

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts

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Chapter 1. Introduction

We come to a subject which is vital to the health of every believer, and even more vital to the health of every local church. Improper interpretation of the Bible's teaching on Spiritual Gifts has caused much harm to the Body of Christ. However, I think even more harm has been caused by believers ignoring the teaching of these passages, and not earnestly seeking to know their gifts and use their gifts for the glory of their Savior and the benefit of their local church.

QUOTE - Once upon a time, the animals decided they should do something meaningful to meet the problems of the new world. So they organized a school.

They adopted an activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming, and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming; in fact, better than his instructor. But he made only passing grades in flying, and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to drop swimming and stay after school to practice running. This caused his web feet to be badly worn, so that he was only average in swimming. But average was quite acceptable, so nobody worried about that, except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of his class in running, but developed a nervous twitch in his leg muscles because of so much make-up work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing, but he encountered constant frustration in flying class because his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed "charlie horses" from overexertion, and so only got a C in climbing and a D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was severely disciplined for being a non-conformist. In climbing classes he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there..." (Charles R. Swindoll, Standing Out, (Multnomah Press, Portland, OR; 1983), p. 51)

As ridiculous as animals trying to act like other animals may sound, it is a pretty good illustration of Christians in a local church who do not know their place and their particular gifts, or who do not use their gifts as God intended.

We will be using several key passages in this study. I encourage you to read these passages everyday during the time we are studying Spiritual Gifts, and come to class prepared to discuss the truths contained therein. Many questions can be raised by the thinking Christian as he / she reads these verses. What questions do they bring up in your mind? Come to class prepared to ask questions.

The passages we will use are Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesian 4:1-16. Each has much to say on the subject of Spiritual Gifts.

QUESTION - Let's begin with some discussion this morning. Someone define the term for me. What is meant by the term "spiritual gifts?"

QUESTION - What are some examples of spiritual gifts?

QUESTION - What issues concerning spiritual gifts are especially problematic in the church today?

QUESTION - Let's get even more specific. What is the single greatest problem related to spiritual gifts that the local church faces today?

ANSWER - Their absence! The biggest problem is that so many with spiritual gifts are not using them in their local churches.

In this study I have several goals.

1. I want to do everything possible to ensure UNDERSTANDING of spiritual gifts. This will require my spending time in the Word and doing everything I can to understand the Biblical teaching, myself, and to impart that to you. It will also require each and everyone of you being in class, and participating with your questions. If I am unclear, call me on it. If I am not dealing with a question you have, call me on it. Let's ensure we all understand the truth about this great subject before we walk away from it.
2. Even more than that, though, I want to ensure that each of us recognizes the importance of spiritual gifts both to ourselves as individuals, and even more so to our church. At the conclusion of this study, I hope and pray you will have a desire to know your gift or gifts. I hope and pray that, if you do not know your gifts, you will set out upon the journey of discovering them, and most of all, I hope and pray that you will begin using those gifts for the glory of God, and for the benefit of this local church.

George Barna has done some research related to spiritual gifts. Some of the things he found include:

- 29% of all adults - and 40% of Baby Buster adults - have never heard of spiritual gifts
- 69% have heard of spiritual gifts but do not know what their spiritual gift is
- 1% of adults and 9% of senior pastors claim they have the gift of evangelism
- 1% of adults and 6% of senior pastors claim they have the gift of leadership
- the most common gift claimed by church-goers is the gift of teaching (5%)
- the most common items mentioned as spiritual gifts which are not biblical gifts are love, kindness, relationships, singing, and listening
- 7% say they have spoken in tongues
- 13% have heard of the gift of tongues but say it is not operative today

Do you see yourself in that list?

Well, we are going to take a four-fold approach to our study of this subject.

1. We will look first at the gifts themselves. This part may be a little dry, but we will look at the lists of gifts in the relevant passages, and define each of them. We will also discuss which of the listed gifts are for today, and which are not, and why we think that.
2. Second, we will spend some time discussing the importance of spiritual gifts. Why are they given, and who are they to benefit? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts in the local church, and what happens when gifted Christians do not use their gifts for the glory of God. If you can only attend one of the lessons in this study, try and be here for this one.
3. Third, we will give some thought to the subject of discovering your gifts. How can I know my spiritual gifts? There are some tools and methods, and we will share them, as well as some simple and practical ideas for discovering and using your gifts.

4. Finally, we will talk a little bit about a subject which needs to be remembered, and is related to the subject of spiritual gifts. That subject is servanthood. We are all called to be servants. We will close with that thought.

Chapter 2. What are Spiritual Gifts?

Let's define the term "spiritual gift."

QUOTE - "A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church" (Dr. Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, to be published in 1994), chapter 52

QUESTION - Do you agree or disagree with this view? Why?

QUOTE - "...a spiritual gift is spiritual in character (pneumatikon), sovereignly given by God the Holy Spirit (charismata), to others (diakonia), in the power of God (energeema), with an evident manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the Christian as he serves God (phanerosis)." (Jerry Falwell, Elmer Towns, Stepping out on Faith, p. 127)

QUESTION - Do you agree or disagree with this definition? Why?

QUOTE - "Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry that the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers and that are to be completely under His control and used for the building of the church to Christ's glory." (MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1747)

It is important in discussing spiritual gifts to draw a couple of distinctions:

1. A spiritual gift is not the same thing as a talent. Unsaved people have talents. Spiritual gifts are only for born again believers. They are provided by the Holy Spirit for use in the local church and for the edification of the body of Christ.
2. A spiritual gift is not the same thing as an ability. Abilities are learned behaviors which anybody can obtain. For example, I can play the piano a little bit. This is not a talent, because I certainly didn't come from the womb playing the piano, and it is not a spiritual gift, because there is nothing supernatural about it. I started taking piano lessons when I was seven (I think) and continued until I was in junior high school. I was in band, and have continued to practice at the keyboard throughout most of my life. This is learned behavior, not talent or spiritual gift.

And so let's consider this definition, which I believe is a good one: A spiritual gift is an ability that is spiritual in character, given by the Holy Spirit to all believers (but only to believers), for the purpose of building up other believers in the local church."

The Listed Gifts

(3 major scriptures - 1 Cor 12-13, Rom 12, Eph 4 - list and define all gifts mentioned.)

Before we look at the lists contained in each of these scriptures, it is important to remember the context. Paul wrote all three of these letters. What was his purpose in each case?

Romans was written as a general explanation of the glorious truth about salvation. My Thompson Chain Reference Bible tells me that the main theme of Romans is "The Plan of Salvation - Justification by Faith and Sanctification through the Holy Spirit." Of Ephesians, the same source tells me that Paul wrote the letter to emphasize the importance of "unity in the church." 1 Corinthians, on the other hand, was written primarily to correct error and answer questions. The main theme of 1 Corinthians is "the need of cleansing the church from false conceptions of the ministry, intellectual pride, social evils, and other disorders."

Often, the gifts of the Spirit are interpreted incorrectly, simply because this context is not considered. We must be very careful of how we interpret 1 Corinthians, especially, because so much of what Paul spoke about was ERRONEOUS teaching that he was correcting.

With these thoughts in mind, let's look at the listed gifts.

The Romans List

READ - *Romans 12:1-8*

1. Prophecy

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events"

QUOTE (Barnes) - This word properly means, to predict future events; but it also means, to declare the Divine will; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence men. Its first meaning is to predict or foretell future events; but as those who did this were messengers of God, and as they commonly connected with such predictions instructions and exhortations in regard to the sins, and dangers, and duties of men, the word came to denote any who warned, or threatened, or in any way communicated the will of God.

QUOTE (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown) - that is, of inspired teaching (as in *Acts 15:32*). Anyone speaking with divine authority, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future, was termed a prophet (*Exodus 7:1*).

QUOTE (People's New Testament Notes) - To prophesy was to speak by inspiration. As the early church did not yet have the New Testament, many were thus inspired to speak.

There is an aspect of the gift of prophecy which is clearly not for today, as it was a foundational gift. (More on this later). Prophecy contained the element of "foretelling" the future by divine inspiration. This is no longer needed, as we have the completed word of God. There is also the element of prophecy, though, that consists of "forth-telling" the Word of God. Some believe that this part is still in effect today. There are those who proclaim the Word from the pulpit regularly. Are they prophets? Perhaps. However, the gift of prophecy also seemed to always include providing a message that was directly inspired by God, and that is not what is done today. We have God's completed inspiration in Scripture, and there is no further direct inspiration of new truths. So it would seem that prophecy is not for today.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

Note that prophecy is taught in that verse as an Old Testament activity, seemingly replaced by teaching in the New Testament.

2. Ministry

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

Greek - diakonia, from which we get our word DEACON.

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "service, ministering, esp. of those who execute the commands of others"

QUOTE (Barnes) - This word properly means service of any kind, *Luke 10:40*. It is used in religion to denote the service which is rendered to Christ as the Master. It is applied to all classes of ministers in the New Testament, as denoting their being the servants of Christ; and it is used particularly to denote that class who, from this word, were called deacons, i.e. those who had the care of the poor, who provided for the sick, and who watched over the external matters of the church.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown see this as "administering of the temporal affairs of the Church (*Acts 6:1-3*)."

It is interesting that ministry is listed as one of the gifts. We often tend to think, as did the Corinthians, of the more spectacular things when we think of Spiritual Gifts. Yet, ministry is mentioned here by Paul, and may be one of the most important gifts of all. It is a somewhat all encompassing gift, and it could be said to include the others.

QUOTE - "Ministry is service of all kinds. It is the practical application of the Word of God to daily living. It is voluntary service in contrast with bondservice." (Phillips, *ibid.*, pg. 194)

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

3. Teaching

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - We discussed the gift of prophecy. How is the gift of teaching different from that gift?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

Greek - *didasko*, from which we get the word *didactic*.

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses, to be a teacher, to discharge the office of a teacher, conduct one's self as a teacher, to teach one, to impart instruction"

QUOTE (Barnes) - This word denotes those who instruct, or communicate knowledge.

QUOTE - "The teacher is the man who studies the Bible diligently, comparing scripture with scripture, using sound methods of exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, analysis and synthesis, and who edifies others with the fruits of his efforts." (Phillips, *ibid.*)

This gift primarily differs from prophecy in that prophecy always seems to involve direct inspiration of new truth from God, where teaching involves handling the Word of God accurately and honestly, and proclaiming the already inspired truth contained therein.

Where prophecy is believed to be a foundational gift (more on this later) and therefore NOT for today, teaching is a vital gift for today's local churches.

Paul did not tell Timothy to prophesy, but to teach and preach the Word - cf. *2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; 4:1-4*

4. Exhortation

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

Chapter 2. What are Spiritual Gifts?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

Greek - parakaleo, from which we get one of our favorite names for the Holy Spirit - the One called alongside to help.

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "to call to one's side, call for, summon; to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort; to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort."

QUOTE (Barnes) - This word properly denotes one who urges to the practical duties, of religion, in distinction from one who teaches its doctrines. One who presents the warnings and the promises of God, to excite men to the discharge of their duty. It is clear that there were persons who were recognised as engaging especially in this duty, and who were known by this appellation, as distinguished from prophets and teachers.

QUOTE (People's New Testament Notes) - He whose peculiar strength was to encourage feeble saints, and to stir up Christians to duty.

QUOTE - "Exhortation is most frequently addressed to the conscience and the heart, whereas teaching is more often addressed to the mind." (Phillips, *ibid.*, pg. 195)

There are different aspects to this gift, I think:

- a. There is the ability to comfort and encourage other believers, especially in times of need or pain.

QUESTION - Have you known anybody like this? Do you have examples of people you think had / have this gift?

The gift of exhortation is the ability to come alongside someone in need of help, and give them the encouragement and comfort they need.

- b. There is the ability to motivate others to action. I've heard it described as the ability to stir people up, like a person can stir glowing embers with a poker and turn it in to a roaring flame.

Have you ever known an individual who could just motivate people to action? I can think of preachers I've known who were spectacular at teaching, or distilling of truth in an understandable way, but were not as good at motivating to action. I can think of others who were fabulous motivators, too. The gift of exhortation is the ability to come alongside believers, and exhort them to action - to motivate them into higher levels of service for God.

5. Giving

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

No magic about this, it means giving. However, the person who gives their tithe and nothing more does not have this gift. The person who grumbles at the idea of giving to Christ's work does not have this gift. The person with the gift of giving is the one who WANTS TO GIVE and wants to give as much as is possible! He or she gives CHEERFULLY (hilariously, as the Greek indicates), and seeks ways and means to give ever more.

QUOTE - (Waldo Weaning) There are three levels of giving -

- a. You have to (law)
- b. You ought to (obligation)
- c. You want to (grace)

Those who have the gift of giving, WANT to give abundantly to the work of Christ. Sadly, though, most Christians are not exercising this gift.

ILLUS - Martyn Lloyd-Jones told a story about a farmer who went into the house one day to tell his wife and family some good news. "The cow just gave birth to twin calves, one red and one white," he said. He continued, "We must dedicate one of these calves to the Lord. We will bring them up together, and when the time comes, we will sell one and keep the proceeds and we will sell the other and give the proceeds to the Lord's work." His wife asked him which he was going to dedicate to the Lord. "There's no need to bother about that now," he replied, "we'll treat them both in the same way, and when the time comes, we'll do as I say." A few days later, he entered the kitchen looking unhappy. "What happened?" his wife asked. "I have bad news," he replied. "The Lord's calf is dead."

6. Ruling

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "to be over, to superintend, pre-side over"

QUOTE (Barnes) - This word properly designates one who is set over others, or who presides or rules, or one who attends with diligence and care to a thing. In *1 Thessalonians 5:12*, it is used in relation to ministers in general: "*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord.*" In *1 Timothy 3:4,5,12*, it is applied to the head of a family, or one who diligently and faithfully performs the duty of a father: "*One that ruleth well his own house.*" In *1 Timothy 5:17*, it is applied to "elders" in the church: "*Let the elders that rule well,*"

QUOTE (Barnes) - The prevailing sense of the word, therefore, is to rule, to preside over, or to have the management of.

QUOTE (Robertson's Word Pictures) - "The one standing in front" for which see *1 Thessalonians 5:12*.

Some people just naturally seem to have the gift of administration, or ruling. They are born leaders. People follow their leadership, almost without thinking.

ILLUS - Rick Warren, in his fabulous book entitled "The Purpose Driven Life" gives a simple test for determining whether you have this gift. He says to simply look over your shoulder. Is anybody following? If not, you don't have this gift.

7. Showing Mercy

QUESTION - Can someone define this gift for me?

QUESTION - Is this a gift that is in the church today?

QUESTION - Do you know anybody in our church that you think might have this gift?

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "to have mercy on, to help one afflicted or seeking aid, to help the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched "

ILLUS - David showed this gift of mercy with Mephibosheth. Read the story sometime in *2 Samuel 9*. The parable of the good samaritan gives another example of this gift Read about it sometime in *Luke 10:30-37*.

To sum up the list of gifts in Romans, we can see that there are seven gifts listed. All but one (prophecy) are relevant to us today. Do you see yourself in the list? Do any of these gifts ring true in your life?

The Corinthians List

READ - *1 Corinthians 12:1-31*

Remember that we emphasized earlier in this study the importance of considering Paul's context. Why was he writing? In *1 Corinthians*, he is primarily writing to CORRECT ERROR. The Corinthian church was a messed up fellowship, with believers acting out of selfish motivation, and seeking pre-eminence and glory for themselves in the assembly. This selfish attitude had spilled over into their understanding of spiritual gifts, and so they were seeking what they considered the best gifts, so they could proclaim, "Look at me, I have the gift of..."

Paul did a couple of things in this passage. First, he redefined the "best gifts." He taught the Corinthians that they were messed up about that, and the things they thought best were not really best. He also gave some wonderful and powerful thoughts about WHY we have the gifts in the first place. We'll discuss that in more detail later in this study, but for now it is important to know that this passage is more about WHY we have spiritual gifts, and HOW we use them, than it is about what they are.

There are 13 gifts mentioned in this passage, and only a few of them are for today. Let's briefly define them.

1. Word of Wisdom

Wisdom differs from knowledge in that wisdom is more about the application of knowledge. It is more like the difference between book learning and horse sense. Those supernaturally gifted in applying the truths of scripture to the circumstances of life have this gift.

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, inasmuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? (Matthew 13:54)

There is a certain amount of wisdom that is available to all believers. If you are struggling with the application of scripture truth to your life, you can ask for help in that area! *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)*

QUESTION - Beyond that which is available to all believers, though, is the gift of a "Word of Wisdom." Do you know anybody who you believe has this gift today?

2. Word of Knowledge

This refers to supernatural insight into the truths of God, or doctrinal things. Paul demonstrated this gift in his understanding of God's truth which he shared in his letters.

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words (Ephesians 3:3)

Certainly there is an aspect of this gift that, at least in Paul's day, involved direct revelation from God. As we will see when we discuss the temporary nature of some of the gifts, this aspect is not for today. There is no need for direct revelation from God now, because we have the completed Bible. However, the ability to understand and grasp the facts of scripture is still evident to an extraordinary degree in some believers today. It is possible that such believers have this gift.

3. Faith

All Christians have a measure of faith. It is impossible to be saved apart from it!
For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

This gift of faith, though, is probably an unusual measure of trust in God beyond that exercised by most Christians.

4. Healing

The ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to heal diseases and even to raise the dead.

QUESTION - We do not believe this gift is for today, for a variety of reasons which we will describe. What can we say, though, about those who claim this gift today? Benny Hinn claims it. Ernest Angley claims it. Do they have the gift of healing?

ANSWER - The gift of healing is seen in this verse, which describes the gift of healing in Peter's life - *Acts 5:15-16*. This explanation of the gift of healing as demonstrated by Peter, stands in stark contrast to what many call the gift of healing today. The simple truth is, the gift of healing was temporary, and is no longer being given by the Holy Spirit.

The gift of healing was a temporary sign gift, meant to authenticate the Messiah and His apostles at the formation of the church. We no longer come into a new area, as the apostles did, with no authentication. We have the Bible, and come proclaiming its truth. They had no such thing, and needed something to authenticate their ministry.

This gift is one that was considered the sign of an apostle - a sign gift. cf. *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (2 Corinthians 12:12)*

QUOTE (MacArthur Study Bible, pg. 1747) - "Some people feel that healing should be common and expected in every era, but this is not the case. Physical healings are very rare throughout the OT record. Only a few are recorded. There was never a time before the coming of Christ when healings were common. Only in His lifetime and that of His apostles was there a veritable explosion of healing. This was due to the unique need to accredit the Messiah and to authenticate the first miracles of the gospel. Jesus and His apostles temporarily banished disease from Palestine, but that was the most monumental era of redemptive history and called for such authentication. To normalize healing would be to normalize the arrival of the Savior. This gift belonged to the sign gifts for that era only. The gift of healings were never used solely for bringing people physical health. Paul was sick but never healed himself or asked another human to heal him. His friend Epaphroditus was near death (*Philippians 2:27*), and Paul did not heal him. God intervened. When Timothy was sick, Paul did not heal him, but told him to take some wine (*1 Timothy 5:23*). Paul left Trophimus "sick at Miletus" (*2 Timothy 4:20*). Healings were not the everyday norm in Paul's ministry, but did occur when he entered a new region, e.g., Malta, where the gospel and its preacher needed authentication (see *Acts 28:8,9*). That healing was the

first mention of healing since the lame man was healed in Lystra (*Acts 14:9*) in connection with the arrival of Paul and the gospel there. Prior to that, the nearest healing was by Peter in *Acts 9:34*, and the resurrection of Tabitha in *9:41*, so that people would believe the gospel Peter preached (*9:42*).

And so, the gift of healing is not for today. It was a sign gift that vanished with the apostles.

QUESTION - If it is true that the gift of healings is not for today, then what is the correct Biblical understanding of healing? Does God heal today? What is the Bible-believing Christian's response to disease and injury? How does one seek healing in 21st century America?

ANSWER - While there is no gift of healing today, HEALING is possible today. We as believers are told to pray for healing. The formula for New Testament Christians with regard to healing is given in *James 5:13-15* - *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

We could all point to examples of people we know who have been healed due to the power of prayer working in their behalf. God still heals. He just doesn't use the gift of healings in the lives of His people to do it today.

5. Working of Miracles

QUESTION - What do you think this gift involved?

This could include several things, but all of them demonstrations of supernatural power or ability. It might include exorcising of demons, inducing physical disability, or even death. Some verses:

So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. (Acts 19:12)

And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. (Acts 13:11)

And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (Acts 5:5)

QUESTION - Is this gift for today?

ANSWER - No. This gift, like healing, was a sign gift that vanished with the apostles.

6. Prophecy

We defined this earlier.

7. Discerning of Spirits

QUESTION - What is this gift?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary defines this as "the gift to differentiate the Word of God proclaimed by a true prophet from that of a satanic deceiver."

(If any of the Corinthians possessed this gift, it was not being practiced!)

QUOTE (MacArthur Study Bible) - "Christians with the gift of discernment have the God-given ability to recognize lying spirits and to identify deceptive and erroneous doctrine."

The ability to discern truth from error is needed in every local church, and in every believer's life.

ILLUS - Paul demonstrated this gift in *Acts 16:16-18*.

QUESTION - Is this gift for today?

ANSWER - I believe it is, although with the completion of the Word of God, perhaps it has a slightly different mode of operation than it did before that completion.

A certain measure of discernment is available to all believers. John said, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" (1 John 4:1)

Knowledge of the Word of God provides a measure of discernment to believers today, as it did in Berea long ago: *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* (Acts 17:11)

Another excellent scriptural reference on this subject is *Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.* (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22), which teaches us to never look down at the proclamation of God's Word (prophesyings), but to always exercise discernment in what we take away from that proclamation. We need to PROVE or TEST all things we hear. We need accept and act upon that which is good, and turn away from all that which is not. This is exercising discernment.

And so, all believers should cultivate discernment in their lives, but apparently, some are gifted with an unusual measure of this ability.

8. Diverse kinds of tongues

QUESTION - What was this gift?

QUESTION - Is this gift for today? Support your answer.

This gift was a foundational sign gift, just like healings and miracles. It was given to authenticate the ministry of the apostles, and has since vanished.

READ - *Acts 2:1-12*. This is the best description of this gift.

QUESTION - Let's brainstorm this a little bit. Tell me what thoughts about the gift of tongues come to your mind after reading *Acts 2:1-12*.

Notice that the gift involved NORMAL and KNOWN languages. (*Acts 2:6, 8-11*) There was nothing unknown about the languages.

QUESTION - Now notice a problem in *1 Corinthians 14*. Scan down through the chapter in your King James Bible, and you will see over and over the phrase "unknown tongue," which seems to lend credibility to the view that these were mystical, heavenly, previously unknown languages. Notice particularly *vss. 2, 4, 13, 14, 27* If these were known languages, how do we explain this phrase "unknown tongue" in our Bibles?

ANSWER - There was nothing unknown about these languages, although they may have been unknown to those present in the particular assembly where they were spoken. The Greek word used here is GLOSSA, which simply means (according to Strongs) "the tongue, a member of the body, an organ of speech; the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations." Other than this passage in *1 Corinthians 14*, there is no other reference in scripture that would make us think these were mystical or "unknown" tongues. They were the languages of known people groups then on the earth. The translators of the King James Bible added the word "unknown" to describe the gift of tongues, but it must be recognized that this word is in italics in your King James Bible, meaning it does not exist in the Greek, but was added by the translators indicating they believed it was implied. When you read it, understand it to

Chapter 2. What are Spiritual Gifts?

mean "unknown to those in the local assembly, but not unknown to the world of earthly languages." An even simpler translation might have been "foreign" rather than "unknown."

The Corinthian church had elevated this gift, no doubt because of its fantastic nature, to first place. They used it (as many do today) as a sign of spirituality. You needed the gift of tongues or you weren't with it! However, Paul corrects this error in *1 Corinthians 13-14*.

Paul, in those two chapters:

- a. Elevates prophecy above tongues, because prophecy edifies the church, while tongues does not.

READ - *1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 18-19, 39*

- b. Reminds of the priority of love over all the gifts, and chastises the Corinthians believers for a desire to elevate themselves through fantastic gifts, rather than the church through service gifts.

READ - *1 Corinthians 13:1*

- c. Regulates the use of this gift in the church. READ - *1 Corinthians 14:27-34*

- d. REMINDS THEM THAT THIS IS A TEMPORARY SIGN GIFT, GIVEN SPECIFICALLY TO AUTHENTICATE THE MINISTRY TO JEWISH PEOPLE - READ - *1 Corinthians 14:21*

- e. TOLD THEM PLAINLY THAT THE GIFT OF TONGUES, AND OTHER SIGN GIFTS, WERE TEMPORARY AND WOULD CEASE - READ - *1 Corinthians 13:8-12*.

And so, tongues was a temporary gift, not to be seen in the church today, as its stated purpose is not relevant to today. We have the Bible to authenticate our ministry and message, wherever we go.

9. Interpretation of tongues

During that brief time in history where the gift of tongues was being practiced in churches (only valid when unbelievers were present), there was a need for interpretation of the message to the believers who were present. That was this gift of interpretation of tongues. It vanished with the gift of tongues and is no longer valid today.

10. Apostles

That group of men who saw Jesus Christ face to face and laid the foundation of the church.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (Ephesians 2:20)

In a secondary and lesser sense, the term refers to messengers of the church, such as Barnabus: *Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, (Acts 14:14)*

There are no apostles today.

11. Helps

This is the same gift as the gift of ministry mentioned in Romans.

12. Governments

This is the same as the gift of administration or "ruling" mentioned in Romans.

The Ephesians List

READ - *Ephesians 4:1-16*

In Ephesians we have a slightly different emphasis. Whereas the other two lists emphasize gifts given to local churches, this list emphasizes "gifted people" that God gives to local churches.

1. Apostles

(Discussed earlier)

2. Prophets

(Discussed earlier)

3. Evangelists

DEFINITION - (Online Bible Greek Lexicon) - "a bringer of good tidings, an evangelist; the name given to the NT heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles "

QUESTION - Is this gift for today?

ANSWER - Certainly there are those who seem to have an uncanny ability to deliver the message of salvation clearly and with power. I believe this gift is for all ages, and exists in our church today.

ILLUS - I have, on my bookshelf at home, a copy of Curtis Hutson's great book, "Salvation Crystal Clear." In this book there are sermons on common salvation texts, but the clarity with which Curtis Hutson could present these gospel truths always amazes me. Read it, and you will see an example, I believe, of the gift of evangelism.

ILLUS - While serving in a church in New Jersey, I came to know a man named John. He was a plain looking and plain speaking man, getting up in years when I knew him. He had a ministry of passing out tracts. You dared go nowhere with John if you didn't want to pass out tracts. He was unschooled, and had no training in evangelism. He would stand in the doorway of a local establishment called Cowtown (similar to our Hartville Flea Market here), and hand tracts to everybody who dared pass his way. Only heaven knows how many were saved by his humble ministry (and maybe still are being saved). John had the gift of evangelism.

It is important to note that ALL Christians are to do evangelistic work. The responsibility for evangelism is not limited to those with this gift. However, God has given such gifted individuals to His church.

4. Pastors and Teachers

Although some would disagree, I believe that this phrase refers primarily to a single gifted individual, rather than to two separately gifted individuals. The word pastor is from a Greek word meaning "shepherd" and defines a certain aspect of the office. We have already discussed the gift of teaching. I believe both of these descriptions relate to the office of pastor (or elder or bishop - terms

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used elsewhere in scripture to define the same office). Those that God gifts and provides as gifted men to His church have the gift of shepherding AND the gift of teaching.

On the other hand, we already learned about the gift of teaching. If this phrase refers to two different gifted individuals in a local church, rather than a single person, then it refers to one who has the gift of shepherding, and one who has the gift of teaching.

Chapter 3. Why are Spiritual Gifts?

READ - *Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 11; 18*

We have spent considerable time now on the listed gifts, and I hope the definitions have been helpful. Now let's turn our attention to the reason for spiritual gifts.

Perhaps we can begin with some discussion. We have touched on the answers to these questions in previous weeks, so some of this is review.

QUESTION - Why do spiritual gifts exist?

QUESTION - Who has a spiritual gift or gifts?

QUESTION - Who decides what gift you have?

QUESTION - Who is supposed to benefit from your spiritual gift?

QUESTION - What are some results when Christians properly and faithfully exercise their spiritual gifts?

QUESTION - What are some results when Christians fail to exercise their spiritual gifts?

I. Spiritual Gifts are given because the Holy Spirit wants to give them.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

It is Christmas time, as we discuss this topic, and the idea of gift-giving is on everyone's mind. Sometimes at this time of year, we preachers will use this opportunity to teach an important truth about salvation. We know salvation is a GIFT of God. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)* We will often describe the fact that a gift must be ACCEPTED or it has no value... no meaning. Certainly this is true of salvation. Although Christ's death on the cross is sufficient for all, it is only efficient for those who BELIEVE, or those who RECEIVE the gift. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (John 1:12)*

This same truth applies to spiritual gifts. You need to believe that you have a gift or gifts (because scripture is clear that you do), and you need to accept and receive that gift from the Holy Spirit, or else it has no meaning, and no value.

ILLUS - Imagine the disappointment of giving a gift that is not well-received. Those of us with family members and loved ones who lived through the depression can relate. How many times have we picked out just the right gift for that loved one, and some time after we gave it to them, we discover they put it in a drawer and never used it. I have an acquaintance who some time ago died and went to heaven. When his family went through his possessions, they found gift after gift after gift unused, still in its original packaging.

A gift is not useful unless it is used. So it is with salvation, and so it is with spiritual gifts. Notice again the emphasis in *Romans 12:6-8*. Paul makes it clear that if you have been given a gift, you should use it. Let us not disappoint our Lord by putting His gifts in a drawer where they will be found someday, unwrapped and unused.

What wonderful truths - we are saved because God loves us and wants to GIVE us salvation! We are gifted because God loves us and wants to GIVE us spiritual gifts.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matthew 7:11)

Our God is a God who gives. We need to show our gratitude by accepting and using His gifts.

II. Spiritual Gifts are given to every Christian.

... God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3b)

...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (1 Corinthians 12:7b)

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

These verses do not require a lot of explanation. They are easy to understand. For some reason, though, we struggle to accept them.

These verses make it clear that I HAVE A SPIRITUAL GIFT!

These verses make it clear that YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL GIFT.

QUOTE - At the moment of salvation when the believing person is baptized into the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit gives to every believer one or more gifts, God-given abilities for service as He chooses (1 Cor. 12:11). (The Constitution, Doctrinal Statement and Position Statements of Scofield Memorial Church, As Amended to December 18, 1995.)

The only way a Christian could possibly exist who does not have a spiritual gift would be for the Word of God to be erroneous. And we know that is not true. Every word of scripture is true, accurate, and without error.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

You believe that in regards to salvation - believe it also in regards to spiritual gifts.

...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (1 Corinthians 12:7b)

By the way, ladies, that includes you. The Greek translated "every man" in our King James Bibles simply means "everyone" or "each one." Ladies, you too have a spiritual gift or gifts.

You have one or more gifts, Christian. You may accept and use them as God intended, or you may put them in a drawer. Your choice has consequences, but it is YOUR CHOICE. What will you do with the gift or gifts you have been given?

III. Spiritual Gifts are ALL important.

READ - 1 Corinthians 12:11-27

Paul uses a metaphor of the human body here to point out how important each member is. There is no part of the body that we can eliminate without pain and loss. So with spiritual gifts. God knows what He is doing, and He has provided just what is needed in the local church. To remove any of the gifted individuals that He has placed here (that means you and I), is to cause pain and loss.

ILLUS - In the movie Amadeus, a wonderful movie about the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, there is a scene where Mozart's supposed arch enemy Antonio Salieri is describing the perfection of Mozart's music. Of this particular song, Salieri says, "Displace a single note, and there would be diminishment. Displace a single phrase, and the structure would fall." (By the way, Antonio Salieri is depicted in this movie as the cause of Mozart's mysterious death at a young age. There is no evidence of this, however, and most scholars do not believe Salieri had any hand in Mozart's death.)

Just as every note is required in a piece of music, so every gift is required in local church! Displace any of it, and there is diminishment in God's work!

QUESTION - Let's discuss this for a moment, using Paul's metaphor of the body. Somebody tell me a part of the body that we can dispense with. What parts are unnecessary?

ILLUS - Some might think the appendix unnecessary. For years doctors removed it without concern, thinking it a remnant of evolution and therefore unused. However, according to Scientific American, "... although scientists have long discounted the human appendix as a vestigial organ, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that the appendix does in fact have a significant function as a part of the body's immune system. The appendix may be particularly important early in life because it achieves its greatest development shortly after birth and then regresses with age." Scientists have come to realize that it, too, has a purpose.

ILLUS - Some might think the big toe an unimportant part of the body, but ask someone who has lost one and had to learn to walk all over again.

ILLUS - I can remember a time when I worked in construction, and was building a pole barn in the brutal dead of winter. We did things the hard way back then, with hammers and nails. We did not have access to the pneumatic nailers used today. I was attempting to nail T111 sheeting on the side of the barn, and in order to handle the nails had to remove my gloves. My hands were so frozen that I could not feel a thing. The only way I knew I was smashing my thumb with the hammer was by the spurts of blood that would appear periodically on the siding! Once my hands warmed up, though, I sure knew. That thumb really started talking to me.

Paul's example is perfect - there is no part of the body that we can discard without pain and loss. So with spiritual gifts. However God has gifted you, your gift (and therefore you, yourself) are VITAL to this body of Christ. You are the answer to a particular need here. Your gift is indispensable, whether it is a flashy public gift, or a quiet humble gift meant to function behind the scenes. All gifts are important.

IV. Spiritual Gifts are a stewardship.

(i.e. I believe we will give account for their use.)

READ - *Matthew 25:14-29*

For sake of time we will not delve deeply into this scripture, but simply notice a main point - you and I are responsible for that which we have received. There is a day of reckoning (*vs. 19*). There will be a day, I believe, when Jesus will ask of us how we used the gifts He gave us.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Are you using the spiritual gift(s) that the Holy Spirit has given you? Are you using it in this local church? I believe scripture is clear. We will answer that question at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

There is a verse that makes this extremely clear with regard to one particular gift - *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (James 3:1)* The word translated "master" refers to one who teaches, or in the context of spiritual gifts, has the gift of teaching.

And so, we are responsible for how we use the gifts God has given us. Spiritual gifts are a stewardship. They are given for us to USE, not to view on a shelf.

... For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required... (Luke 12:48)

(NOTE that there is no guarantee of how long you will be able to use your spiritual gift. eg - football players who get old - preachers who lose their voice, etc. We need to use the gift NOW, for there is no guarantee of tomorrow.)

V. Spiritual Gifts are given for the good of the local church.

A. When exercised, they build the Body of Christ.

You will personally benefit and be built up in your relationship with Christ when you exercise the gift(s) given to you. However, this is the side effect. The actual purpose of the gift is made clear in *1 Corinthians 12:7*, *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

1. My preaching and teaching requires study of the Word of God, which greatly benefits me. But that personal benefit is not the reason for the gift.
2. A person who gives to the work of God in the United States receives benefits in the form of tax breaks. But that personal benefit is not the reason for the gift.
3. The encourager, who takes time to encourage and build up others is himself / herself built up in his faith, but that is not the purpose for the gift.

B. When ignored, they weaken the Body of Christ.

Just as you will suffer personal benefit from exercising your gift, you will also suffer personal loss through not exercising it.

1. You will find yourself convicted by the Holy Spirit.
2. You will possibly find the gift removed.

ILLUS - In the parable of the talents, the master took the talent away from the one who did not use it wisely.

ILLUS - I used to play an instrument called an oboe. I actually played it quite well, and wish that I could play it today. Recently a friend who is a music teacher handed me one he had lying around, and I found to my dismay that I had lost every bit of ability with it. I could not even remember how to hold it!

However, the benefit of spiritual gifts is to the local church, and not primarily to the holder of the gift. Similarly, the loss when the gift is ignored is a loss to the local church, rather than to the holder of the gift. It is critical that we understand this key concept about spiritual gifts. They are given to benefit the church, not the holder. You have a gift because you are the answer to a need in this local church. If you exercise that gift, this local church is built up, and the work of Christ is done here as He intended. If you do not exercise that gift, then a need for which you are the solution is not being met, and this local church suffers harm and loss.

You are the solution to a need in this church. You and the spiritual gifts you possess are intentional. You are here because you are needed here. You are here because God has a job for you to do here.

When Christians do not exercise their spiritual gifts, many adverse things happen in the local church. Let's think of a few:

1. Things do not get done.
2. People do not get saved.

3. Those who are not gifted, but have the heart of service, jump in and do more than their share.
4. A disproportionate amount of work is done by just a few people. This is the case in too many churches today, and the reason is simply that Christians are not exercising their spiritual gifts.
5. Good Christians who are doing more than their share of work in local churches get burnt out and then they drop out.

ILLUS - I have a problem with an incident in the life of Jesus. It is the story of Mary and Martha in *Luke 10:38-42*. You remember it, I'm sure. Jesus came to dinner at their home, and Martha was running around fixing and preparing. She was, as Luke put it, "cumbered about much serving" while her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet, rapt with attention, and allowed Martha to do all the work. When Martha complained to Jesus about this, He seems to have rebuked her and justified Mary. He said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Now, I struggle with that a little bit. We have way too many Mary's in our churches today, who sit and listen and let others do all the work. Meanwhile, the Martha's are "cumbered about much serving" for a while, and then they are no longer around. I would not dare question Jesus in this incident, and readily admit that time spent in worship of Him is paramount. So please don't misunderstand me. Obviously, Martha had her priorities wrong in that setting. We all need to be like Mary, and worship Christ always. We also need to exercise our spiritual gifts, so that none are "cumbered about much serving" to the detriment of their worship, as was Martha.

Chapter 3. Why are Spiritual Gifts?

Chapter 4. What are My Spiritual Gifts?

Introduction

Having defined the spiritual gifts themselves, as well as the purpose of spiritual gifts, let's spend some time now applying these truths. It does us no good to know about the gifts of the Spirit if we do not also discover what our particular gifts are. Do you know your spiritual gifts? By the end of this lesson, I want to provide some tools and thought processes that you can employ to learn your gifts.

God wants you to know your spiritual gifts. He did not provide them as an exercise in confusion and He does not want to make it difficult for you to figure out your gifts.

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:33)

And so, let's begin with some brainstorming.

QUESTION - What are some methods you might employ to discover your spiritual gifts?

Let's look at a 6 step plan for discovering your spiritual gifts.

I. Try a simple self-evaluation

Now that we've learned what the gifts are, one method might be to simply list the gifts, and then rank yourself against the list. Simply look at each gift and rate yourself based on what you know about the gifts at this point. A "1" means the gift is weak, and a "10" means the gift is strong. A handout is provided in Appendix A which may be used for this purpose.

This method is intended to make you think about the gifts, and what we have discovered of them. Keep the results of this self-evaluation, for it may be interesting to compare the results you get using this method with the results from the other methods we will try.

II. Try a more elaborate spiritual gifts evaluation

There are several online evaluations you might use. I recommend the one at The Church Growth Institute.¹ An excerpt from this tool is included in Appendix A, just to give an example of how it works. An offline version is also available for a modest price for those who do not wish to use the online tool.

QUESTION - Let's stop and talk about the two methods we've discussed so far. Do you believe either or both of these methods will provide you with valid indications of your spiritual gifts? Why or why not?

QUESTION - What weaknesses might be inherent in tools such as these? If these are the only methods we use to seek knowledge of our gifts, what problems might we encounter?

ANSWER - Rick Warren, in his wonderful book *The Purpose Driven Life*, provides some insight into the problems with spiritual gifts tests.

QUOTE - "Spiritual gift tests and ability inventories have some value, but they are limited in their usefulness. In the first place, they are standardized, so they don't take into account your uniqueness. Second, there are no definitions of the spiritual gifts given in the Bible, so any definitions are arbitrary and usually represent a denominational bias. Another problem is that the more mature you become, the more likely you are to manifest the characteristics of a number of the gifts. You may be serving or

teaching or giving generously out of maturity rather than because it is your spiritual gift." (The Purpose Driven Life, pg. 250)

(For the record, I don't necessary agree with Brother Warren when he says that the gifts are not defined in scripture. The definitions of the words provided by the Holy Spirit have meaning, and are filled with definition. I DO agree, however, that most of the tools I found for analyzing spiritual gifts demonstrated denominational bias, though, in their interpretation of the gifts. For example, an internet search for such tools, will result in a number of sites that reflect a Lutheran perspective.)

If standardized tools and surveys are only a part of the answer, then, let's think of a few other steps we might take in discovering and practicing our spiritual gifts.

III. Search the Scriptures.

The answer to every question starts here. If you are trying to find the will of God in any area, you start with the Bible. What sayeth the Lord? Other peoples' opinions and pontifications should NEVER be consulted until you are sure of what the Lord says. Only in the light of His Word dare we consider the thoughts of man.

- The Bible is our FOOD!

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:2)

- We are told to INTERNALIZE it!

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... (Colossians 3:16a)

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul... (Deuteronomy 11:18a)

- It provides LIGHT and DIRECTION

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding... (Psalm 119:130)

And so, we gain understanding in all areas when we go to the Word of God. Spiritual gifts are just one area where this is true.

ILLUS - On a personal note, it interests me how the Word of God gives clarity and understanding in all areas when I read it consistently. Conversely, I've learned that my understanding becomes muddy when I ignore the Word. For example, my normal practice is to rise early each day and spend some time with God in His Word before I begin my day. I say NORMAL practice, because sometimes I fail at that. This past week is such an example. I did not read my Bible as consistently this week as I normally do, and I found that this impacted every area of my thoughts this week. When I am in the word of God, all things are clearer. When I am not in the word of God, all things are fuzzier.

With respect to spiritual gifts, we already started this process. We studied each of the gifts and gained an understanding of each.

As part of your discovery process, may I suggest that you continue to read and re-read the passages pertaining to spiritual gifts, and as you read prayerfully consider each gift, and whether it applies to you. (Note that prayer is a part of this step, as it is of the other five. There is no seventh step where we pray about our spiritual gifts - prayer bathes every one of the six steps.) Ask God, "Lord, is this one of my spiritual gifts?"

In addition to asking God about each individual gifts, ask yourself some questions about each gift.

1. Is this something I CAN do?
2. Is this something I LIKE TO do?
3. Is this something I AM GOOD at?
4. Is this something I HAVE TRIED and SUCCEEDED in?
5. Is this something OTHERS HAVE CONFIRMED in my life?

QUOTE - "Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others. If you think you are gifted to be a teacher or a singer and no one else agrees, guess what?" (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, pg. 250)

IV. Ask others for their opinions.

Again, NEVER DO THIS if you have not first determined what God's Word says. Christians get in so much trouble when they seek man's way, and ignore God's way. Ask God first, then ask men.

Some thoughts we might consider when asking other's for their opinions.

1. Ask Christians, only. Unbelievers do not understand spiritual gifts, and therefore cannot possibly help you with discovering yours.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

2. Try to ask the opinion of someone older and wiser than you. Although the Lord often uses the younger and less experienced, as a general rule, you should seek advice from someone older and wiser.

ILLUS - Solomon's kingdom was divided after his death. It was divided because his stupid son Rehoboam ignored the wise advise of the older men, and listened to the warmongering advise of his younger advisers. You can read about it in *1 Kings 12*.

3. Tell the person you are asking that you are genuinely seeking the will of God. Tell them that you are not fishing for compliments but for the truth.

V. Be willing to do what God wants you to do.

If you have a spiritual gift, then rest assured God wants you to use it. If you are using it, God is pleased and the church is benefited. If you are not using it, God is displeased with you, and the church is hindered.

Are you willing to do what God wants you to do? You cannot discover the will of God if you are not. You cannot accurately assess or discover your spiritual gifts if you enter the process with thoughts like, "Well I'm willing to be a helper, but I'll never teach!" "Even if I did discover that I have the gift of ministry and service, I just don't have time to exercise it." May God help us to not fall into such thought patterns, which are clearly from the flesh and the devil. Shun them. Be willing to do the will of God!

May I humbly suggest a method to help ensure you are willing to do the will of God in your life? It is really quite simple - JUST DO WHATEVER NEEDS TO BE DONE! If there is something that needs to be done, YOU DO IT. Forget for a moment the entire concept of gifts. I'm not saying to do it if you have the gift. I'm saying, do it anyway, whether you have the gift or not! When you demonstrate that you are willing to do anything God wants you to do, He will demonstrate to you what He wants you to do.

We might call this method of discovery EXPERIMENTATION. Experimenting with various areas of ministry will open up all kinds of knowledge for you about your spiritual gifts. You'll succeed at some things, and you'll fail at others. You will enjoy some areas of ministry, and you will not enjoy others. Such experimentation is valuable in your search, and it ensures that things get done in God's church, whether or not the gifted ones do their job or not. TRY IT - Is there something around here that needs done? Is there a vacant ministry, Sunday School class, nursery need? DO IT! TRY IT! EXPERIMENT WITH IT! You just might discover a spiritual gift in the process.

I believe that we have hindered this method of discovery in many of our churches. Those of us in leadership are often so desperate for help, and there are so many needs, that when a person volunteers to help, we bury him / her under the work, and never let them come up for air. Once a person says they are willing to try something, we assign that task to them for life! If it turns out to be something they are not gifted in, they burn out and eventually quit, and then they do not want to try anything else. There is another model of ministry which is finding its way into more and more churches. Those employing this approach suggest that a person commit to a given ministry for a reasonable period of time and then re-evaluate. We tried this with the choir, and I believe people were more willing to commit to the choir because it was for a given period of time. We are now in the re-evaluation period, and are deciding what to do with the choir going forward, but I believe the method works, and should be applied in other areas, as well. If you are considering a ministry, or want to experiment with a ministry in this local church, do not fear that you will be locked into it forever. State plainly that you want to try it for a period of time - 6 months perhaps, and then re-evaluate.

VI. Be willing to count the cost of the alternative.

In other words, what is the result when a believer discounts his / her spiritual gifts? If you decide that this series of lessons is for someone else, and not for you, what will be the result of that? You need to consider that result before you decide how you will respond to the truths we have presented.

QUESTION - Toward that end, let's discuss it for a minute. What will be the result to this church - New Testament Baptist Church, if a person who has the gift of giving does not exercise it?

QUESTION - What will be the result to this church if a person who has the gift of exhortation does not exercise it?

QUESTION - What will be the result to this church if a person who has the gift of helps does not exercise it?

QUESTION - What will be the result to this church if a person who has the gift of teaching does not exercise it?

QUESTION - What about the result to the individual? If I do not exercise my spiritual gift or gifts, what impact does it have on my life? What if I don't give? What if I don't help? What I don't teach? What if I don't encourage others? Does it hurt me? How?

And so, if you have a spiritual gift, and choose to ignore it, or not exercise it, then you hurt this church. You hurt those around you. Look around at your brothers and sisters in Christ. They are relying on your spiritual gifts! "Brother Bill, why the guilt? Are you trying to make us feel guilty for not using our gifts?" ABSOLUTELY! If you are

not using your spiritual gifts, then you ARE GUILTY of hindering the work of Christ, and if you ARE GUILTY, then there is no more valuable feeling than GUILT. God gave guilt to goad us into change. The wonderful thing about guilt in the Christian life is it can ALWAYS be cured. Just start doing what God wants you to do, and the guilt and guilty feelings will disappear in the wonder of His grace. Exercise your spiritual gifts, my brothers and sisters. This church needs you to do so.

There are so many needs in this local church. All of these needs would go away if God's people would exercise their spiritual gifts. (List some of the local needs.)

You see, we need you. The church needs you. Your brothers and sisters in Christ need you. None of us can do it alone.

ILLUS - In illustrating the interdependence of one another's spiritual gifts in a local church, Gary Inrig, in *Life in His Body* shared the following story: Several years ago, two students graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The highest ranking student in the class was a blind man named Overton and, when he received his honor, he insisted that half the credit should go to his friend, Kasprzyzak. They had met one another in school when the armless Mr. Kasprzyzak had guided the blind Mr. Overton down a flight of stairs. This acquaintance ripened into friendship and a beautiful example of interdependence. The blind man carried the books which the armless man read aloud in their common study, and thus the individual deficiency of each was compensated for by the other. After their graduation, they planned to practice law together. This story was related by Donald Grey Barnhouse. No believer is complete by himself, we are to minister to one another, as a family.

You have a spiritual gift. Will you use it? Will you help?

Leftovers are such humble things,
We would not serve to a guest,
And yet we serve them to our Lord
Who deserves the very best.

We give to Him leftover time,
Stray minutes here and there.
Leftover cash we give to Him,
Such few coins as we can spare.

We give our youth unto the world,
To hatred, lust and strife;
Then in declining years we give
To him the remnant of our life.

- Source unknown

Will you help?

Notes

1. <http://www.churchgrowth.org/>

Chapter 4. What are My Spiritual Gifts?

Appendix A. Resources

Spiritual Gifts Self-Assessment

To complete this self-assessment, simply look at each gift and rate yourself based on what you know about the gifts at this point. A "1" means the gift is weak, and a "10" means the gift is strong.

Table A-1.

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Ministry | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Teaching | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Exhortation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Giving | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Ruling | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Mercy | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Word of Wisdom | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Word of Knowledge | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Faith | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Discernment | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Helps | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Evangelism | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |
| Pastor / Teacher | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | |

Excerpt from Spiritual Gifts Analysis

The following shows a portion of the questionnaire used by the Church Growth Institute in their Spiritual Gifts Analysis web page. If you would like to make use of this tool, it is offered free of charge on their web site at The Church Growth Institute.¹

Make certain that you leave sufficient time to complete the analysis, which consists of 110 questions. Once you have answered all the questions, a report of your dominant

Appendix A. Resources

spiritual gifts will be provided.

Select the response that fits you best for each statement.

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | I have a consuming passion (strong desire, great concern) to reach lost souls. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 2 | I put great importance (high priority) on repentance (sorrow, regret, resulting in turning from sin). | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 3 | I believe I am very discerning (perceptive) of other people's motives. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 4 | When I speak, I desire to stir other people's consciences (make them think, convict them to act). | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 5 | I have an unusually strong desire to study God's Word. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 6 | I place great importance (value) on education. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 7 | When I do something, I like to see "tangible" results for my efforts, such as a finished project or measurable results. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 8 | If I were to teach a group, I would prefer to deal with topics rather than verse-by-verse studies. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 9 | I am willing to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |
| 10 | I am people centered; I need many relationships in my life. | Almost | Always | Occasionally | Not Very Often |

Notes

1. <http://www.churchgrowth.org/>