

**“Now Concerning  
Spiritual Gifts,  
Brethren, I Don’t Want  
You To Be Ignorant”**



*by Robert Curry*

God inspired Paul to write this in 1 Corinthians 12:1. Even after 52 years in the Church, I knew I didn't understand Spiritual Gifts very well, and I'd especially like to know what Spiritual Gifts God has given me and how I can use them to His glory and service.

Paul discusses **20 Spiritual Gifts** in four lists in three chapters: Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-30, and Ephesians 4:7-12.

The Greek word for gifts is *charisma* [think charismatic individuals, with “star” power; God's people should be lights of the world!].

Besides Paul's writings, *charisma* is only used in 1 Peter 4:10: “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (New Living Translation).

Peter says each member has at least one Spiritual Gift. Paul says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them” (Romans 12:6).

*The Anchor Bible* says Spiritual Gifts are special gifts bestowed by God on individual members for edification of the Church.

Do you know your Spiritual Gifts? Are you using them and developing them to serve one another and the Church of God?

# The 20 Spiritual Gifts

These can be grouped into three categories:

**“SIGN GIFTS”**—God gave these in dramatic fashion to the Church initially to draw attention to it and spur growth. These occur today but not nearly so much. God may well grant them at the end-time to again cast attention on His Church and its Gospel witness.

- Distinguishing/discerning of spirits
- Miracles
- Healings
- Speaking in tongues (actual languages not known by the speaker)
- Interpretation of tongues

**“PERFECTING GIFTS”**—God gives these gifts to individuals who themselves become gifts to the Body—the Church—“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

- Apostleship
- Prophecy/perceiving/inspired speaking:  
**Strengths:** identifies good & evil, black & white, no gray, frank, outspoken  
**Ways to use:** counseling, visiting, intercessory prayer, teaching adults or older youths  
**Examples in Bible:** 1 Corinthians 14:1—“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”  
Romans 12:6 “Let him use it in proportion to his faith.” 2 Timothy 4:2, Proverbs 1:2, John the Baptist
- Evangelism
- Pastor/shepherd

- **Teacher**  
**Strengths:** self-disciplined, logical, applies Scripture to life  
**Ways to use:** teaching in a spiritual setting, public speaking, mentoring, writing, research  
**Examples in Bible:** Hebrews 5:12-14 says we “ought to be teachers” but James 3:1 cautions “let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”
- **Wisdom**—All Christians should ask for wisdom (James 1:5), but a few have a special gift
- **Knowledge**—God the Father must open our minds to understand His plan of salvation for us to even be a Christian, but a few have a special gift

**“SERVICE GIFTS”**—God gives these Spiritual Gifts to enable us to become servant leaders, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:25-28).

- **Administration**
- **Leadership**  
**Strengths:** highly motivated to organize, clear communicator, prefers to be under authority, will assume responsibility if no leadership exists, visionary, enjoys delegating & supervising  
**Ways to use:** organizing & overseeing programs, events and activities, teaching adults  
**Examples in Bible:** Romans 12:8 “let him govern diligently.” 1 Corinthians 14:40, Mark 10:42-43, Matthew 25:21, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, Joseph, Nehemiah, Deborah
- **Exhortation**  
**Strengths:** loves to encourage, applies truth rather than research, willing to help, wants to see change, sees trials as growth opportunity  
**Ways to use:** public speaking, supporting others, encouraging others in trials, teaching all ages  
**Examples in Bible:** Hebrews 10:24-25, 3:13, 1 Timothy 4:13, Barnabus—Acts 11:23

- Faith—This is also a Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).  
What the difference between Fruits of the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts?  
**Fruits of the Spirit: what we are, attitudes**, byproduct of healthy relationship with God, necessary for effective service as a member of the body and for spiritual growth and development.  
**Spiritual Gifts: what we do, aptitudes**, supernatural endowment of God through Holy Spirit, necessary for most effective service as a member of the body.
- Giving  
**Strengths:** Gives of time, money, energy; gives without people knowing, handles money wisely, quick to volunteer, believes God is the source of all  
**Ways to use:** visiting others, helping others, general hospitality, serving in activities, teaching all ages  
**Examples in Bible:** Romans 12:8 “give generously.” Luke 6:38, Matthew 10:8, Romans 12:13, Cornelius Acts 10:1-2
- Helps—behind the scenes
- Service  
**Strengths:** sees needs and meets them, works with hands—manual, detail oriented, hospitable, does more than asked, high energy, doer  
**Ways to use:** physical service, setup for services, assisting others in need, hosting events for others, using physical talents  
**Examples in Bible:** Galatians 5:13, Matthew 25:40, Colossians 3:23-24, Psalm 100:2, John 12:26, Martha—Mark 10:28
- Mercy  
**Strengths:** large capacity for love, looks for good in people, attracted to those who are hurting, takes action to help and remove hurt, does thoughtful things, avoids conflict, confrontations, crusader for good causes, doer  
**Ways to use:** visiting others, calling, writing, listening to others, helping & teaching children, Big Brother  
**Examples in Bible:** Romans 12:8 “do it cheerfully.” 1 Peter 3:8, Matthew 5:7, Galatians 6:2, Colossians 3:12-14, Zechariah 7:9, Good Samaritan

Special thanks goes to Scott Ashley, Managing Editor of *Beyond Today* magazine, for his five-part sermon series on this subject and his handouts. Scott puts this so well:

“Even though we have one or two key Spiritual Gifts, we are to put all of them into practice in our lives. We each have innate personality characteristics that God gave us, and that’s how we will primarily help within the Body because that’s where we will most feel a need to serve and we’ll probably naturally be drawn to that. But needs are always there and must be met by someone. Serving in all areas will make us a better, more well-rounded person so we can discover where we can serve most effectively.”

Paul ended the discussion of Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 with “earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way” (verse 31).

Chapter breaks were not added until A.D. 1551 when Robert Estienne (a.k.a. Stephanus) added verse divisions to his fourth edition of the Greek New Testament.

### **Spiritual Gifts must be packaged in love and humility**

Paul went right into “the Love Chapter” [1 Corinthians 13] and wrote that if we have the gifts of tongues, prophecy, understanding all mysteries, knowledge, or faith that can move mountains, but don’t have love—and throw in humility—we are nothing and it profits us nothing!

Scott concludes, “The overriding motivation for use of all gifts and talents whether spiritual or physical should always be love in an attitude of humility. We are to use our gifts to serve, honor and glorify God and the Church, not ourselves. We are to use our Spiritual Gifts to *serve*, not to aggrandize the self. Spiritual Gifts are *God’s gifts of grace* that we do not deserve any more than we deserve eternal life.”

# **God Places Us in the Body (the Church) & Gives Us Spiritual Gifts to Serve in It**

In the popular Briggs Myers Personality Test, used to identify the dominant personality traits you were born with, some note that seven of the 16 possible personality traits compare with seven of the 20 Spiritual Gifts: P=prophecy/perception, S=serve, minister, T=teachers, E=exhorter, G=giver, L=leader/administrator, and M=mercy.

This sounds surprising, but humans have a Spirit in Man which animals don't have. Job said "There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8). Paul wrote, "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? (1 Corinthians 2:11). Humans are born after the God kind (Genesis 1:26), primed for the time when God calls each of us to understand His plan of salvation and receive His Holy Spirit.

Paul goes on to explain, "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit [which] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:11-12). After baptism and the laying on of hands by a minister from God, we receive the Holy Spirit uniting with our Spirit in Man (Acts 2:38, 8:17).

This Holy Spirit is a downpayment for when we are resurrected to become totally Spirit Beings as sons and daughters in the Family and Kingdom of God! (Ephesians 1:13-14). "Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ... the guarantee of our inheritance!"

God gives us Spiritual Gifts through the power of the Holy Spirit which will enhance our natural talents from birth and our learned skills from yielding ourselves to God's guidance of our

life. God can amplify what He has given us to take it to a higher level of serving Him.

Exodus 35:30-36:1 tells how God called “Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the Lord has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary.” God filled them with the Spirit of God to be master craftsmen. He gave them ability to teach other artisans. Did you catch what it was for: “the service of the sanctuary”—the church in the wilderness!

So there’s no need for us to get hung up on stressing about whether our gift is natural, learned, or given by the Holy Spirit. The challenge is to use our gifts!

### **For what purpose?**

In all three chapters written by Paul about using our Spiritual Gifts, this instruction is intertwined with how the Body—the Church of God—is made up of many members or parts. God is consistent and so is His plan of salvation.

Just as “One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing [Spiritual Gifts] to each one individually *as He wills*” (1 Corinthians 12:11), so “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (verse 18).

Spiritual Gifts are how the Body—the Church—functions and grows. Spiritual Gifts are how the Church becomes like its vision.

### **The Church’s Vision**

Paul says, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of



the stature of the fullness of Christ ... speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which *every part does its share*, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:12-16, emphasis mine).

“Every part does its its share” in building the spiritual Church of God. The seven Spiritual Gifts which compare to seven inherited personality traits can be compared to parts of a human body:

Perceivers = eyes,

Servers = hands

Teachers = brain

Exhorter = mouth

Giver = arms

Leaders/administrators = shoulder (Isaiah 9:6)

Mercy = heart

1 Peter 4:11 says if our gifts are speaking (which would include perceiver, teacher, exhorter, leader), “then speak as though God himself were speaking through you.”

If our gifts are ministering/serving, Peter writes, “Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen” (New Living Translation).

## **Are We a Good Steward with the Spiritual Gifts God Has Given Us to Serve His Church?**

In the three chapters Paul writes about Spiritual Gifts, God speaks only of “one body, one Spirit ... one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5-6), “the unity of the faith” (verse 13), “the church” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

No one argues that there is more than one Holy Spirit, and “by one “Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (verse 13). Baptism is a crucial step in a Christian’s journey which we should not put off because our sins are not forgiven until baptized (Acts 2:38). Also, after baptism is when we need a true minister of God to lay hands on us and ask God to grant us His Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17).

Though God can give a Spiritual Gift any time He chooses, this event after baptism seems to be when a Spiritual Gift is usually given.

Paul told Timothy, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul also says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the eldership” (1 Timothy 4:14). How I wish I could remember exactly what Dr. Robert Oberlander said when he laid hands on me 52 years ago!

Receiving the Holy Spirit results in our name being written into the Book of Life and makes us a member of the one spiritual Church of God. The three chapters about Spiritual Gifts mention that they are written to members.

The 20 Spiritual Gifts are given to individual members to build the Body—the Church of God—and participate in the Great Commission (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20).

Church leaders have always stressed that we are not loners. Not just you and me, Lord. We must not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

We are regularly warned that we will grow only to the extent that our hearts are in doing “the Work.” If we were only seeking our own salvation, we would lose it (Matthew 16:25). We would not have heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ about the soon-coming Kingdom of God on earth if others did not go before us doing “the Work.”

Jesus warned in a parable that we must be good stewards of the talents He gives us, growing and even doubling them, rather than like the foolish man who buried his talent (Matthew 25:14-30). When our Master comes, we must be found “so doing” (Matthew 24:46, Luke 12:42-48). We must not “neglect so great a salvation!” (Hebrews 2:3).

### **Nine years ago,**

I listened to Scott’s five sermons and read his handouts. But I didn’t take the time to really study it and absorb it. I recommend you go over and over the list of the 20 Spiritual Gifts and carefully note which gift or gifts God has given you. In some cases, the complete description of a gift might not fit you, but maybe a big portion of it does.

Now is the time to ask God to help you really understand your Spiritual Gifts and use them fully to build His Church and bring all glory to Him!



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