

THE WORKING OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

The word 'workmanship' refers to more than the created product. It also refers to the degree of skill applied in crafting the product, imparting value to it. It places emphasis on the creator rather than the creation. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;"* 1 Corinthians 15:10. Paul makes it clear that he is what he is because of God's workmanship. We are God's workmanship in that He created us, He redeemed us, and He sanctifies us. We are not saved by our own works for we are God's work. As His workmanship, He has given us gifts to enable us to carry out His work in the world.

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen;" 1 Peter 4:10. As we serve one another, not only are we good stewards, but we do it with the ability God supplies so that ultimately God may be glorified.

There may be various reasons why people are not operating in spiritual gifts. Some of these reasons may include a lack of knowledge regarding spiritual gifts, confusion about the different types of gifts, not knowing one's gifts, or perhaps gifts are being suppressed because of misconceptions. There are various tests available for you to help discover your spiritual gifts. This document however will focus on explaining the different types of gifts by comparing them, setting them out individually, and showing how they work together.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

A comparison of Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 gifts

	Romans 12	1 Corinthians 12	Ephesians 4
Gifts – which?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prophecy • ministry (serving) • teaching • exhorting • giving • leading • showing mercy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word of wisdom • word of knowledge • faith • gifts of healing • working of miracles • prophecy • discerning of spirits • different kinds of tongues • interpretation of tongues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apostles • prophets • evangelists • pastors • teachers
Gifts – type?	<i>"having then gifts"</i> – natural talent or creation gifts.	<i>"manifestations of the Spirit"</i> – the gifts are expressions of the Holy Spirit.	<i>"to be"</i> – vocations. The gifts are people.
Source – who is the giver?	God the Father	Holy Spirit	Jesus
Recipients?	Every created person	<i>"To each one individually"</i> – every Christian individually	Leadership in the context of the church
Timing – when is it given?	Given at birth	<i>"As He wills"</i> – Given in the timing, manner and will of the Holy Spirit.	Originally given when Jesus ascended. The New Testament mentions enough additional people acting as <i>"the gift itself"</i> , to indicate that these vocations are a continuing ministry in the church. These gifts can then be seen as inherent gifts, given at

			birth, but over time established by Jesus Himself in the person, for it to become a vocation in the church.
Purpose?	<i>"let us use them"</i> – gifts expressed as an action or service	Situational – to meet the needs of the ministry situation, for comfort and relief, and to make the Spirit visible (God is manifested).	<i>"For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"</i> . To prepare God's people to fulfil their calling and to help them grow in maturity.
Benefactors of the gift?	Originally, beneficial to the person and the world. After salvation when used in ministry, beneficial to the kingdom.	Profit for all	Profit for the body of Christ
Effect?	Diverse effects – In church context, members of the body are served through humility and ongoing sacrifice.	Diverse effects – meeting the present need in a situation	Unifying effect – (unity & maturity) <i>"till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to be a perfect man."</i>
Special instructions	Be humble and exercise your gift.	Let all things be done in an orderly manner in love	Speak the truth in love
Our responsibility?	Be faithful and diligent with your talents to develop them (Luke 19:11-27). Remember our interdependence as a body.	Make space for the Holy Spirit. Do not quench the Holy Spirit through a lack of co-operation or grieve the Holy Spirit through sin or despise prophecies (Ephesians	Grow in maturity and stir up or fan into flame the gift you have received (Ephesians 4:13-16 and 2 Timothy 1:6)

		4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)	
One word	Talents	Comfort	Maturity

THE GIFTS EXPLAINED

There is great interaction among the different types of gifts given to us by God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus. To accomplish a certain job or task, a person will need to rely on various gifts. Think of a mechanic (person or vocation as gift), who needs to repair a broken vehicle. This person may be naturally mechanically gifted (talent) but to complete the task of repairing the vehicle, the mechanic will need to use various tools, depending on the situation, such as a wrench, screwdriver, or a ratchet (Holy Spirit gifts). Furthermore, should the mechanic work on a tractor with a hydraulic lift, he may need to rely on the experience of a hydraulic expert (someone with a different gift package). We are different parts of one body, and we are therefore interdependent.

We will now look at the different types of gifts in more detail.

ROMANS 12 – TALENTS

Throughout the book of Romans, we are made aware of different people (in that context Jews and Gentiles), coming together in one body. The passage that leads up the talents or gifts that God has given us, speaks about offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. Paul encourages the readers to renew their minds, not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to and then moves straight into the gifts or talents. The idea then is that, although we are many members (different people), we are one body and should serve each other (as living sacrifices) with the gifts or talents God has given us. Outlined below is a brief definition of the gifts or talents given by God the Father.

- PROPHECY – to declare a divinely imparted message from God.
- MINISTRY or SERVING – It involves the ability to identify unmet needs and to do practical and necessary tasks.

- TEACHING – implies teaching, giving instruction, simplifying, clarifying, imparting knowledge, or pointing people in the right direction.
- EXHORTING – means to encourage, affirm, comfort, plead, urge, strengthen, to call or invite someone, and propelling people in the right direction.
- GIVING – denotes the action of giving, sharing, contributing, imparting, committing, or bestowing generously from personal resources.
- LEADING – providing vision and directing people to accomplish the purposes of God. It involves the ability to effectively organize people and utilize resources to accomplish tasks.
- SHOWING MERCY – means having a tenderness towards and compassion for broken and hurting people, and seeking to alleviate physical, emotional, or spiritual suffering.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 – MANIFESTATION SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A manifestation is a showing. When the Holy Spirit is manifested in our lives, we make Him known or visible through us, making the invisible God visible.

The gifts given to us in 1 Corinthians 12 are manifestations of the Spirit given to us at a particular time, for a specific situation or need. These gifts are supernatural and not a result of study, training, instruction, or maturity. For instance, God wants His children to know His Word so that, among other things, we can grow in the knowledge of Him, become mature, and be able to discern between good and evil (2 Timothy 3:10-17). In contrast to obtaining knowledge through studying, a manifestation of a word of knowledge, is divine knowledge that is given when information is needed immediately and when the only way to get that knowledge is through supernatural revelation from God. Also, a thorough knowledge of the Word can equip us to discern between good and evil, but the Holy Spirit can give us supernatural discernment that is not a result of study or maturity. These gifts are inexplicable in natural terms, they are supernatural giftings.

Outlined below is a brief definition of the manifestation gifts:

- WORD OF WISDOM – the supernatural provision of divine wisdom or the right application of knowledge.
- WORD OF KNOWLEDGE – the supernatural revelation of facts or information (past, present or future), not learnt through human effort.
- FAITH – a surge of faith, to confidently believe without a doubt. This is different from saving faith.
- GIFTS OF HEALING – supernatural restoration or healing of the body, soul, or spirit.
- WORKING OF MIRACLES – supernatural or miraculous ability, abundance, might, power, strength, a mighty work etc. This spiritual gift is manifested through direct, divine intervention.
- PROPHECY – expressing the mind or heart of God, which God has spontaneously brought to someone's mind.
- DISCERNING SPIRITS – supernatural ability to see the reality or truth in a situation or motivation of a person. It is the supernatural ability to recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit or demonic spirit in a person.
- DIFFERENT KINDS OF TONGUES – the supernatural ability to speak a language that was not previously studied.
- INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES – the supernatural ability to translate or explain the meaning of something said or written in a language that was not previously studied.

EPHESIANS 4 – VOCATIONAL GIFTS

Outlined below is a broad definition of each of the vocational gifts set out in Ephesians 4. The purpose of each vocational gift is *"the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to be a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;"* Ephesians 4:12-13.

The chapter leading up to the passage about the gifts given by Jesus speaks of the mystery that has been revealed. The mystery is that believing Jews and believing Gentiles are joined together into one body of Christ, namely the Church. The gifts

given by Jesus is then specifically given to people in the context of the body of Christ so that each individual part of the body may grow in maturity, unity, and love.

While on earth, Jesus was the ultimate apostle (John 17:3), prophet (John 12:49), evangelist (Luke 4:43), pastor (John 10:11) and teacher (John 13:13). When He ascended, He gave gifts to people to help mature and equip His body.

These vocational gifts need to be contrasted with the office of an elder or deacon within a local church. 1 Timothy 3:1-12 and Titus 1:5-16 explain that elders have the oversight and authority of the local church and deacons work closely under the oversight of the elders but without governmental authority. Elders and deacons are not spiritual gifts. They are offices within the church. Through grace, Jesus bestows gifts on people to enable them to serve the church. As leadership gifts, the people mentioned in Ephesians 4 will usually serve as elders or deacons in a local church. However, a person does not need to operate in an Ephesians 4 gifting to qualify for the office of an elder or deacon. When Ephesians 4-gifted people operate trans locally, they will submit under the authority of the elders of a local church.

Each person is unique and so despite receiving the same vocational gift as someone else, the complexity of each person means that it will be expressed differently. Various factors can contribute to the uniqueness of the expression of each of the vocational gifts in Ephesians 4, such as culture, upbringing, personality, qualifications, experience, spiritual gift mix etc. Outlined below is a general definition of each of the vocational gifts.

APOSTLE

In Greek, the term apostle (apóstolos) means sent one. An apostle performs both pioneering and custodial functions:

Pioneering

- Laying foundation in churches – *“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, as a wise master builder I [Paul] have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it”* 1 Corinthians 3:10

- Sent out with the specific mission of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

Custodial

- Focuses on the ongoing integrity of the core principles of the church
- Being fathers to leaders and churches.
 - The apostle Paul refers to the church at Corinth as *"my beloved children"* – *I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."* 1 Corinthians 4:14-15.

Examples from the Bible:

- The original twelve – Simon Peter, Andrew, James (the son of Zebedee), John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (the son of Alphaeus), Thaddeus, Simon (the Zealot) and Judas Iscariot.
- Paul – *"But the Lord said to him [Ananias], 'Go for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel,'"* Acts 9:15. Paul refers to himself as an apostle in his letters to the various churches, *"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus, Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God."* Romans 1:1, also Acts 13:2-3
- Barnabas – Acts 13:2-3
- Apollos – Acts 18:27
- Junia – Romans 16:7

PROPHET

A prophet is someone who brings a message from God in complete consistency with the foundation of the Old and New Testaments. A prophet unfolds or reveals the mind of God and accurately discerns God's heart for a situation. They often help people experience the voice of God and help people grow in hearing the voice of God in their own lives. God often uses prophets to get people's attention to reveal what He is doing in a situation. Prophets habitually instruct and encourage the church.

Examples from the Bible:

- Agabus – Acts 11:28
- The four daughters of Philip – Acts 21:8-9
- Silas – Acts 15:32

EVANGELIST

In the Greek, the term evangelist (euangelistēs) means preacher of the gospel. It is someone who proclaims, preaches, announces, or otherwise communicates the good news about Jesus. Evangelism is about proclaiming the gospel of salvation.

An evangelist is often someone who travels from place to place to preach the gospel and often does trailblazing work. Missionaries are considered evangelists. In contrast to a pastor who takes special care of the flock, the work of an evangelist involves proclaiming the gospel to those who have not yet heard or made a commitment to Jesus. We often associate evangelists with mass meetings, such as Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2). However, the gift of an evangelist can be exercised towards a single individual, as we see with Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40.

Examples from the Bible:

- Philip – He is specifically referred to as an Evangelist in Acts 21:8

All Christians ought to share the good news of the gospel with others, but not all have the special gift of an evangelist to communicate the gospel in relevant terms to those who are not yet Christians. This should not discourage us as we have the Holy Spirit as our helper to share the gospel at His direction.

PASTOR

The literal translation of the Greek word 'poimēn' (usually pastor in most English Bibles) is shepherd. Some of the descriptions of the Hebrew word for shepherd (rā'â) include the following: *"to be a companion, be a friend; to care for flocks, graze; by extension: to rule, with a focus on care and concern; pastors."* A shepherd in the Biblical context is therefore a person who cares for and protects the portion of God's flock that has

been entrusted to him. Pastors are gifted in creating a safe atmosphere in the church of belonging, guiding people through brokenness, protects people and prepares them for use in God's Kingdom.

Examples from the Bible:

- James – the brother of Jesus Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18
- Timothy – sent by Paul to assist churches in setting up their ministries in pastoral care (1 Timothy 4:6-14) and he pastored the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3)

TEACHER

According to Strong's, in Greek, the term teacher (didaskalos) means teacher, instructor, one who provides instruction, implying authority over the students or followers. In the context of Ephesians 4, being a teacher means using one's God-given ability to explain God's Word and to clearly instruct and communicate knowledge with the focus or purpose, specifically to equip the church for the work of ministry, for edifying the body and bringing people to maturity in the faith.

Examples from the Bible:

- Paul – *"...to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher to the Gentiles."* 2 Timothy 1:11
- Priscilla and Aquila – Acts 18:24-26
- Luke – author of the Gospel according to Luke and Acts. He has many titles, but his historical accuracy and authorship of about a quarter of the New Testament clearly establishes him also as a teacher, explaining many important and profound principles to his readers.

MISCONCEPTIONS

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO NOT INDICATE THAT GOD IS PLEASED WITH YOU

Gifts are not a reward from God based on our maturity. We should not assume that God is pleased with us because we have received talents or flow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit from time to time.

Everyone received gifts (talents) from God the Father by grace (Romans 12:6). This means that we do not deserve them. Furthermore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in the timing, manner and will of the Holy Spirit.

Warning:

- *"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."* Romans 12:3

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO NOT INDICATE GOOD CHARACTER

We need to distinguish between gifts and character. The church at Corinth was full of gifted people, yet they were riddled with problems because of a lack of character. Paul wrote the following to them: *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."* 1 Corinthians 13:1-2

From this passage it is evident that someone could be incredibly gifted yet fall short in character. Gifts therefore do not flow from character. They are given to us by grace. Our character however determines how we will use our gifts. *"Spiritual gifts, no matter how exciting and wonderful, are useless and even destructive if they are not ministered in love."* Warren Wiersbe

The gifts of the Spirit are not the same as the fruit of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit have to do with service – it enables us to serve God and people. The fruit of the Spirit has to do with character – it is something that is produced in us as we grow in maturity. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."* Gal 5:22-23

We should be careful not to praise and follow men for their gifts. Gifts are a means; mature character is the end.

Warning:

- *"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" 1 Samuel 16:7*

SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO NOT INDICATE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

God gives talents (gifts) to people by grace. We do not deserve these gifts. The gifts are irrevocable. In other words, God does not take a gift away because of a lack of character or misuse of the gift. We should therefore not deceive ourselves into thinking that we have a relationship with God based on the presence of a gift.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7:21-23

Similarly, we should be careful not to be deceived into following people based on the presence of gifts or working of miracles. When used correctly, our gifts should always point to Jesus.

Warning:

- *"For false christs and prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." Matthew 24:24*
- *"Test all things; hold fast what is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21.*

CONCLUSION

We are part of a body and when we allow the various gifts to work in our lives, it strengthens the whole body and glorifies God. *"God has given a spiritual gift to the church in you, and you dare not keep it to yourself."* Aaron Niequist