



The Gifts of the Spirit

Background

In the first of our studies on the Holy Spirit, we looked at ‘Why you should believe in the Trinity’. In this second study about the Holy Spirit, our focus changes to examine the gifts of the Spirit. It is important for us to have an understanding of these gifts because they are integral aspects of our faith, relating to the function we fulfil in the body of Christ and our spiritual growth. The Bible also tells us “*Keep on pursuing love, yet be seeking earnestly the spiritual gifts, especially the ability to prophesy.*” (1 Corinthians 14: 1) We all therefore have a calling to earnestly seek or eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, but we must also ensure that we do this with the right motives.

The Message

The Bible tells us of gifts and graces (charismata and charis). Although the root Greek word is the same, the meaning of the two words is fundamentally different. Although both gifts and graces are freely given to us from God, grace is given for the salvation of those who have it; gifts are bestowed for the edification of the church and salvation of others.

There are a few important points that need to be made about the Gifts of the Spirit:

1. There is no such thing as a ‘complete list’ of the Gifts of the Spirit in the Bible
2. Everyone has a gift (1 Peter 4: 10)
3. Specific gifts are reserved for individuals, i.e. not everyone will have the same gift (1 Corinthians 12: 30)
4. Many people may have more than one gift (1 Corinthians 14: 26)
5. Spiritual gifts are apportioned by God (1 Corinthians 12: 6 - 11, 28 - 29)
6. We may keep on desiring more gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 31)
7. We should use ‘devote ourselves’ to using the gifts we are given (Romans 12: 7 - 8)
8. People with gifts are themselves gifts from Christ (Ephesians 4: 7 - 13)
9. The hallmarks of the Gifts of the Spirit include:
 - i. Bringing glory to God rather than man - the man who had been born lame praised God not Peter (Acts 3: 9);
 - ii. Upbuilding or edifying individuals (1 Corinthians 14: 26);
 - iii. Upbuilding or edifying the church - the body of Christ (Ephesians 4: 12)
 - iv. An escalation into the Fruit of the Spirit - a consequence of the sanctifying work of the Spirit within us (Ephesians 5: 8 - 9)

“If you are led by God's Spirit, you will say that Jesus is Lord, and you will never curse Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 12: 3)

Table 1 contains a listing of all the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament. These are drawn from a variety of sources, predominantly 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.



The need for spiritual growth

All believers should grow continually and thrive - this is not something that is simply the responsibility of the leaders of our churches. It is possible for us to stop growing in our faith, and even in some cases backslide. Certainly we can remain on spiritual milk alone for all of our Christian life, never fully growing into the person that God would like us to be - or realising our true potential in Christ. We may become a people who need milk instead of solid food (Hebrews 5: 12). We may also become barren in our faith, but a sure sign of spiritual growth and maturity is the fruit that we bear. God is glorified when we produce a lot of fruit and prove to be Jesus' disciples (John 15: 7). When we begin to look at the spiritual gifts then, we should also then look the fruit of the Spirit. This is something that we will cover in a separate study that accompanies this one.

Challenges to spiritual growth

Many Christians today feel that they have failed, because time and again they have come up against barriers that inhibit their spiritual growth. If we look at the parable of the sower in Mark 4: 1- 20, we can see how Satan can all too easily prevent a seed that has been sown from growing and yielding fruit. Our heartfelt prayer should be that we will be as the 'good soil' so that when we 'hear the word and receive it', we will 'keep yielding fruit - thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.'

It is so easy to forget that we are all too human, and we make mistakes. It also takes effort on our part to be as the 'good soil'. The Bible tells us:

"So therefore, we also having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, having put off every impediment and the easily entangling sin, let us be running with patient endurance the contest having been set before us, looking with undivided attention to the Originator (author) and Perfecter (finisher) of our faith - Jesus - who, because of the joy being set before Him, endured a cross, having disregarded the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12: 1 - 2) .

How well God recognises that sin is easily entangling, and an impediment. How well He understands that without Jesus we are nothing. And when we think of the incredible price he paid for us, how can we fail to be humbled and ask for His enabling?

Aspects of spiritual growth

We should also remember that our journey of faith takes **time**. And on this journey, we realise that:

"For we now see by means of a mirror by reflection, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also was known." (1 Corinthians 13:12).



Praise the Lord that in His grace and mercy we will one day know fully, one day we will encounter Him face to face - we are to know Him as we are known by Him. The scales will come crashing down off our eyes. We should not persecute ourselves through having an unreal expectation of where we believe we should be in God. What is important is that we submit to God, and ask Him to use us. We need to be ready and willing...we need to be like Isaiah, and when we hear God asking "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" our response should be "*Here am I! Send me.*" (Isaiah 6: 8).

In these times we have to remind ourselves of God's promises. We have to speak God's truth into our heart and mind again and again until it becomes etched on our heart. We have to come before God in openness and humility - with reverence and expectation - and ask for his forgiveness and enabling, remembering that His "*mercy triumphs over judgement.*" (James 2: 13) We also have to be set free by accepting His grace. We must remember that we are not in this alone. Firstly we know that Jesus is "*the true vine, and His father the vineyard keeper. God takes away every branch in Jesus not bearing fruit, and He prunes clean every branch bearing fruit so that it shall bear more fruit*" (John 15: 1 - 2). If we trust in the Lord, through His great love and mercy He will complete the work he has begun in us.

Secondly we are part of the body of Christ. The Bible tells us that we are:

"an elect or chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that we may openly speak of the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light; you who then were not a people, but now are the people of God; the one not pitied then but now pitied."
(1 Peter 2: 9 - 10)

"It is he who gifted some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, and still others to be pastors and teachers, to perfect the saints, to do the work of ministry, and to build up the body of Christ until all of us are united in the faith and in the full knowledge of God's Son, and until we attain mature adulthood and the full standard of development in Christ. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed like waves and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, or by clever strategies that would lead us astray. Instead, by speaking the truth in love, we will grow up completely into the one who is the head, that is, into Christ, in whom the whole body is united and held together by every ligament with which it is supplied. As each individual part does its job, the body's growth is promoted so that it builds itself up in love".
(Ephesians 4: 11 - 16)



Barriers to spiritual growth

We are faced with a clear challenge, and it is worthwhile identifying the barriers to Christian growth which we need to recognise:

- **Time;**
We all lead busy lives, and quite simply it can be very difficult to spend time with God in prayer, meditation or studying His word. There may be demands on us from many different directions, whether family or work - and in some cases even from within the church. But we have to strive to be right with God, and immersed in His word.
- **Lack of confidence / self doubt;**
When we encounter people in leadership positions in church, and sometimes even other Christians that we may know, it is so easy to put them on a pedestal, and never have confidence in the knowledge that we can be used by God - and in a mighty way. We should recognise too that it is the Holy Spirit that enables us, and God may already be using us - even if we ourselves have not yet recognised this.
- **A distortion of the body of Christ;**
We have touched upon the body of Christ earlier in this study, and whilst we will not be going into this in detail in this study it is not unusual to encounter Christians who quite simply do not know where they fit into the body of Christ. If believers are not functioning as their individual part of the body in Christ, the whole church becomes dysfunctional. This may be realised in three main ways:
 - a) People simply not knowing which part of the body they are, so not doing anything;
 - b) People with a clear calling to form one part of the body trying to fulfil another part, because there are parts of the body that are missing and they are trying to compensate;
 - c) People denying the sovereignty of the gifts, and trying to do things in their own strength rather than seeking God's will for their lives.
- **Negative criticism;**
It is sadly all too easy to become overwhelmed by the lack of encouragement and in some cases negative criticism received from people in the church. Of all the areas of our life, the place where we should be free and able to be our most real is within the church. We have to take a balanced view about this...it is the easiest thing in the world to be critical, and very difficult to be constructive - one of the many consequences of a fallen world. There needs to be truth and reconciliation in our encounter with the body of Christ. We should also look upon **constructive** criticism favourably because it will encourage us in our growth, and may be one of the ways the Lord disciplines us: *"Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you."* (Deuteronomy 8:



5, Hebrews 12: 6) We live in a broken world, filled with broken people and therefore we should not expect perfection, as we ourselves are not perfect.

- **Poor communication;**

Communication is at the heart of relationship. Have there ever been times you have had a misunderstanding with a friend / member of your family / brother or sister in Christ? Have there ever been times when you have regretted something you have said? We look at communication in separate study, but what is apparent is that clear and effective communication can sometimes be difficult for all sorts of reasons. We know that *“the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart.”* (Matthew 15: 18)

- **Complacency;**

We may believe that we have reached the standard that we have set for ourselves, and see no need for improvement. We may be coasting along trying to do things in our own strength, and that this is good enough. If this is what we believe we are quite simply in denial. It is so easy for us to only turn to God when the going gets tough, and not allow Christ to make His home in our hearts when things are going well. (Ephesians 3: 16 - 18). The Bible tells us that *“Unless you are willing to take up your cross and come with me, you are not fit to be my disciples. If you try to save your life, you will lose it. But if you give it up for me, you will surely find it.”* (Matthew 10: 38 - 39, Matthew 16: 25)

- **Loss of focus;**

Read Luke 10: 38b - 42. The account of Mary and Martha. Martha had lost her focus, and forgotten or perhaps not recognised what was really important. At the time she had not *“chosen what is better”* like her sister Mary. We need to have a sense of priority and a sense of focus in our lives. There also needs to be balance: the families of people in leadership positions can often suffer due to the great demands placed upon the leadership.

- **Ignorance;**

Many Christians in their walk with God never think to come before Him in prayer and ask to be blessed by the Gifts of the Spirit. They are ignorant of their giftings. Do we seek earnestly or eagerly desire the spiritual gifts? Do we seek to understand our role in the body?

Write down other barriers to spiritual growth that you have encountered, and share with the group. Come together in discussion to consider what practical steps you could take to remove the barriers you have encountered and those listed above using the worksheet.

The premise of this study then is that there is no better place to be than in God's will, doing what God would have us to do.



Table 1 The Gifts of the Spirit ¹

	Category	Gift	Detail	Reference
1	Gifts of utterance	Apostle	From the Greek ‘ <i>apostolos</i> ’. Literally ‘one sent forth’; an envoy, or missionary. An ambassador of the Gospel. Proclamation of the gospel to an unbelieving world (Galatians 2: 7 - 9)	1 Corinthians 12: 28 Ephesians 4: 11
		Word of wisdom	From the Greek ‘ <i>logos sophias</i> ’. Expressing spiritual insight.	1 Corinthians 12: 8
		Word of knowledge	From the Greek ‘ <i>logos gnōseōs</i> ’. A revelation of knowledge about something / someone.	1 Corinthians 12: 8
		Teaching	From the Greek ‘ <i>didaskalia</i> ’. The expounding and application of established Christian doctrine. See also James 3: 1	Romans 12: 7; 1 Corinthians 12: 28f
		Prophecy ²	From the Greek ‘ <i>prophēteia</i> ’. Proclamation of a message of edification, exhortation, consolation and rebuke. Linked intrinsically with discernment.	Romans 12: 6; 1 Corinthians 12: 10, 28f Ephesians 4: 11
		Discernment ³	From the Greek ‘ <i>diakriseis pneumatōn</i> ’, distinguishing between spirits. Complementary to prophecy, and distinguishing the genuine prophet from the false. An important gift to have in times of false teaching.	1 Corinthians 12: 10, 14: 29, 1 Corinthians 2: 12 - 16
		Speaking different kinds of languages	From the Greek ‘ <i>genē glōssōn</i> ’, kinds of tongues.	1 Corinthians 12: 10, 28 ff
		Interpretation of languages	From the Greek ‘ <i>hermēneia glōssōn</i> ’, interpretation of tongues.	1 Corinthians 12: 10, 30
		Evangelist	From the Greek ‘ <i>euaggelistēs</i> ’, derived from ‘ <i>euaggelizō</i> ’, to announce good news (evangelize), especially the gospel. To declare or bring and show good tidings and preach the gospel.	Ephesians 4: 11
		Pastor - teacher	From the Greek ‘ <i>poimēn</i> ’, a ‘shepherd’ or pastor; and ‘ <i>didaskalos</i> ’. See also ‘Teaching’ above. Perhaps exemplified by Peter.	Ephesians 4: 11

¹There is a sense from 1 Corinthians 7: 7 that ‘marriage’ and ‘celibacy’ are also spiritual gifts.. They are therefore mentioned in this footnote for completeness.

²For additional context on prophecy, refer to the study on ‘Peter’s concept of Christ’.

³For additional context on discernment, refer to the separate study on Discernment.



	Category	Gift	Detail	Reference
2	Gifts for practical service	<p>Gifts of power:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Faith Power to heal the sick Power to work mighty miracles <p>Gifts of sympathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts of helping / servanthood Encouraging Contributing to the needs of others Works of mercy Ministering 	<p>From the Greek 'pistis'. This is a higher measure of faith bestowed upon believers to allow special deeds to be undertaken. Examples are given in Matthew 18: 19 - 20, 1 Corinthians 13: 2, Hebrews 11: 33 - 40.</p> <p>From the Greek 'charismata iamatōn'. Results in miraculous healing of the sick. An example may be found in Acts 5: 15 - 16.</p> <p>From the Greek 'energēmata dynamēōn'. Power to perform miracles of varied kinds - application of miraculous power.</p> <p>From the Greek 'antilēmpseis'. The aid given to the weak by the strong - special gifts to care for the sick and needy.</p> <p>From the Greek 'parakaleō'. Note that in John 14: 26, the Greek for 'Comforter' is 'paraklētos', meaning advocate or helper.</p> <p>From the Greek 'ho metadidou'.</p> <p>From the Greek 'ho eleōn'</p> <p>From the Greek 'diakonia'. We might understand this in the role of a Deacon.</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 12: 9</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12: 9, 28, 30</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12: 10, 28f</p> <p>1 Corinthians 12: 28; Romans 12: 7</p> <p>Romans 12: 8</p> <p>Romans 12: 8</p> <p>Romans 12: 8</p> <p>Romans 12: 7; Philippians 1: 1; 1 Timothy 3: 1 - 13</p>
3	Gifts of administration	<p>Administration</p> <p>Leadership</p>	<p>From the Greek 'kybernēseis'. The authority to govern and direct the local church, providing guidance.</p> <p>From the Greek 'ho prohistamenos'.</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 12: 28</p> <p>Romans 12: 8</p>

“O how deep are God's riches, wisdom, and knowledge! How impossible to explain his judgments or to understand his ways! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become his adviser? Who has given him something only to have him pay it back? For all things are from him, by him, and for him. Glory belongs to him forever! Amen.” (Romans 11: 33 - 36)