

Talents Inventory

Stewarding gifts of providence (natural talents) and the Holy Spirit (spiritual gifts).

Section 1 - Two Streams of Gifts

God forms and equips His people through two complementary streams of gifts. One is woven into us through creation and providence; the other is given to us through new birth (salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross) and the subsequent empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Both matter. And most of the time, God delights to braid them together, so our lives become love in action for the good of others and the glory of Christ.

Natural Gifts (Providence)

All people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27) and reflect His creativity and capability in limited ways. This is part of God’s common grace in the world. Natural gifts include things like abilities, strengths, temperament, skills you’ve learned, and wisdom you’ve gained over time.

These gifts are shaped through family, life experience, learning, work, hardship, and opportunity. Sometimes you can see them clearly; other times they feel so “normal” to you that you hardly recognize them as gifts at all. But God often uses these providential strengths to meet practical needs, to build beautiful things, to bring order and clarity, to comfort others, or to solve problems with steady faithfulness.

Spiritual Gifts (Holy Spirit)

When someone becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts—Spirit-empowered abilities to serve Christ and build up His church (1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10). These gifts are not earned and not badges of maturity. They are grace—given by God’s choice—for the strengthening of His people and the advance of the gospel.

Spiritual gifts are meant to move us outward in love: to equip others, serve others, encourage others, teach and build up others—so that the whole body grows into maturity in Christ.

How the two streams work together

Most often, these two streams work together, creating unique ministry opportunities. A natural gift may become spiritually powerful when the Spirit fills it with love, humility, and gospel purpose. And a spiritual gift is often expressed through very ordinary, embodied means—conversation, planning, cooking, listening, teaching, organizing, showing up, helping, praying.

So our goal in this booklet is simple: to help you ask, with open hands and an open heart.

“Lord, what have You formed in me by providence—and what have You given me by Your Spirit—so I can love Your people well?”

Section 2 - Natural Gifts vs. Spiritual Gifts

Quick comparison:

Question	Natural Gifts (Providence)	Spiritual Gifts (Holy Spirit)
Who gives them?	God gives to all people through parents and life experience	God gives to Christians by the Holy Spirit
When do we receive them?	At birth (and developed over time)	At new birth (conversion)
What are they for?	To benefit people at a natural level	To build up the church and advance the gospel
What should we do?	Recognize, develop, and use them	Recognize, develop, and use them
Common fruit/result	Insight, skill, help, beauty, inspiration	Maturity in Christ, unity, gospel impact, love built up in the body

How do you get a spiritual gift?

Spiritual gifts are given by God's choice, not earned - He distributes them "as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11, 18; Romans 12:6).

Because God designs His church with "each part working properly," the aim is not to chase a preferred label, but to receive what God gives and steward it faithfully.

What are spiritual gifts for?

God gives gifts so the church will be built up into maturity and love (Ephesians 4:11-16). When believers steward their gifts, the result is that:

- The church is built up (Ephesians 4:12, 16)
- Christians are strengthened and encouraged (Romans 1:11-12)
- The whole church becomes more effective (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- The mission expands as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16)
- Christ is honored as we serve by His strength (1 Peter 4:11)

Are there lists of gifts in the Bible?

Yes - four key passages include gift lists:

- Romans 12:6-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30
- Ephesians 4:11
- 1 Peter 4:11

A wise word about spiritual-gifts tests

Spiritual-gifts assessments are like personality tests: helpful as a starting point, but not Scripture, not scientific certainty, and not a box to live in. So don't say:

- "I got mercy, so I can't lead," or
- "I got teaching, so I don't have to serve."

The goal isn't a label. The goal is love. Talents - whether from providence or from the Holy Spirit - are meant to become love in action.

Section 3 - Spiritual Gifts Snapshot

Spirit-empowered abilities given to Christians for the building up of the church and the advance of the gospel (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Foundational note

The New Testament speaks of apostles and prophets as foundational to the church's once-for-all deposit of authoritative revelation (Ephesians 2:20; Ephesians 3:5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Many churches therefore distinguish between the foundational office (unique to the apostolic era) and contemporary gifted roles that do not add revelation equal to Scripture.

Gift-by-gift

Apostleship: (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 13:3-4; Acts 10:34-35) A Spirit-empowered capacity to advance the gospel into new places - often including church planting, cross-cultural mission, pioneering leadership, and building ministry from "nothing" with resilience and faith.

Prophecy / Prophetic ministry: (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 2 Timothy 4:2) In the church today, this is best understood as Spirit-empowered bold, timely proclamation and application of God's Word - calling people to repentance, clarity, and faithfulness without compromise.

Evangelism: (Ephesians 4:11; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Luke 19:10) A Spirit-given ability and desire to communicate the gospel clearly and courageously to non-believers, often with unusual fruitfulness and joy in seeing people come to Christ.

Pastor-Teacher: (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-9) A Spirit-empowered shepherding gift that feeds, guides, protects, and equips a local church through Word-centered care and leadership (often connected to elder oversight).

Teaching: (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 18:24-28) A Spirit-given ability to understand and explain Scripture so that people grasp truth and can apply it faithfully in real life.

Encouragement (Exhortation): (Romans 12:8; Romans 1:11-12) A Spirit-empowered ability to strengthen, comfort, motivate, and counsel others toward maturity - helping weary believers take the next faithful step.

Word of Wisdom: (1 Corinthians 12:8; Colossians 2:2-3) A Spirit-given ability to offer practical, timely, God-honoring insight into complex situations - seeing what matters most and what obedience looks like.

Word of Knowledge: (1 Corinthians 12:8; Daniel 1:17-20) A Spirit-empowered capacity to gather, retain, synthesize, and deploy knowledge helpfully - often strengthening the church through clarity, understanding, and well-grounded guidance.

Faith: (1 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11) A Spirit-given ability to trust God confidently for what seems impossible - especially in adversity - strengthening others to pray, persevere, and attempt hard obedience.

Healing: (Matthew 4:23-24; James 5:13-16; Acts 5:14-16) A Spirit-empowered pattern of praying for the sick where God often grants healing, directing attention to His mercy and power (without denying ordinary medical means).

Miracles: (1 Corinthians 12:10; Acts 2:22) A Spirit-given capacity to call on God for extraordinary acts that display His power and confirm His presence and purposes.

Tongues: (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 13-14; Acts 2:1-11) A Spirit-enabled ability to speak in a language not learned - used devotionally and/or missionally, and (in gathered worship) governed by biblical order and interpretation.

Discernment (Distinguishing of Spirits): (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1; 1 Corinthians 14:29) A Spirit-given ability to recognize what is true/false, godly/ungodly, and to identify unhealthy teaching, motives, or spiritual influences with biblical clarity.

Helps: (1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 20:35) A Spirit-empowered ability to strengthen ministry by supporting others - often behind the scenes - through loyalty, practical assistance, and load-bearing service.

Service: (Romans 12:7; Matthew 20:28) A Spirit-given readiness to meet practical needs joyfully, making burdens lighter and enabling the body to flourish through humble, tangible care.

Leadership: (Romans 12:8) A Spirit-empowered capacity to set direction, mobilize people, and move ministry forward with humility - helping others pursue a clear vision in love.

Administration: (1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Titus 1:5) A Spirit-given ability to organize people and resources so ministry happens fittingly and orderly, with clarity, good process, and follow-through.

Giving: (Romans 12:8; Matthew 7:7-12) A Spirit-empowered ability to give generously, wisely, and joyfully - seeing needs, meeting them sacrificially, and strengthening gospel work without seeking applause.

Mercy: (Romans 12:8; Luke 10:30-37; Acts 9:36) A Spirit-given capacity to feel and express compassion for those in pain, moving toward sufferers with practical care, patience, and tenderness.

Hospitality: (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9) A Spirit-empowered practice of welcoming others warmly - making space (often in the home) for belonging, love, and gospel-centered relationship.

A brief note on a longtime Christian difference

Faithful Christians have differed on whether some of the more extraordinary/sign gifts (like tongues, prophecy, and healing) continue in the same way today. **Cessationists** believe these gifts served a unique purpose in the early church and are not expected to function in the same way now.

Charismatics/continuationists believe these gifts continue today and should be practiced—wisely, biblically, and in good order. In either case, we share the same aim: to honor Christ, submit to Scripture, and build up the church in love.

Section 4 - Self-Assessment Tools

Before you start

This section is meant to help you notice patterns - not earn a label.

As you answer these questions, remember:

- Some talents are so normal to you that you don't recognize them as gifts.
- Clarity often comes through prayer, community feedback, and actually serving, not just reflection.
- The aim is not self-discovery for its own sake, but love in action for the good of the church.

A simple prayer to begin: "Lord, show me what You have formed in me by providence and what You have given me by Your Spirit - so I can love Your people well."

Part 1 - Natural Gifts (Providence) Self-Assessment

These questions help you identify abilities, skills, strengths, and experiences God has formed in you through life.

A. What comes naturally?

1. What am I good at (even if it feels ordinary to me)?

2. What do others say I'm naturally strong in?

3. What do people consistently ask me for help with?

4. What do I pick up quickly or do with ease compared to others?

B. Where do I come alive?

5. When I serve, what kinds of tasks leave me with energy and joy (even if tired)?

6. What problems do I notice first - and instinctively want to fix?

7. What kinds of needs am I most drawn toward (practical, relational, teaching, leadership, mercy, hospitality, etc.)?

C. What has life taught me?

8. What have I learned through my work, education, hobbies, or responsibilities that could serve others?

9. What have I learned through hardship or suffering that could become comfort and help for others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)?

10. What experiences has God given me that could become ministry - parenting, caregiving, building, administration, counseling, mentoring, hospitality, etc.?

D. What fruit do others receive through me?

11. When I'm at my best, how do people tend to feel afterward? (seen / encouraged / grounded / organized / hopeful / cared for / challenged / equipped / included)

12. Where have I already seen consistent fruit when I serve?

E. Pulling it together.

If I had to name three natural talents (gifts of providence), they would be:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

If I had to name two areas I want to grow, they would be:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

Ask someone who knows you (highly recommended)

Write two names and ask: "Where do you see God using me most fruitfully to love and serve others?"

- Name: _____
- Name: _____

Part 2 – Spiritual Gift (Holy Spirit) Assessment

A brief caution about spiritual gifts tests

Spiritual-gifts tests can be helpful the way personality tests can be helpful: as a starting point. But they are not Scripture, not scientific certainty, and not something to lock yourself into.

Use tests as a prompt for prayer and conversation, then pursue clarity through service, community feedback, and fruit over time.

Optional online spiritual gifts assessments (insert links)

- 1) <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>
- 2) <https://mercyvillage.church/spiritualgifts>

Next steps (choose at least one)

- ☐ I will talk with a leader / mature believer about where to serve.
- ☐ I will try one serving opportunity in the next month.
- ☐ I will ask two people for feedback this week.
- ☐ I will take a gifts assessment (as a starting point) and then talk it through with someone.