Gifts'. See **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**. These are gifts which are beyond normal human experience and cannot be explained other than by the power of God . . . The Spirit poured out UPON us.

c) 'Ministry Gifts'. See **Ephesians 4:11-13** and **1 Corinthians 12:28**. These are completely different: they are not gifts given to individuals, but individuals given to the Church! As far as I can see, these are people who are learning to share God's heart for the growth of the Church. Their message and their lives are interwoven, the quality of their ministry depends on the Holy Spirit WITHIN and UPON them.

We are going to look at b) Spiritual Gifts. You could say that they are less important than the other two, but they are still important in the development of the Church.

3. The Spirit poured out - Communication with the Living God!

a. The Promise of the Prophets. **Jeremiah 31:31-34**. Much talk in evangelical circles about 'knowing God' and 'having a personal relationship with God'. How much of it is real? **Joel 2:28-32**. The Spirit of God poured out, with 'wonders': this the passage Peter quoted in **Acts 2:17**.

b. The Teaching of Jesus. **John 14:25 & 26**. Teaching, reminding of all that Jesus has said. **John 15:15**. Jesus told his disciples what he was doing, and then in **John 15:26 & 27** and **John 16:13-15** he says that the Holy Spirit will go on doing the same thing when he comes.

c. The Experience of the Church. **1 Corinthians 2:6-16**. A key passage on the work of the Holy Spirit. Try reading these verses again, perhaps in several different versions, to see what God has in store for each member of the Church. This is not a 'special' for the privileged few, as it was in the Old Testament. This is the inheritance of every child of God! Notice **vv.12 & 13**: the Holy Spirit is given so that we may understand what God has given us, and we then express that understanding in words given by the Holy Spirit. Paul is pulling back the covers on his own ministry here and we can see how the Lord works through him.

4. Spiritual Gifts in the Church

With that background, on to looking at the gifts as they are listed in **1 Corinthians 12, 13 & 14**:

The Central Gift of Prophecy. It is clear from **1 Corinthians 14** that prophecy is the most important of these gifts. What is prophecy?

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Let my people go...’ “ (Moses)

“Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people...”

“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:...” (Nathan)

“This is what the Lord says:...” (Gad)

“As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.” (Micaiah)

“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain...” (Elijah)

“The word of the Lord is with him” (Elisha)

“Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken:” (Isaiah)

“ ‘The time is coming,’ declares the Lord,” (Jeremiah)

“The Holy Spirit says...” (Agabus)

...and so on! Do you get the picture? The central theme of prophecy is the current word of the Lord, answering the question “What is God saying NOW?”

Now look at the list of spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthians 12**:-

The message of wisdom

The message of knowledge

Faith

Gifts of healing

Miraculous powers

Prophecy

Distinguishing between spirits

The ability to speak in different kinds of tongues

The interpretation of tongues

All of these are to do with Father communicating what he wants to say or do NOW. Like the Lord Jesus, we are intended to operate in this supernatural realm only in complete dependence on Father. See ***John 5:19 & 20*** and link it again with ***John 16:13-15***.

We have the written-down expression of God's will and purpose in the Bible and we have the interpretation of its teaching through those who can open it up to us. We have all known the voice of God in our lives from time to time. We need to open up to hearing what he has to say to ourselves as individuals, to other individuals, to the Church locally and maybe further afield.

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

Dave Taylor 8th August 1993

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