

LESSON 38 - GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

What Are The Spiritual Gifts And What Are They For?

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If you believe the Gospel and follow Jesus then you’ve been spiritually born again by God. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, indwells every believer, uniting us like different parts of a spiritual body, and Jesus is the head (1 Corinthians 12:12-20; Colossians 1:18). The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts (supernatural empowerments) to individuals within the Body of Christ, for the benefit of the whole, and for our common mission, as He determines (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). This lesson covers: 1) a summary of the spiritual gifts, 2) their purpose, and 3) how to embrace them.

1. A Summary of the Spiritual Gifts. The number one gift the Holy Spirit gives to believers is *Himself* (Acts 10:45). At the launch of the Church, on Pentecost in Acts 2:38-39, the Apostle Peter proclaimed, “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.*” Jesus gives us His presence forever, through the person of the Holy Spirit. Through Him, we receive all the amazing benefits of intimacy with God. After receiving the Holy Spirit, there are three broad categories of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit Himself gives to those who are His. The first category is Motivational Gifts. These are inward drives that fuel our desires, emotions, prayers, decisions, and actions. These gifts are ways God’s grace is given to people to uniquely express God’s love and build up others. I found these five: Love (the supreme gift), Faith, Mercy/Kindness, Encouragement, and Hope. You’ll likely have one in particular that’s abundant, but you’ll receive all of them to some degree. The second category is Ministry or Service-Related Gifts. These gifts are different ways that God works within believers to serve and meet the needs of others. I’ve found these eight: Leadership, Helping/Serving, Teaching, Administration, Exhortation/Preaching (encouragement to action), Word of Wisdom, Craftsmanship, and Giving. These gifts are given *as needed* to the Body, the local church, or the mission. Either the gifted person will be present, or the gift itself will be supplied to one present. The third category is Manifestational Gifts. These are demonstrations of God’s supernatural power to aid in our ministry efforts. I’ve found eight: Prophecy (the supreme manifestation), Word of Knowledge, Distinguishing of Spirits, Healing, Working of Miracles, Speaking in Tongues, Interpreting Tongues, and Divine Appointments to evangelize.

2. The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts. There are two primary reasons the Holy Spirit gives us these gifts: edification and expansion of the Church. The edification of the Church includes educating, training,

uplifting, and sanctifying it—thus making disciples of Jesus. The expansion of the Church includes growing it and unifying disciples on mission to proclaim the Gospel, be witnesses, evangelize unreached areas, plant new churches, and advance God’s Kingdom on earth. Manifestational gifts are sometimes the emphasized gifts but the motivational gifts are the most important, especially love. 1 Corinthians 13:2 says, *“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”* Service and Manifestational Gifts should also be inspired and led by the Motivational Gifts. 1 Corinthians 14:1 and 3 say, *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy... the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”* These verses show how all the gifts work together. Consider the example we just read. The Motivational Gift is foremost Love, along with Faith, Hope, Encouragement, and Kindness towards others. These inward drives are then empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Manifestational Gift of Prophecy, and then demonstrated and lived out through the Service Gifts of Helping/Serving, Teaching, and Exhortation/Preaching. All working to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others. In other words, edification. Driven by godly motivations, and the desire to serve others, God will empower us in many ways towards edification and expansion. 1 Corinthians 14:12 says, *“Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.”*

3. How To Embrace Your Spiritual Gifts. First, embrace the free gift of salvation through Jesus. Our trust in the Gospel is what causes God to adopt us and give the gift of the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. A personal, intimate relationship with God Himself is our greatest gift! So cherish this and draw near to Him, prioritize Him, spend time with Him and in His Word, and thank Him daily through worship and prayer. The more time you spend with God, the more He will change you and make you more like Jesus. Intimacy with God, and your increased desire to become like Jesus and live for His glory, will grow you deeper in all the Motivational Gifts, because they are all attributes of God (Galatians 5:22-23, Matthew 5:43-48). Next, live these attributes out. Talk is cheap. Follow the way of love. Love others as you love yourself (Mark 12:31). Die to your old sinful selfish ways and the ways of the world. Put others first. Don’t harm anyone. Bless those who curse you. Seek others’ best interests and serve them in love. Seek the Lord for an increase in your faith, mercy, encouragement, and hope, and build up others lacking in these areas. The Lord gives gifts to us freely so we can share them with others. Receive God’s mercy, forgiveness, and kindness, and then mirror/reflect that to someone who has harmed you, even if they still hate you. Seek in all ways to build up the Church and pursue its edification and expansion. Serve both the larger, capital “C” global Church and your local congregation. If you’re qualified to lead, teach, or preach, and given the opportunity to, then do so. Wherever there is need, and you’re able and qualified to serve towards that need, then joyfully serve there. If you’ve been blessed with abundance then give generously toward Kingdom efforts. Pursue prophecy and the other manifestation gifts so you can serve in an even greater capacity. The Holy Spirit will give you everything you need for the tasks He gives.

Let’s pray. Holy Spirit, thank You for the greatest gift, You. Increase my love, faith, hope, kindness, and encouragement. I’m ready. Reveal where and how I can best serve today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.