

Understanding the Purpose and Power of Your Spiritual Gifts

Dr. Antipas L. Harris

President, the Urban Renewal Center



“The historical Christian faith delivered to us was established and built upon the supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit. To see the supernatural in operation in our lives and in the life of the church as it was in the beginning, is part of the great price we seek to obtain. We don’t need to compromise, theologize, or rationalize about it.”

[David Ireland, *Activating the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997).]



**Spiritual Gifts are for *inside*
and *outside* of the Church**



Three Disclaimers

Disclaimer #1

There are nearly 30 gifts mentioned in the New Testament. However, there are at least 21 that are often acknowledged. Any list is not exhaustive. So, there are other Spiritual gifts as well.



Disclaimer #2

Gifts don't prove salvation. Salvation is only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.



Disclaimer #3

Spiritual gifts are for *building up the Church* to engage in Christ-inspired *activity in the world*. This includes personal as well as communal spiritual development.



What are Spiritual Gifts?

Spiritual Gifts are attributes of grace poured out in the life of believers. R. Paul Stevens points out, “the Greek word ‘χαρίσματα’ (charisma) does not mean a ‘spiritual gift,’ but rather ‘a concrete expression of grace.’” [R. Paul Stevens, *Spiritual Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2004), 6.]

We don’t earn the gifts; we don’t learn them; we don’t deserve them. The Spirit of God invests in believers “concrete expressions of grace” for the purpose of equipping us to be the Body of Christ in the world.



What are Spiritual Gifts?

Spiritual Gifts are God’s way of saying that “everyone in a community has a contribution to make.” Everyone is important, “just as each part of the human body contributes to its ability to function properly.”

[R. Paul Stevens, *Spiritual Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2004), 9.]



What are Spiritual Gifts?

1. “...the ‘gift’ movement has been largely co-opted by the narcissism of Western culture and its preoccupation with personal fulfillment, individualism and selfism.... Spiritual gifts are not *for us* but *for our service* to others, not about finding our identity but rather living out our **vocation.**” [R. Paul Stevens, *Spiritual Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2004), 5.]



What are Spiritual Gifts?

2. “The emphasis of the New Testament is not on something we possess or something given to us... but rather [Spiritual Gifts are the] work of the Spirit *through us.*”

[R. Paul Stevens, *Spiritual Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2004), 5.]



Purpose of the Gifts

The phrase “Spiritual gifts” is better expressed as “Spirit-giftedness.” In contemporary times, the language of “spirituality” dilutes the emphasis on God, the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual gifts as given by the Holy Spirit implies that the Spirit is the ultimate Gift. The Gift clothes us with gifts to reveal the Spirit of God in the world.



Purpose of the Gifts

Therefore, the purpose of the Gifts of the Spirit is tied to the mission of the Spirit. That is to make God's presence known among the people and to bring glory to God.

- The chief example of the Spirit's mission is expressed in Jesus. Consider Luke 4. The Spirit's purpose is to endow and edify the Church for Christ's mission to bring hope and liberation to the oppressed.



Which is of Divine Importance? To be Appointed? Or, Spirit-Gifted

In 312 A.D... the Roman emperor Constantine became Christian and made Christianity the religion of the Roman empire. The church grew bureaucratic. Leaders were appointed.

Bryan Carraway points out, “Gifted people in the church were many times weeded out of leadership and replaced by the appointed ministers who were favored by the bureaucracy.”

[Bryan Carraway, *Spiritual Gifts* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2005),32.]



Could it Be?

Are we continuing a Western legacy of bureaucracy, appointing people who the Spirit has not gifted into roles at our churches?



Power of Spiritual Gifts

George Barna points out, “If more believers understood the nature and potential of that special empowerment [of Spirit-ual gifts], the global impact of the Christian body would be multiplied substantially....”



One of the functions of the local church is to help believers understand who they are in Christ, and how to live the Christian life more fully. Focusing on spiritual gifts – *what they are, who has them, how to discover one’s giftedness, and how to use gifts most appropriately* – could ignite a movement of service and influence unlike anything we **have experienced during our lifetime.”**

[George Barna, *Awareness of Spiritual Gifts Is Changing*.

<https://www.barna.com/research/awareness-of-spiritual-gifts-is-changing/>]



Three Classic Categories of Spiritual Gifts

1. Motivational Gifts
2. Ministry Gifts
3. Manifestation Gifts



1. Motivational Gifts (7)

Romans 12:3-8

[We have different gifts (**χαρίσματα**), according to the grace (**χάρις**) given to each of us.]



- **Prophecy**
- **Serving**
- **Teaching**
- **Exhorting**

- **Giving**
- **leading**
- **Mercy**



- **Prophecy** – Prophecy is uttering insight into divine purpose. “[Prophecy or the prophetic] is to proclaim God’s way in the world – the way of peace, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and radical love [and righteousness].” [Johnny Bernard Hill, *Prophetic Rage* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 83]

Seeking God is the pursuit of love. God is love.

“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” 1 Corinthians 14:1



○ ***Serving*** – “Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s ‘Theory of Relativity’ to serve. You don’t have to know the Second Theory of Thermal Dynamics in Physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.” Martin Luther King, Jr.



- **Teaching** – “Those with the teaching gift both love to teach and have an ability to impart....” [Bryan Carraway, Spiritual Gifts (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2005), 137.]

The gift of teaching involves guidance in divine morality and holiness:

- “They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.” Ezekiel 44:23
- “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.” Hosea 4:6



○ ***Exhorting*** – Life is challenging. People need encouragement. Exhorting means encouragement.

- “not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

The gift of exhorting is the God-given empowerment to encourage and strengthen others and to inspire them to reach their God-ordained potential.



- ***Giving*** – “God-given ability to give unselfishly of one’s resources (time, money, affections, etc.) to ensure that the work of the church and the needs of others are **taken care of.**” [Bryan Carraway, *Spiritual Gifts* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2005),162.]

Two characteristics of gift of giving:

- 1. Joy to bless others**
- 2. Sensitive to the needs of others**



- ***Leading*** – the gift of leadership involves vision and the capacity of influence. It is the inspiration to take people to a place they need to go and often want to go but don't know how to get there.

John Maxwell says, “True leadership cannot be awarded, appointed, or assigned. It comes only from influence, and that cannot be mandated.”

This means that appointing people to leadership roles based on buddy systems could destroy the church and is destroying society and businesses, as well.



○Mercy – God is a God of justice. Yet, when justice demands punishment, mercy is necessary to return to right standing. Those with the gift of mercy are easily moved with compassion to the disadvantaged or downtrodden. Paul encourages the ones with the gift of mercy not to feel bad about their heart of compassion but share their gift with joy.

Mercy is a gift for the church and society. God empowers believers with such gift to bear witness to Christ's character in the world.



2. Ministry Gifts (5)

Ephesians 4:7-13

(Gifts to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building-up the Body of Christ)



- **Apostles**
- **Prophets***
- **Evangelists**

- **Pastors**
- **Teachers***



3. Manifestation Gifts (9)

1 Corinthians 12:1 –11; 27–31

[Manifestations of the Spirit for common profiting
(**συμφέρον**) – 1 Corinthians 12:7-10]



- **Words of Wisdom**
- **Words of Knowledge**
- **Faith**

- **Gifts of Healing**
- **Working of Miracles**
- **Prophecy***
- **Discernment**

- **of spirits**
- **Speaking in Tongues**
- **Interpretation of Tongues**



As Paul turns his attention to the problem of manifestation gifts in worship, he emphasizes upfront that the Holy Spirit's primary goal in worship is to glorify Jesus as Lord. 1 Cor. 12:1–3:

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I want you to know 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. (NIV)



Purpose of Manifestation Gifts

1. *Glorify* the Lord
2. *Testify* to the Spirit
3. *Edify* the community of faith, the Body of Christ
4. *Amplify* Christ



We must not seek Gifts. We should seek God's face with an openness of heart to participate in God's mission. As a result, the Spirit bears witness of such worship with Manifestation Gifts.

