

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual gifts has been a popular subject for Christian writers and teachers associated with Charismatic Renewal. Whilst it is generally agreed that God gives spiritual gifts to believers, there has been some difference of opinion as to how many and which gifts He bestows on Christians today.

What spiritual gifts are available? How can we receive them? How can we use them?

A close examination of spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament will reveal that there are three basic groups of gifts and that there are definite differences between these groups. The nature and the application of the gifts in each group are clearly distinct from the gifts in each of the other two groups. These three basic groups of gifts are listed by Paul in Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:11-12.

Spiritual gifts mentioned in other parts of the New Testament are either further references to these gifts or else these same gifts called by alternative names. In some cases, what has been listed by an author as another gift, is in reality an area of ministry and not a spiritual gift as such.

TEMPERAMENT, NATURAL GIFTS AND TALENTS

God does not make two people the same. People are different because God makes each person to be unique. Right from birth we each have our own individual personality, which develops as we grow older.

Each person's personality has its basis on temperament and natural gifts and talents. As we go through life, particularly in the early formative years, our personality is also influenced by environment, education, training and life's experiences.

As a result our personality will reflect certain characteristics, some of which will be regarded as strengths and some as weaknesses. There will be certain things that we can do well.

THE GRACE OF GOD

Salvation does not result as a reward for the good works that we have done. The Bible emphasises that we are saved by God's grace, that is, salvation is God's free gift to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. Whilst we are not saved by good works, having been saved we are then called to a life of doing good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

God calls each Christian to do good works and He faithfully supports us in our efforts by giving us the spiritual gifts that we need to enable us to accomplish the ministry, that He calls us to do. God's grace adds a supernatural dimension to our personality to produce spiritual gifts, that are beneficial to us for our ministry (1 Cor. 7:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Just as God worked His grace in and through the Apostle Paul to make him effective in ministry, God works His grace in and through Christians today (1 Cor. 15:9-11).

THE GIFTS

"THE MOTIVATIONAL GIFTS"

The first group of spiritual gifts that Christians should be concerned with, are those listed by Paul in **Rom. 12:1-8**. These seven gifts have become known by some as the functional or motivational gifts.

When we first become a Christian, God's grace working in us produces within us a motivation and an ability to serve God in a particular way. This inner motivation with the accompanying ability is what constitutes a motivational gift and this provides the foundation on which we can base our ministry/service.

We can operate in these gifts at will, because we possess them continuously and permanently. They are always under our control. To find our ministry, we must first identify our strongest motivational gift/gifts and then look to see how and where we can use our gift/gifts to serve the Lord.

The seven Motivational Gifts are:

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT (PROPHECY): Being able to see things as God sees them. Knowing and proclaiming God's will.

SERVING (HELPS): Rendering assistance to meet practical needs.

TEACHING: Imparting knowledge to lead others into revealed truth.

EXHORTATION (ENCOURAGEMENT): Encouraging others to grow in faith and commitment.,

GIVING (SUPPLYING, CONTRIBUTING): Generously sharing one's time, talents and/or possessions.

FACILITATING (ADMINISTRATION, LEADERSHIP): Being able to efficiently organise people and resources so as to achieve common goals.

MERCY: Showing compassion to those who are suffering.

"MANIFESTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

In **1 Cor. 12:1-11** Paul lists nine Spiritual gifts that are known as the Manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

When we have been baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5,8) we become channels through which the Holy Spirit can manifest any of these nine gifts. It should be understood that a Christian cannot claim any of these spiritual gifts as his/her own, because they are really the Holy Spirit's gifts and He manifests them just as He determines. We cannot operate in these spiritual gifts at will because we are not in control of them. These gifts are always under the control of the Holy Spirit.

God faithfully supports us in our ministry by manifesting these gifts of the Holy Spirit through us. We will usually find that because of the nature of the ministry we have, certain gifts will be manifested through us more frequently than the others, but the Holy Spirit can manifest all nine gifts through us at different times if He so chooses. As we minister, the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts through us.

The nine Manifestations of the Holy Spirit are:

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE: A word or message of God's divine knowledge revealed to the human mind.

WORD OF WISDOM: A word or message of God's divine wisdom revealed to the human mind.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS: A divine revelation to the human mind as to whether certain utterances or behaviour are of God, of man, or of Satan.

GIFTS OF HEALING: A supernatural dimension of healing is manifested to heal physical, emotional or spiritual infirmities.

MIRACLES: An impossibility becomes a reality through the intervention of God.

FAITH: A temporary extra measure of faith, which God adds to a Christian's own faith, to give the necessary confidence to carry out God's will at a particular time.

PROPHECY: Proclaiming a message of divine truth revealing God's will.

TONGUES (PUBLIC UTTERANCE): A public proclamation of words in a spiritual language.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: A response to the public utterance of tongues which can either give an explanation of the general meaning of the words previously spoken in a spiritual language or God's answer to those words.

"GIFTS OF OFFICE"

In **Eph. 4:11-12** Paul lists five "spiritual gifts", that can be referred to as the gifts of Office or the gifts of Leadership. Unlike the gifts in the other two groups, the spiritual gifts in this group are not gifts that are available to all members of the Body of Christ.

Christ selects certain people to hold office in His church and carry the responsibilities of leadership. They become Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. In fact they become the gifts - they are Christ's gifts of leaders to His church. Their responsibility is to lead the church and to train the members for ministry. Most of these will probably be engaged in full time ministry.

The five gifts of Office are:

APOSTLE: One who is sent and who represents the one who sent him. The sending forth makes him an apostle. Strengthens local bodies; pioneers churches; facilitates the ministries of others; often perform signs and wonders; acts as a representative from one body to another.

PROPHET: One who has "stood in the council of the Lord" and who is consistently called to be a mouthpiece for the Lord, so that the vision of the church is kept in line with the plans of God.

EVANGELIST: One who is able to communicate the message of the Gospel in such a way that many people will listen and be moved to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

PASTOR: A "Shepherd of the flock", who cares for the spiritual, emotional and physical well being of the people under his authority.

TEACHER: One called to ensure that God's people know and understand the Scriptures and to teach them how to apply this in their daily lives.

FURTHER READING:

(preferably in the following order)

"Why You Act the Way You Do" by Tim La Haye. (Living Books).

"Motivational gifts" by Don Pickerill. (Calvary Chapel, 204 Waterloo Rd., Greenacre, NSW).

"The Holy Spirit and You" by Dennis & Rita Bennett. (Kingsway Publications).

"A Key to Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church" by Vincent M. Walsh. (Abbey Press).

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Spiritual Gifts

