

FELLOWSHIP SPIRITUAL GIFTS

For the next two weeks we're going to be looking at spiritual gifts... and not just spiritual gifts in general, as we read about them in the Bible, but also YOUR PERSONAL spiritual gift(s). It's exciting to know that God has given every believer a unique ability to serve in His Body, the Church.

By asking and answering questions each day, we'll try to understand better the big picture when it comes to spiritual gifts. We'll also list sixteen specific "gifts" and see which ones remind you of your own personal walk.

So let's dig in and try to understand more clearly this, sometimes confusing, subject.

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

Many Christians – especially young Christians – sometimes ask, "What is my spiritual gift?" But what they should be asking first is, "What is a spiritual gift?" Most believers don't understand the relationship of spiritual gifts. That is, they don't understand how a spiritual gift relates to their life; how it relates to God's will for their life; how it relates to the lives of those around them; how it relates to the local church; or how it relates to the Body of Christ as a whole. Just knowing what your potential gift(s) might be doesn't make you a more effective, a more fulfilled, or a better Christian. It doesn't give you any more understanding of yourself or those around you.

A spiritual gift is a special ability, given by God, for Christian service. Spiritual gifts are tools that God gives Christians to do the work of the ministry—to fulfill the Great Commission to reach, baptize, teach and to minister to one another.

Spiritual gifts are the tools God uses to build His Church. A spiritual gift is a divine calling with a divine responsibility, because what God has gifted you to do, He has called you to do.

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

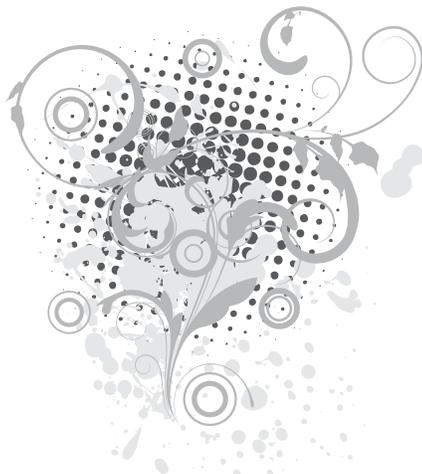
Probably the simplest definition of a spiritual gift would be this: a spiritual gift is the God-given capacity of every Christian to carry out their function in the Body of Christ.

There are basically four places in the New Testament where we can read in detail about spiritual gifts: **1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4.**

After reading through these passages you will find a few principles common about the purpose of spiritual gifts:

1. For the Body of Christ to function effectively, each individual Christian needs to contribute
2. Every part of the Church Body is essential to the well-being of the Body of Christ
3. Spiritual gifts are given to the individual to benefit the entire Body

Read **1 Corinthians 12** and **Romans 12:3-8** to get a good "feel" for the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts.



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WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The Apostle Paul addresses the presence of spiritual gifts in three main sections of Scripture: **Romans 12**, **1 Corinthians 12**, and **Ephesians 4**. Peter also verifies their existence in **1 Peter 4:10**. These sections of Scripture provide the following understanding:

All Christians have been given at least one spiritual gift. The purpose of a spiritual gift is twofold: (1) to unify Christians in their faith and (2) to produce both numerical and spiritual growth within the Church. We're to use these gifts out of love for one another and in service to one another.

We don't choose which gifts we receive. God bestows them upon us through the work of the Spirit. Just as we don't have a say in the color of our eyes or how tall we are, we can't select our own gifts. They're truly "gifts" given to us at the will of the Spirit.

Spiritual gifts aren't natural talents. All people have natural talents—things they do well. We receive natural talents at our physical birth. Only believers receive spiritual gifts—at our spiritual birth. Your natural talents and spiritual gifts can sometimes work together but are still each a different part of your individual make up.

Spiritual gifts aren't to be confused with Christian roles. Some Christian disciplines have corresponding spiritual gifts, but the two aren't the same. God calls all Christians to be people of prayer, but some have the *gift* of intercession. God wants each of us to be merciful, but some have the *gift* of mercy. God calls us to tithe, but some have the *gift* of giving. A lack of a certain gift doesn't exempt you from exercising that role. So what's the difference? Those who have the corresponding gift usually go above and beyond the call of duty (with a sense of joy rather than obedience).

Spiritual gifts aren't the same as the "fruits of the Spirit." Galatians 5 lists the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc). These are the attitudes we strive for or they are a result of using our gifts. Paul says he could have all gifts (and no one has them all), but if he doesn't show love, he's like a noisy gong.

God gives us spiritual gifts—abilities that bring satisfaction and meaning to our lives when we use them in God's service. Put another way, gifts of the Spirit have a great deal to do with the way that God has "wired" us.

To summarize:

God's Word says that every believer can minister in some way. Each person has important work to do in the Church regardless of gender, age or education.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:10**, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Clearly our God-given abilities, skills, and passions are to be used to build up the Body of Christ and to glorify God.

Read **Ephesians 4:1-16** and **1 Peter 4:10-11** and you will have read the four major sections in the New Testament on spiritual gifts.

FELLOWSHIP SPIRITUAL GIFTS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS TO KNOW THEIR GIFTS?

For various reasons, many have played down the importance of knowing their spiritual gift. Today we're going to look at several reasons why it is imperative for every Christian to know their gift(s).

1. The prominence of spiritual gifts in Scripture. One of the ways we can measure the importance of a principle or a doctrine is to determine the amount of space devoted to it in God's Word. Subjects or doctrines which are merely implied are surely of less significance than those clearly stated. Matters mentioned infrequently should not be regarded as crucial as matters frequently dealt with. Using this standard of measurement, the subject of spiritual gifts is a vital one. We find spiritual gifts addressed or seen in most New Testament books after the four Gospels. In addition to the four central passages we looked at on Days 106 and 107, spiritual gifts are mentioned many times in the life of the new Church and believers. Spiritual gifts must be important to God who inspired the writing of the Bible and thus they should be important to us.

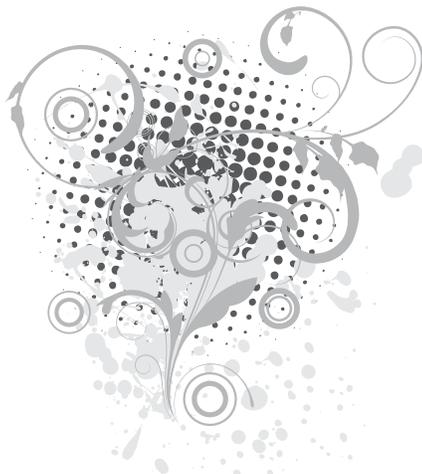
2. The elementary nature of spiritual gifts. When 1 Corinthians was written, it was addressed to those who were obviously not very mature in the faith. There were many forms of worldliness cited by Paul in this epistle. The things Paul wrote about in this epistle were not matters of the 'deeper life,' but rather the elemental truths of the Christian life. Due to the emphasis on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians, we conclude that the doctrine of spiritual gifts is important and that it is foundational and fundamental to the Christian life.

3. Spiritual gifts are a matter of individual stewardship. When Peter spoke of spiritual gifts in his first epistle, he considered them a matter of personal stewardship. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (**1 Peter 4:10**). Peter meant that just as we must give account of our use of the material things God has placed under our control, and just as we must give account of the use of our time, so we must also be accountable for the use of our spiritual gifts.

4. Knowing your spiritual gift(s) will enable you to find your place of ministry in the local church. Since every Christian has a particular function in the Body of Christ, since your spiritual gifts equip you to carry out this function, then knowing your gifts help you to plug into the ministry of your local church.

Being able to label your gift(s) is not of utmost importance, but using your gift(s) is. Knowing your gifting, however, helps you to be able to develop that gift better. You will know what to look for and you can avoid pitfalls that someone with that gift might fall into. You will be able to use your knowledge to encourage others in their gifting. You will have a point of reference for plugging into ministry where you can be most effective.

Considering what has been covered in the last three days, why do you think God gives the Body of Christ spiritual gifts?



FELLOWSHIP SPIRITUAL GIFTS

DOES IT REALLY MATTER IF I FIND/USE MY GIFTS IN THE LOCAL BODY?

In the life of the local church there are two major problems related to the subject of spiritual gifts:

1–Far too few Christians are involved in any kind of ministry. They conceive of themselves as spectators rather than participants. None of these “spectators” have the joy of being actively involved in ministry and seeing God work through them in the exercise of their spiritual gifts. Hopefully, after your first three days of looking at the Scripture concerning spiritual gifts – **1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:1-16** and **1 Peter 4:10-11** – you no longer consider “sitting on the sidelines” as a viable option.

2–Some Christians are actively involved in a ministry of the local church, but they are not functioning in a ministry which corresponds with their spiritual gifts.

Their dilemma is illustrated by the story of a certain sea captain and his chief engineer who were having an argument as to which one of them was the more important to the ship. Failing to agree, they resorted to the unique idea of swapping places. The chief ascended to the bridge, and the captain dove into the engine room. After a couple of hours, the captain suddenly appeared on the deck covered with oil and soot.

“Chief!” he yelled, wildly waving aloft a monkey wrench. “You’ll have to come down here; I can’t make her go!”

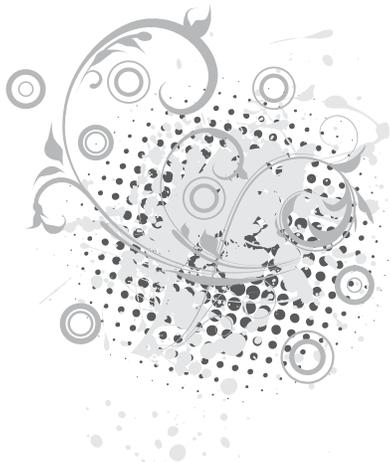
“Of course you can’t,” replied the chief. “She’s aground!”

Perhaps one reason why so many have chosen to do so little or nothing in the way of ministry in the local church is because they have seen how frustrated others are, who are striving to accomplish tasks they were never intended to attempt. The primary qualification for most tasks in the church is a willingness to try or at least too little fortitude to turn down the job.

The solution to both of these problems is a proper understanding of the subject of spiritual gifts. It is my contention that Bible expositors have often made of this subject something far more mystical, mysterious and complicated than it really is. You know that if there is anyone who can look at a matter with simplicity, it is me. My friends often remind me how simple I really am!

If you’ve never really thought about your spiritual gift, one way to get started is by taking a Spiritual Gifts Assessment. We have one on the Pinedale website if you would like to see what areas you are gifted. Go to <http://www.pinedale.org/spiritual-gifts-assessment> then click “here” to get started.

Write down your results and be ready to share!!!



FELLOWSHIP SPIRITUAL GIFTS

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TALENTS, NATURAL ABILITIES, AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The bottom line is that all we have is from God, so in that sense they are all gifts from God. Scripture, however, appears to set apart spiritual gifts as something different from talents and natural abilities. Perhaps we could say that talents are natural abilities which seem to be hereditary, to run in the genes. Unbelievers, as well as believers, have talents. Perhaps we could say that natural abilities are either talents or skills that have been learned through conditioning from the environment we lived in or training we have received. Again, both believers and unbelievers have natural abilities. Spiritual gifts, however, are an empowerment of divine origin, not a result of genetics, training, or conditioning. Only believers have spiritual gifts.

WHY DO DIFFERENT BIBLE SCHOLARS COME UP WITH VARYING NUMBERS OF GIFTS?

Some people look at the key passages on spiritual gifts (**Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4**) and limit the gifts to the ones listed therein. But even within those three passages there is discrepancy. Some people say the gifts of administration (**1 Cor. 12:28**) and leadership (**Rom. 12:8**) are the same gift. They also say service (**Rom. 12:7**) and helps (**1 Cor. 12:28**) are the same gift. The problem with that is - if you look at the original Greek words, they are all different words with distinct meanings. So part of the differences in numbering gifts is the way each word is defined.

Some people add in craftsmanship and music because of the skilled people that God brought in to help with the Old Testament tabernacle. In **Exodus 31** it says God filled Bezalel "with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts" (**verses 3-5**). From passages similar to that, people have concluded that craftsmanship and music are spiritual gifts. Others stick with the gifts listed in the New Testament. Some see craftsmanship as a vehicle to exercise the gift of service. Music may be seen as a vehicle to exercise the gift of exhortation.

Yet other people will add the possibility of a few other gifts—celibacy, hospitality, martyrdom, missionary, voluntary poverty, and intercession. If you look at the context of the verses where they are found, you will see the Greek word "charisma" (which is the same word used in other passages) interpreted as "spiritual gift" used in all but intercession. At least one person who pegs intercession as a spiritual gift, does so because he/she can't imagine it isn't—since prayer is so important. Or could it be that prayer is a vehicle through which those with the gifts of faith, healing, and miracles operate?

So you see how we have different Bible scholars with different listings of "gifts." Be careful about getting dogmatic on the number of gifts because God leaves it a little open. If you look at the list of gifts in the three main passages, no list is the same. There is some overlap but each list has some gifts not listed in the others, so no one list is comprehensive. This could indicate that there could be other gifts as well, since no one passage is complete in itself.

Can you think of one "gift" or spiritual ability that is in use around Pinedale that might not be "listed" in the spiritual gifts passages?

Starting tomorrow, we're going to list 16 spiritual gifts as found in the New Testament. We're listing these so you'll not only learn more about each "gift" but so you also can do a little research to see which one(s) might be you. As we list the spiritual gifts remember that no one person has all these "gifts" but every believer has been given at least one.

FELLOWSHIP SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Now it's time to start introducing you to 16 spiritual gifts that we find in the New Testament. As we talked about yesterday, the number of spiritual gifts can be debated so we've gone with a number that represents those gifts agreed upon by most Bible scholars.

With each spiritual gift we're going to give you the Scriptural reference pertaining to that particular gift, a quick definition and traits as seen in individuals. Also, we'll try to explain what each gift looks like in action along with ministry areas that fit each gift.

Remember, not every one of these gifts are going to be relevant to you. No one person will have all these "gifts" or traits. So some of these will interest you and you will want to dig a little deeper to learn about that particular spiritual gift. It is important to know all of them though, because one of your roles as a member of the Body of Christ is to "affirm" or recognize a gift or gifts in others and encourage that person in that gifting.

Let's look at some spiritual gifts and list some people within our church who you believe exhibit these gifts.

Spiritual Gift: ADMINISTRATION

Definition: The gift of Administration is the God-given ability to understand what makes an organization function, and the special ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry.

Scriptural Reference(s): 1 Cor. 12:28, Acts 6:1-7, Ex. 18:13-26

Distinctives of this gift:

- Develop strategies or plans to reach identified goals.
- Organize people, tasks, or events.
- Assist ministries to become more effective and efficient.

Traits of this person: Thorough, Objective, Responsible, Organized, Goal-oriented, Efficient, Conscientious

Potential Ministry Involvement: Planning teams, Ministry Coordinator, Organizer of special events, Chairperson

Spiritual Gift: DISCERNMENT

Definition: The gift of Discernment is the God-given ability to distinguish between truth and error. It is able to discern the difference between good and evil; right and wrong.

Scriptural Reference(s): 1 Cor. 12:10, Acts 5:1-4, Rom. 9:1

Distinctives of this gift:

- Identify deception in others with accuracy and appropriateness.
- Able to sense the presence of evil.
- Recognize inconsistencies in a teaching or message.

Traits of this person: Perceptive, Insightful, Sensitive, Intuitive, Truthful, Decisive

Potential Ministry Involvement: Committee/Board member, Youth Ministry, Counseling

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WHEN DOES A PERSON RECEIVE HIS/HER SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)?

Some believe we have our spiritual gifts from physical birth and tie them in with our personality traits. Others believe we receive our spiritual gifts at our new birth in Christ. Factors to keep in mind are that the Bible clearly teaches that spiritual gifts are a work of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:7-11**). A person does not receive the Spirit until salvation. Personality traits are linked to genetics, tempered by our environment. Spiritual gifting is a manifestation of the Spirit, tempered by our walk with God. If a gift lies dormant within us until salvation or such a time as it becomes manifested, does that mean an unbeliever has spiritual gifts within? How does that reconcile with Scripture about the condition of the unregenerate man?

As with yesterday, look at these spiritual gifts and list some people within our church who you believe exhibit these gifts.

Spiritual Gift: ENCOURAGEMENT

Definition: The gift of Encouragement is the God-given ability to present words of comfort, consolation, and encouragement, so to strengthen, or urge to action, those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

Scriptural Reference(s): Rom. 12:8, Acts 11:22-24, Acts 15:30-32

Distinctives of this gift:

- Comfort others to trust and hope in the promises of God.
- Motivate others to grow.
- Urge others to action by applying biblical truth.

Traits of this person: Positive, Motivating, Affirming, Reassuring, Supportive, Trustworthy

Potential Ministry Involvement: Children's Ministry, Visitation to sick or shut-in, Counseling, Greeter, Support Group Facilitator, Prayer Ministry

Spiritual Gift: EVANGELISM

Definition: The gift of Evangelism is the God-given ability to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship.

Scriptural Reference(s): Eph. 4:11, Acts 8:5-6, Acts 14:21

Distinctives of this gift:

- Communicate the message of Christ with clarity and conviction.
- Seek out opportunities to talk to unbelievers about spiritual matters.
- Challenge unbelievers to faith in Christ.

Traits of this person: Sincere, Candid, Influential, Confident, Commitment-oriented

Potential Ministry Involvement: Visitor Calling, Door-to-Door Visitation, Outreach Events, Literature Distribution, Greeter