



**Your
Spiritual Gifts
Revealed**

Don Merritt

Introduction

This study is a compilation of bible study and a series of blog posts. I have put them together for a twofold purpose, first to provide a simple document for personal study on the subject of spiritual gifts that is both concise and simple. Second, I put this together as an accompaniment for anyone who might be teaching a small group or class on spiritual gifts. If you use this for a class of some kind, then this could be the “leader’s guide” or as a background piece for additional reading. I am also posting a separate document that contains class handouts.

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All blessings to you in Christ!

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To Begin With...

I've been wanting to write about spiritual gifts for quite some time, but I keep putting it off; I'm not sure why, but I have. Overdue maybe, I've resolved to get this done... the only question is, how do I approach the subject?

Writing a study of spiritual gifts is a tricky proposition, after all we're dealing with something that seems... well... "out there." We live in times that are marked by scientific accomplishments and attitudes, and quite honestly, spiritual gifts and manifestations don't seem very scientific. In a time when people scoff at the notion of a god, call the Bible a book of myths and accuse followers of Jesus delusional, spiritual gifts is not so "cool" as it once was, and maybe this is why so few teach much about it these days. I was sitting here thinking about this, and a thought came to mind, a thought I'd like to share with you.

175 years ago, the great scientists scoffed at the idea that micro organisms cause infections, and the doctors of that era routinely infected their patients causing misery and death on a scale that would shock medical science today. Even after micro organisms were discovered, doctors were slow to accept the notion that they could cause disease or infection. 100 years ago, nobody was solving crime by using DNA, for they had no idea that there even was anything like that. Even 40 years ago, though it had been discovered, there was no way to use it to solve a crime; the technology simply didn't exist, and anyone who would have asserted its value for fighting crime would have been laughed out of the scientific community.

Then, technology advanced, and there is no question about either micro organisms or DNA.

Scientifically minded people might scoff at the concept of spiritual gifts, they might ridicule anybody who even suggested such a thing; no doubt, they would scoff at God too, but what does that prove?

Nothing at all.

Who can predict the future? Well, certainly I can't, but might these scoffers change their tune if science discovered a way to detect the presence of the Spirit like they discovered a way to detect microbes and DNA? Oh, wait... sorry, that's a really dumb idea... except that technology as it slowly advances has discovered quite a few things that nobody expected. Why listen to those who are simply not advanced enough to understand that which we, as followers of Jesus Christ have known about all along? True, as I write this, the study of spiritual gifts isn't very scientific, but that is a reflection on the primitive technology available, not on spiritual gifts that any of us can see, if only we take the time to notice them at work in our midst. On that note, let's just push ahead in our study, and find out what wondrous things God has in store for us?

I am definitely not going to approach this subject as an academic study, for academic studies of spiritual gifts are precisely what has made the subject so difficult; spiritual things by their very nature, aren't academic, but are instead experiential in nature. That isn't to say that spiritual things can operate contrary to or in opposition to Scripture, because Scripture is revealed to us by the same Holy Spirit that is operating within us through spiritual gifts. The problem of

academics comes when we insist on forcing everything to a specific Systematic Theology, which, though derived from the study of Scripture, is also subject to the preferences and prejudices of specific human scholars, and thus subject to error. When we find ourselves needing to force something into Systematic Theology, we come away thinking that understanding Scripture is quite difficult, but the difficulty is not usually within the Scriptures, but rather within our Systematics, and should trigger the flashing red lights and warning bells within our minds that warn us that there is a problem with our Systematics.

OK, well that's about as academic as I'm going to get in this study! Let's get on with spiritual gifts, shall we? Here is a brief explanation of what they are...

Have you ever worked on a project where you couldn't do the whole thing by yourself? Have you ever needed to get help from another person who had skills that you don't have? I would guess that all of us have been in the situation where we needed another person with a particular skill set to get something accomplished, and spiritual gifts are sort of like that. Every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts as you will see, but no one of us has them all. Spiritual gifts are kind of like a tool box for the Kingdom, they are special gifts that transcend natural talent for getting the Lord's work accomplished, and for most any activity that the church is involved in undertaking, more than one of these miraculous gifts will come into play. Our task is to identify who has that gift and to be willing to plug the right person with the right gift into the right spot to do the Lord's work. You can accurately say that the Lord's work and spiritual gifts are both *inter-dependant* and no one person can do it all by himself.

You've probably just noticed that spiritual gifts are being spoken of here in a *ministry* rather than in a *personal* context. When I taught this subject on my blog, one of the first questions I received was this: "When are you going to tell us how spiritual gifts will enhance *my life*?"

Dear oh dear... how do I tell this person that the purpose of spiritual gifts is to build the Body of Christ, not enhance our personal lives? Now with that said, there is no greater joy, nor anything more deeply satisfying this side of heaven than to use our gifts in accordance with God's will and purpose. Would you like to find peace that "transcends understanding"? Find out what your gifts are and then put them to work selflessly to build the Body of Christ, and you will be well on your way.

For those who prefer neat and tidy definitions, here is our working definition:

A spiritual gift is a distinctive ability given by the Holy Spirit to every Christian according to God's grace and design, for the purpose of building the body of Christ.

Put another way, a spiritual gift is a God-given *supernatural capacity* that enables you to do *effective* ministry.

Another question that needs to be dealt with right away is this: What are the passages in the Bible that deal directly with spiritual gifts? Here are the main ones...

Romans 12:3-21

(Verses 3-8 discuss the gifts, and 9-21 discuss the motivation that must be in place for their use)

1 Corinthians 12

Ephesians 4:7-16

1 Peter 4:10-11

I would strongly recommend that you read these very carefully, don't just skin through them, read them carefully more than once, and let them really soak in so that as we continue through them you will have the fullest understanding of this subject.

Here's the plan for this study: I'll go through several basic concepts about spiritual gifts, then we'll examine each gift individually and take a look at where it comes from in Scripture, its attributes and dangers or pitfalls, and finally we'll go over some things that might help you to discern which ones you might have.

Spiritual Gifts: The Basics

Why You Should Care About Spiritual Gifts

Ah yes, this is the question that most people are too polite to ask. It reminds me of an undergraduate class I took in Communication about 150 years ago, where the professor was discussing effective communication and persuasion. He told us that for any communication to take place, the communicator had to answer the “universal question”. What is the “universal question,” you ask? It is simply this: SO WHAT?

Maybe we can phrase it more delicately: “Why should I care about that?”

As that question applies to the subject of spiritual gifts, here’s the answer; it’s a two part answer (no extra charge).

First, if you are a Pastor, Preacher, Minister, Elder... or whatever these things are called in your congregation, you should understand spiritual gifts because they will show you where the Holy Spirit is going in your congregation.

No joke. Here’s what I mean by that:

A Pastor friend of mine told me this story a few years ago:

His group was meeting in a temporary facility; each week they had to go to the venue and set up 300 chairs and all of their equipment (they had a band) early Sunday morning, and then tear it all down and move it out after services were over, and this had gone on for several years. They desperately wanted a facility of their own, but for some reason, it never came together, and they came to realize that obtaining a facility wasn’t the direction the Spirit was leading them in. Now this group had a new member class that included a class on spiritual gifts followed by a spiritual gifts assessment. One day, my friend noticed that over the prior 60 days, 14 people had come to the church with the gift of craftsmanship. Now my friend is of the belief that God sends the workers first, and then leads in that direction, and when he saw such an unusual trend in craftsmanship he called his leadership team together and showed them what he found, with the result being that they decided to find a place to move to.

They found a large old restaurant building that was being offered for sale at a very low price, but it would be a huge job to rehab the building and set it up for a church; the architects and engineers estimated that the job would take at least six months and cost a fortune. Most sane people would pass on that property, but my friend saw it as a gift, and they jumped at it. As soon as the sale closed, work began... all volunteer. Those new men I mentioned? They jumped into the fray without any particular prompting and set up a schedule of three shifts, seven days per week, and the job was completed in just less than 30 days... and you should see the place! The work was a joy for all concerned, because it was done by people who were exercising their spiritual gifts at the direction of the Holy Spirit. Now tell me, what church leader in their right mind wouldn’t want to be able to recognize something like this?

The truth is, however, that most of us aren't pastors, preachers and leaders; we're just regular folks, so why would we care about spiritual gifts? Here's another story, this time about a lady I know very well who was struggling in her faith. She struggled about where she fit in, she struggled about the whole notion of "serving" and whether it is a burden, a holy duty or obligation... or is it a joy? She struggled with other people: Who are they to be in charge of me? She also struggled with her husband who was a member of the church's leadership team: Why should he spend so much time doing that stuff?

Gee, she could have been any one of us!

The first time I taught spiritual gifts in that congregation, she attended and paid close attention and asked lots of questions; a few times I had the impression she might even be playing "stump the teacher" with me! When it was all over and she saw what her gifts were, a light bulb seemed to come on, and to be quite honest, she hasn't been the same person since. She came to see how it all fits together in the Body of Christ, where she fit in, where she could serve God in joy and love and why others might serve somewhere else or in another way, and the results have been nothing short of amazing. The reason is that this wonderful lady saw where she fit in, something she had struggled with for many years. I think most of us have struggled with that at one time or another and it isn't much fun.

So there you have it; you should care about spiritual gifts because an understanding of what they are and which ones you have will tell you a great deal about God's plans for your life as a follower of Jesus Christ! Gone is resentment about why I do this and he gets to do that, and the baggage centering around holy obligation, duty and transactional love, for there is simply no greater joy in this life than to exercise our spiritual gifts to advance the building of the Body of Christ.

All Christians receive spiritual gifts

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

1Peter 4:10

Note that Peter uses the word "each" so that includes everyone. It's very important that we recognize that the spiritual gift that all Christians receive is that of the Holy Spirit Himself. What we commonly refer to as "spiritual gifts" are actually the ways in which the Holy Spirit is made manifest within each of us. The most important question is this: Are we using our gift in ministry?

Why God gave us spiritual gifts

1. To glorify Himself

God has given us gifts so that we might exalt His name, that we might do things that will glorify Him.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

It is way too easy for us to get caught up in being busy or to build something up and forget that our purpose is to give glory to God. When this happens, we sometimes get the idea that our ministry is *ours* and not *His*. The result is that we often come to resent anyone else becoming involved in it, and this is not how we make disciples, for making disciples always leads us to teach others to take our place!

2. To build up the body of Christ

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Ephesians 4:11-12

Church is a team sport, and each one of us has a place and a gift. Everyone needs to practice their gift, and to be in the Word and mature in their use of their gift. When each one uses his gift for the "team" then the team wins and others are brought into the Kingdom... if I might be permitted to use a sports analogy...and just like playing a sport, church ought to be fun. There are certainly aspects of any area of service that may not be fun, but after the game is over, after we have done our part and the "team" is back in the locker room, there is nothing but joy when the team has won the game and new members have entered the Kingdom.

3. To develop unity in the body of Christ

...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish as fools.
Dr. Martin Luther King

Diversity without unity makes about as much sense as dishing up flour, sugar, water, eggs, shortening and baking powder onto a plate and calling that a cake. They have to be put together in a way that makes sense to us.

C. William Pollard

4. To develop maturity in the body of Christ

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:14-15

Maturity is the ability to stick with a job until it is finished. The ability to do a job without being supervised. The ability to carry money without spending it. The ability to bear an injustice without wanting to get even.

Dear Abbey

God is not as interested in your success as in your maturity
Fred Smith

5. To grow the body of Christ

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16

Did you catch “...**as each part does its work?**” Not some of the parts, not some of the parts some of the time and not all of the parts some of the time. All of the parts doing all of their work all of the time.

6. For the common good of the body of Christ

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:7

This verse should settle most of the issues surrounding controversial gifts in our time, and it should settle most misunderstandings that we will face in this study. We will be fierce in our determination to understand spiritual gifts in the context of “the common good.”

We Don't Get to Pick Our Gift

We receive spiritual gifts as the Lord pleases, not as we please. With that said, let's take a moment to really get to the very heart of the matter: The real gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. Consider:

“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.”

Acts 2:38

The Holy Spirit **is** the gift. When a person who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit is placed into the body of Christ, God at His sole discretion will *manifest* that gift in a way that is useful to building up the Kingdom. Paul lays it out for us right after he discussed individual gifts:

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1Cor. 12:11

Scripture seems clear that if we are not faithful in using the *manifestation* of the gift, what we commonly call the “spiritual gift”, then it will be taken away. In short, spiritual gifts are given on the basis of use it or lose it, as you will better see as we continue this study.

The gift is the Holy Spirit, and that will not change. The way the Holy Spirit uses you may change as circumstances and situations change, and it isn't all that unusual for a person to begin to manifest a gift that wasn't evident beforehand. This is fairly common in ministers who face new challenges in their churches, for instance. It is important to bear in mind that God is sovereign and can do as He sees fit, thus He may desire such a shift in someone who is serving Him. Of course another possibility is that as a person becomes more mature as a Christian they find a gift they hadn't noticed when they were less mature.

The Difference Between Spiritual Gifts and Natural Talents

To begin with, there are many wonderfully talented and gifted people who are not believers. Atheists and Satanists have talents, maybe even monkeys have them. In short, there are many wonderfully talented and gifted people who do not acknowledge God... but Christians have spiritual gifts.

Christians have spiritual gifts and possibly many natural talents as well, but we need to be clear on the difference between the two. You may have heard people say that they have the gift of working with children, or loving people, or art or working with computers, but make no mistake, these are natural talents and not spiritual gifts. On the other hand, a person might combine a talent with a spiritual gift with a great result for God. For instance, you might combine the gift of helps with a talent for working with computers, or the gift of mercy with a talent for counseling, or the gift of administration with a talent for financial management. There are any number of talents that can be combined with a gift, and as things progress it may be hard to tell where one starts and the other leaves off. This is no problem as long as the ministry comes primarily from the gift and not the talent. The key thing to keep in mind is that the verse about the common good must always apply, for a ministry is not about building up the individual, but about building up the body of Christ.

Here are some facts about natural talents and spiritual gifts:

Natural Talents

Received from biological parents
Present from natural birth
Benefit people in the earthly realm
Advance Man's plans
Results are (usually) temporal
Glorify self

Spiritual Gifts

Given by God through the Holy Spirit
Present from conversion
Benefit people in the spiritual realm
Advance God's plans
Results are (always) eternal
Glorify God

The Difference Between Spiritual Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

To review the fruit of the spirit, here is a listing of them as found in Galatians 5:

love

patience

faithfulness

joy
peace

kindness
goodness

gentleness
self-control

Although it may not be likely that any of us will manifest all nine of these at all times, any Christian can manifest any or all of these fruit of the spirit as they mature in their faith. If a person isn't showing any of them, they are having serious spiritual problems! Consider these differences:

Fruits of the Spirit

Shape the character of a Christian
The same for every Christian
Evidence of maturity
Permanent; continually available
The desired attribute itself

Spiritual Gifts

Shape the character of a Christian's service
Different for every Christian
Evidence of faithfulness
God may redirect spiritual gifts
The method and means for ministry

To sum it up, the fruit of the spirit are signs of spiritual maturity and are attributes of a person's character, while spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit that are attributes of ministry.

Spiritual Gifts and Christian Responsibilities are Inter-related

God gets you to the plate, but once you're there, you're on your own.
Ted Williams

Please believe me when I tell you that I've really considered whether or not I should use the word "responsibility" here, since I know that some struggle with this. Let's be clear: This post is not a faith versus works argument! There is no argument at all between faith and works, since there is no way to earn salvation, there can be no conflict between the two. Salvation is by faith, and works are involved in our response to it, so please don't go there. I also know that nobody in the 21st century likes the idea of responsibility, yet there really is such a thing. Again, please resist the urge to jump to some kind of transactional relationship in this, for there is no such thing between us and God; His love and mercy are unconditional. With that said however, who would suggest that a Christian is supposed to just go on living as they did before... just like everyone else? Yes, that's right, we're supposed to be different as a result of our salvation and God's love for us... and our love for His children; and that is what I mean by "responsibility".

We all know that God is with us all of the time, but even though He is with us, He expects us to do things. The need to do things in His service is our responsibility. As you mature spiritually, you will grow in several areas of Christian responsibility that are also named as a gift. You may or may not actually have that particular gift, but you are still responsible for certain Christian behaviors. Here are five examples that come up regularly:

1. The gift of giving and the responsibility to give

Giving is a part of life and should start whenever financial life starts. One must not wait until he makes big money to start giving. Few men who wait to give ever really give. Giving is part of building a whole life. My dear friend Maxey Jamman had given millions of dollars to Christian causes. In the latter part of his business life he had some reverses. During this temporary period I asked him if he ever thought about the many millions he had given away, now that he

was not as wealthy. 'Of course I have, but remember I never lost a dollar of the money I gave. I only lost what I kept.'
Fred Smith

A Christian who has the gift of giving is abundantly generous. They are out there seeking ways to give. Often they are even thinking of ways to make more money so they can give it away. Every Christian has the responsibility to give, and to do so cheerfully to help others.

2. The gift of evangelism and the responsibility to share our faith

Christians and non-Christians have one thing in common, we're both uptight about evangelism.
Rebecca Pippert

A Christian who has the gift of evangelism can lead just about anything that moves to Jesus; they live to share their faith and are highly fruitful in the results of their efforts. For the rest us, even though we may not have the gift, we must be ready, willing and able to share our faith when the occasion arises... even though we may not enjoy the level of success that the gifted Christian might enjoy. Who knows? Maybe the opportunity you or I have might be with a person who wouldn't respond to the gifted person; maybe that's why God put them in our path instead.

3. The gift of intercession and the responsibility to pray

A wise investor turns spare time into prayer time.
Sign on a church wall

A person who has the gift of intercession will pray with passion for long periods of time. Often they will go looking for needs to pray for. Those who are without the gift are still responsible to pray; their prayers are no less appealing to the Lord, it's just that they don't have a gift for it... but they do have a responsibility for it.

4. The gift of faith and the responsibility to exercise our faith

You don't know what you have until it's tested
Rees Howells

A person with the gift of faith may show extraordinary vision and trust in God; well beyond any normal expectation. However, all of us, yes every single one of us, is expected to live a life of faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

5. The gift of service and the responsibility to serve in some area of ministry

By now you should see a pattern: Someone who has the gift of service will go above and beyond the usual to find a place to serve. They will work long, hard and with cheer. Even so, the rest of us have a responsibility to serve and to find a place to serve.

Obviously there are more examples I could use here, but these should give you the idea, even if you have a bit of a problem with the word responsibility. Here's one last example: I don't have the gift of mercy; in fact I score really low in that one! Yet when I come across someone who is

hurting, I can't just walk past them and call someone with the gift of mercy to love them. A person with the gift is out looking for people to help; I need to make a conscious effort to help, because that's what people do who are filled with the love of Jesus Christ.

There are Some Dangers Associated With Spiritual Gifts

As with almost anything, there is a potential for things to go awry in the area of spiritual gifts. Consider these 7 possibilities:

1. Coveting a particular spiritual gift

Sometimes a person might so desire a particular gift that they find themselves in a covetous frame of mind. If you covet a gift, it is as though you are saying that God's plan for you isn't good enough; it's akin to saying that you could do a better job of things than God, and this is a disastrous spiritual condition!

2. Assuming an attitude of spiritual superiority

This is a case in which you have the attitude that you and your gift are better than someone else and their gift. For example, let's say you have the gift of teaching and your brother has the gift of service. You have the idea that you are superior to your brother, because you are up front teaching everyone great truths and your brother is sweeping the floor and taking out the trash. In truth, with this attitude you're going to be a lousy teacher because you've missed one of those great truths you're supposed to be teaching: humility. Remember what Paul said: "Can any one part of the body look at the other and say, 'I have no need of you?'"

3. Neglecting your gift

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. 1 Timothy 4:14

There are two ramifications when you neglect your gift:

- A. The body of Christ suffers
- B. The great commission is hindered

Both of these are in complete opposition to the purpose for which the gift was given in the first place.

4. Focusing more on the gift than on its ministry application

This is a condition in which people are too focused on their gift and not on what it's for. An example would be a person focusing on how much money they have in the bank and not looking for opportunities to use it to glorify God.

5. Becoming legalistic in how gifts should operate... and even on what they are

It is important that we not become too narrow on what the gifts are or how they are manifested. God did not give us spiritual gifts so that theologians would have something else to argue about

and create disunity in the Body of Christ; He gave us spiritual gifts to build the Body up... not to tear it down. Frankly speaking, this particular danger area is one of the most common!

6. Bringing attention to yourself rather than to God

This happens when you lose track of the goal: Glorify God! Here's a sad example: I have a preacher-friend who has a hard time being focused on what his preaching is supposed to accomplish, and he is very accomplished. Yet his preaching doesn't produce the response one might expect, can you guess why? My friend struggles with a fundamental problem; he thinks he is the star of the show and thus even though he preaches brilliantly and is clearly gifted in his ministry, the truth he teaches rings hollow for those who really hear him; his focus is on the wrong person.

7. Hiding behind your gift

Someone comes to you and asks you for help in the nursery. You say, "Sorry, that's not my gift. I have the gift of faith and I believe you'll find someone else." We must not hide behind our gifts. There are times when we just need to help out, and this is especially true with short-term commitments. Remember our discussion about responsibility? I bet you can see how that question and this point go together!

How long do I need to be a Christian before I can experience spiritual gifts?

There is no hard and fast answer. There are some who were raised in the church before becoming Christians themselves who can jump in much more quickly because of what they already know; others may need a little more time to fully understand things. There are some areas of responsibility where a new believer can jump right in, and other areas where they aren't ready at first. Leadership and teaching positions require a great deal more Christian education, for instance, before a person can perform them properly. With all of this said, there is no set time limit.

You may need to develop your Christian character and wisdom, and as you do so your gift (and its application) will develop as well.

Your gifts do not operate independently from one another. God designed the body of Christ to be inter-dependant, so there are no spiritual Lone Rangers running around out there! We as Christians need each other to be able to function as God planned. For example, can you picture a leadership team running around with no mercy? Things would get done, but there would be body bags all over the place. Can you imagine the gift of faith operating without the gift of administration? There would be great and wonderful ideas and visions, but nothing would ever be done about them.

A Listing of the Gifts:

The primary scriptural passages list 19 gifts (20 if you count tongues and interpretation as different) The passages are: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

Prophecy	Service	Teaching	Exhortation	Giving
Leading	Mercy	Wisdom	Knowledge	Faith
Healing	Miracles	Discernment	Tongues/Interpretation	Apostleship

Helps

Administration

Evangelist

Pastor/Shepherd

There are 9 other items for which there is strong Biblical support even though they are not listed in the three main texts on the subject, and they are:

Hospitality

Craftsmanship

Celibacy

Missionary

Music

Volunteer poverty

Intercession

Martyrdom

Deliverance

While we will not be dogmatic about this list, and we will certainly add that we are not infallible here, there are several reasons for these things being considered. The gifts listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 do not match up exactly: Why? A likely reason for this is that God knows us well enough to know that if they did match up exactly that this would unduly limit His ability to work effectively with us. The reason is that if He had given us a "Thus saith the LORD" kind of list that we would codify it, go totally legalistic and carve every action into stone. We would want to make up a list of extra rules and regulations about them (as though we don't do enough of that already) and that we would not be able to recognize a special situation. The practical result would be that God couldn't do anything without our permission! Doesn't the whole history of the Law bear this out?

So, if it doesn't build up the body of Christ, if it doesn't serve the common good of the body of Christ, if it doesn't advance God's work, and glorify God then it doesn't belong on the list of spiritual gifts. In the final analysis, we know that there are great changes coming both in the world, in society and in the church. We can see that there are going to be challenges for us that were not even dreamed of just a few years ago, but through all of this, great things are happening in the Body of Christ! God is keeping His tool box open and available to meet these challenges, and as long as we are willing to be open to His leading and open to His ability to have that open tool box, He will provide us with the tools that we need to minister effectively to meet the needs and achieve the purpose of the Body of Christ as the future unfolds.

Spiritual Gifts and the Character of God

Spiritual Gifts go a long way in revealing the character of God. So, before we start looking at the gifts one by one, let's have a look at what they will reveal to us about God. To begin, consider the following:

1. God is generous

He is a generous God: He gives us gifts beyond our own human potential, power and abilities. To put it another way, He is a generous giver to provide things for you in life that will enable you and I to travel farther in life, to enjoy life more, do more in life, to have greater impact, and to experience more joy and fulfillment than we could have ever known without Him.

2. God is creative

God created all of these gifts; they are His idea. He initiated all of these gifts and He chooses the individual who receives the gift and how it is manifested through them.

3. God is industrious

God is on a mission. He has a purpose and a plan, and the gifts are tools to accomplish that, and He is allowing us to help.

A quick look at 1 Corinthians shows us 3 more character traits of God:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (12:4-7)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (12:12-13)

...But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (12:24-26)

4. God values *order* and *unity*.

5. God *trusts* us and is trustworthy.

6. God desires *relationship* with us.

It is good that we should reflect on these things.

The Gifts One by One

An Introduction to the discussion

As we go through the list of spiritual gifts, be thinking of the people around you and what gifts they might possibly have demonstrated. Also, you will no doubt be thinking from time to time that you might have a particular gift. As you do, bear in mind that you could be feeling an impulse that is more related to a responsibility than to the gift itself, keeping in mind the difference that we discussed earlier. There may even be a gift that sounds really awesome to you, and you might think to yourself, "Hey, that sounds really cool, I want that one!" If that happens, please remember that we don't get to pick our gift, and that spiritual gifts are given by God through the Holy Spirit according to God's grace and wisdom, not ours. If we should come across a gift that you think you may have, you might want to make a note about that gift for reference later in the study.

Finally, we will be going through the 19 gifts that are specifically mentioned in the primary texts on spiritual gifts, and five of the others that were mentioned earlier. The five that are not specifically mentioned in the primary texts are the ones that are most commonly recognized as reliable by Christian teachers on the subject. With each gift, I will give a rough definition of the gifts, a textual reference, its purpose, a caution and some things that might be evidence that someone has the gift. So... let's get started!

The Gift of Helps

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:28

The gift of helps is the ability to work with and support the ministry of other Christians. People with this gift see a need and right away ask if they can help, even though they have their own busy lives to live. In spite of their business, they will actually search out areas in which to help. I'm sure you know people who will say that you should call on them if you need help... and who are then too busy, but the person with this gift will always show up when called upon, for they simply love to help.

The purpose of the gift is to enable other Christians to be more effective and fruitful in ministry through the accomplishment of practical and necessary tasks.

There are some cautions about this gift: First, some might think they have a lowly gift, but that is simply not true. Without this gift, the work of the Kingdom would never get done. This is probably the most dominant of the gifts, and in all likelihood more than half of the people in the Kingdom have it. It is a gift that brings a great amount of glory to God and it calls for a lot of maturity on the part of those who have it because they are not looking for attention, praise or glory. Helps is not a lowly gift at all; it is a great honor to be called to serve our King in such a way.

A person with helps as a gift might also miss the big picture of where their service fits in, and it is always important for the person they are helping to make sure their helper doesn't miss the

importance of their work. Finally, a person with the gift of helps may be likely to over-commit themselves, and must recognize that not every need they see is a call to service.

A person who has this gift is a person who is available and reliable, who sincerely enjoys helping other people, who has a servant's spirit, who doesn't need much in the way of public recognition, and who is often asked to help out.

Possible ministry applications...

Telephone Ministry	Cookie Ministry	Children's Work	Church Camp
Nursery	Transportation	Usher	Greeter
Communion Prep	Set Up/Tear Down	Parking Lot	Photography
Visitation	Drama	Electronics	Coffee

The Gift of Leadership

Primary text: Romans 12:8

The gift of Leadership is the ability to influence others according to a "big picture" purpose, mission or plan. Its purpose is to direct and enhance the service of others in building up God's Kingdom in a constructive way to complete or accomplish God's purposes, and achieve the common good of the Body.

Jesus was such a gifted leader that in His day thousands followed Him and today billions follow Him as the greatest leader who has ever lived. Other examples abound, including Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Josiah, Paul, Peter, and James.

As you might expect, there are some cautions that go along with this gift, cautions that require little explanation: First, a prideful attitude and a tendency to look down upon people who aren't leaders. Of course the potential to misuse power, or to use people to accomplish personal objectives rather than God's objectives are caution areas, and finally the potential for feeling superior to those with helping gifts is a caution point.

A person with this gift will be someone who usually seems to have a significant amount of influence on people, who is often asked to lead things, who is normally able to see the "big picture" easily and naturally. He or she will generally be someone for whom decision making comes naturally, and who is often asked for their opinion. They want to make a difference, to "change the world" and are not afraid to take risks, and of course they are people who speak with confidence and conviction.

Possible ministry applications...

Head Usher	Ministry Head	Trainer	Director
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The gift of Hospitality

Primary text: 1 Peter 4:9-10

The gift of Hospitality is the ability to make people feel “at home”, welcome, cared for and part of the group. There is a difference between being “hospitable” and the gift of Hospitality. People who are hospitable will rush around and clean their house, keeping it spic and span and be nervous about the condition of things the whole time you are there because they want everything to be just right. People who have the gift of hospitality don’t worry about that; they just want you to come in, kick your shoes off and be part of the family. People who are hospitable may throw a party, but they will pick who comes. People who have Hospitality will throw a party and invite everyone; anybody is welcome. . Hospitality is supposed to include one's family (1 Tim. 5:8), friends (Prov. 27:10), Christians (Gal. 6:10), and strangers who may not be Christians (Lev. 19:34).

Jesus spent time befriending social outcasts (Matt. 11:19), often ate with His disciples, and welcomes us into the family of God, which includes an eternal home (John 14:2) and an eternal party (Isa. 25:6-9; Rev. 19:6-9). Elders and pastors are commanded to exercise hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). Peter enjoyed the hospitality of Simon (Acts 9:43) and Cornelius (Acts 10:48). Paul enjoyed the hospitality of Lydia (Acts 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:34).

The purpose of the gift is to create an inviting atmosphere to encourage people to be themselves, to feel like a valued part of the body, and to nurture Christian fellowship to a deeper level. Of course, like all of the gifts, there are some caution areas: A person with this gift might tend to over-commit themselves and overlook those closest to them. They might also develop a kind of self-pity if they are the only ones serving in this way, and they run into real problems is they come to see their service as merely “entertaining” for they will lose sight of God’s purpose in giving them their gift.

A person who has this gift will find that new people feel very comfortable around them, and tend to migrate toward them. They have no problem giving without expecting anything in return, and gain real joy from making people feel at home and cared for. Yep, they love a party, but they enjoy giving one even more, and are eager to open their homes to others.

For me personally, I’m always struck by the contrast between leadership, which is a gift I have, and hospitality, which is one I wish I had!

Possible ministry applications...

Usher/Greeter
Home Study

Host
Chats

Open Home
Event Booths

Welcome Center

The gift of Service

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:5

The gift of Service is the ability to identify and meet the practical needs of others. Service and Helps can be easily confused, here is the difference. Helps is a coming alongside another person to help them accomplish what they are doing. Service is a matter of finding things on your own and taking the initiative to accomplish those tasks for the Kingdom. Thus we can say that the purpose of the gift is to bring an overall sense of love, holiness and community to the body of believers.

Matthew 20:28 says that "the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus also said, "I am among you as one who serves," and He even washed His disciples' feet (Luke 22:27; John 13:5). Because servants often work behind the scenes, their work but not their name is often mentioned in Scripture (e.g., Numbers 11:17; 1 Timothy 6:2; Acts 6:1-3). People named in the Bible who helped the church through service include Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Tryphena, Tryphosa (Romans 16:1-4,12), and John Mark (Acts 13:5). Some people with this gift are also appointed to leadership as church deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

As with the other gifts, there are a few cautions for someone who has this gift, and they include serving with wrong or impure motives, becoming upset or bitter if your service isn't recognized, becoming upset if others don't perceive the same need, and becoming overly aggressive in seeking out people to serve, with the classic example being that of a person helping an 'old lady' to cross the street... a street she wasn't intending to cross!

Evidence that you have this gift would be things like easily identifying the needs of others, having a genuine desire to serve others and gaining a sense of satisfaction and joy from serving others, for your greatest passion is to serve others in ways that are important to God.

Possible ministry applications...

Telephone Ministry
Nursery
Communion Prep
Visitation

Cookie Ministry
Transportation
Set Up/Tear Down
Drama

Children's Work
Usher
Parking Lot
Electronics

Church Camp
Greeter
Photography
Coffee

The gift of Administration

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:28

The gift of Administration is the ability to coordinate and organize people and projects. Its purpose is to ensure that dreams, plans, goals, and objectives are realized in a smooth and efficient manner for the glory of God.

Jesus organized His ministry by choosing his inner circle of three disciples (Mark 9:2), appointing the twelve (Mark 3:13-14), and sending out the seventy two by two (Luke 10:1). Joseph (Genesis 41:41-57; 47:13-26), Jethro (Exodus 18), and Titus (Titus 1:5) all demonstrate the gift of administration.

Cautions about this gift are interesting; they all tend to deal with putting tasks ahead of people:

- You may tend to put projects before people
- You may be overly concerned with details
- You may have a tendency toward perfectionism

You may have a tendency to focus more on rules and procedures than on accomplishing the mission.

A person with the gift of Administration usually looks like this:

- You enjoy planning and goal setting
- Organization comes easily to you
- You can manage multiple tasks at one time
- You have a servant heart
- You will stick with a project until it is complete
- You tend to be thorough and objective

Possible ministry applications...

	Special Events	Finances	Marketing/PR
Ministry Head			

The gift of Discernment

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-3

The gift of Discernment is the ability to perceive whether a person's actions originate from Godly, Satanic or merely human sources. Its purpose is to prevent confusion, division and false teaching from infiltrating the body of Christ. People with the gift of discernment know that Satan and his demons disguise themselves as holy (1 Cor. 11:14-15). They also know that Satan empowers counterfeit miracles (Ex. 7:11-22; 8:7; Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Tim. 3:8) to deceive people (2

Thess. 2:9), and that he empowers false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1), false prophets (Matt. 7:15), false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13), and false doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3).

Jesus was able to know the presence of Satan (Matt. 4:1-11), see when someone was influenced by Satan (Luke 22:31), and know when someone's words were influenced by Satan (Matt. 16:23). John (1 John 4:1), Paul (Acts 16:16-18), Peter (Acts 5:1-11), and the disciples (Matt. 10:1) all demonstrated the gift of discernment.

Again, there are some cautions:

- Having a spiritually superior attitude
- You tend to spot a “demon” behind every bush
- You become skeptical about everyone

Some evidence that you have the gift...

- You have a clear sense about whether people are telling the truth or telling lies.
- Your spirit is sensitive to the things of God
- You can spot insincerity quickly and easily
- You have a close and committed relationship with God
- You tend to be perceptive and insightful

Possible ministry applications...

Counselor

Visitation

Benevolence

Divorce Recovery

The gift of Faith

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:9

The gift of Faith is the ability to believe God with confidence for things unseen, spiritual growth and the will of God.

The difference between faith that is needed for Christian living and the gift of faith is:

Christian Faith: Enhances the individual's spiritual growth

Gift of Faith: Enhances the spiritual growth of others

The purpose of the gift of Faith is to lift the body of Christ above common distractions and discouragements to believe God for the seemingly impossible

In one sense, Jesus' entire life and ministry can be summarized as one of faith because he continually and perfectly trusted in God the Father in all things.

Faith is also illustrated in the lives of Paul (Acts 27:21-25), Stephen, who was "full of faith" (Acts 6:5), and Jesus' mother, Mary, who trusted God to give her a child though she was a virgin (Luke 1:26-38). Hebrews 11 also lists a great number of Christians who had the gift of faith.

Yes, there are cautions even for this one, for a person with this gift may sometimes downplay the value of practical planning and preparation, and they might even find themselves tempted to lecture others about what would happen if they only had more faith. Maybe the biggest caution of all is to resist the temptation to think that your own wants are always God's will. The other day I heard a preacher friend remark that God does speak to him in prayer sometimes, but what God says is usually very much what the preacher thinks, and I would imagine that we've all been there...

Some evidence that you might have this gift would include... You have a consistently positive disposition, and an optimistic outlook on life, you are confident about the promises of God, and other people's faith is increased when they are around you

Possible ministry applications...

Prayer Partner

Vistiation

Encouragement

Counseling

The gift of Music

Primary Text: 1 Chronicles 16:41-42 (This could also be a sub-gift of prophecy)

The gift of Music is the ability to make a significant contribution to a *worship experience* through singing or playing a musical instrument; its purpose is to bring praise and glory to God through song and instruments, and it can also be considered an expressive spiritual discipline.

The cautions on this gift are a little tricky:

1) Difficulty in distinguishing the difference between the natural talent for music and the spiritual gift for music.

2) Seeking the attention and praise that often accompanies singing or playing the musical instrument.

3) Allowing the gift to bring your responsibilities beyond your level of maturity and character development.

4) Allowing personal creativity to cloud the overall picture.

Evidence that you might have the gift of Music:

- 1) You have a passion for praise and worship that *exalts the name of God*
- 2) People often ask you to sing, or play a musical instrument *as part of a worship experience*
- 3) People often say to you that the expression of your gift helps them draw *close to God during worship*

Millions of people have musical talent, and a large number of those who have talent have really developed that talent to a high level, but they do not have the spiritual gift of music. I was the overseer of worship for a long time, and in the process of doing that, I witnessed a number of people who served in the musical aspect of worship who had great talent and the desire to serve musically in worship, but I only know one who has the gift of music. When that person sings, everything is different, and maybe one needs the gift of discernment to see it clearly; I don't know... but it is quite special even in rehearsal, and it goes well beyond the person's natural talent. I think the key in discerning the difference between the talent and the gift is found in the evidence cited above, where I have put italics on the key points: "exalt the name of God," and "as part of worship". Not exciting entertainment or insightful interpretation of music... *exalt the name of God in worship*. Yep, that is the key.

Possible ministry applications...

Praise Team

Musical Band

Kid's Music

**Easy Worship
Technicians**

The gift of Tongues/Interpretation

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:10

The gift of tongues is the ability to speak in a language that you never learned and communicate a divinely anointed message from God to unbelievers. Its purpose is for the extension of the local church

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers...

1 Cor. 14:22

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

1 Cor. 14:1-5

Once again, the bottom line according to Paul is: Does it build up the church; is it for the common good... or does it cause confusion and division? (See also 1 Cor. 14:22-25)

There would appear to be two aspects of this gift in Scripture, tongues as a means of communicating the gospel to non-believers in their own language, as we see throughout the book of Acts, and as a “prayer language” in private prayer. Consider this example:

A preacher friend of mine who spent many years in the mission field told me this story...

He and another guy were posted on a small island in the South Pacific in the early '90's, and I must apologize for I have forgotten which one. The other man spoke the local language, but my friend did not. One time, the other guy's father, a prominent preacher in the US was coming for a visit; he was going to preach there in a Sunday service, and the local people were quite excited to have a real preacher from the US visit. The Christians invited all of their non-Christian friends; this was a big occasion in their small community. Picture this: the room is packed, the father is going to preach in English, the son is going to translate; anticipation is very high. When the time came, both father and son went up front and the father began to preach, while the son waited to translate. After two or three minutes, the son sat down. When the message was finished, many came forward and all were thrilled, but the father was a little confused. “I thought you said these people didn't speak English,” the father said to the son afterward.

“They don't” was the son's reply. “Dad, they heard you in their own language; you spoke like a native.”

My friend heard the whole thing in English.

Now I wouldn't have believed this story if I hadn't heard it from someone I knew personally to be very reliable, and even so I went to another man I highly respect who had spent time in the mission field. I told the story and asked him what he thought. He smiled and said, “Don, you have no idea what goes on out there, things nobody back home would believe. This sort of thing happens more than you can imagine.

Now you tell me what I'm supposed to do with this. Do I conclude that these brothers (actually there are several more who have confirmed this since) whom I personally know to be trustworthy are lying because God can't do this based upon inconclusive textual evidence?

As a private prayer language, tongues are outside of my personal experience, yet there it is in the text: What shall we conclude? Here is what I know for sure: God meets us where we are, He created us and knows us better than we know ourselves. Each of us is different in many ways with our own perspectives, personalities and relational tendencies. Some of us are relatively unemotional about most things and relate to God on an unemotional level much of the time, while others are more emotional and passionate in relationships and in their prayer lives. Some of us can put most any feeling into words; others not so much. In my personal devotions, my prayer language is English, and as in other relationships it is not generally overly emotional. Does that mean that your prayer life and personal devotions must be the same as mine? Or

maybe that means that God can only have relationship with you in the exact same way that He does with me?

I think not.

Can I say that something is wrong with you if God relates to you in a prayer language? No.

Can you say that if my prayer language is English, and not a private prayer language, that something is wrong with me? Again, no.

Cautions about the gift of Tongues

- Viewing it as the sole evidence of being filled with the Spirit
- Insisting that everyone speak in tongues
- Bringing confusion or division into the body of Christ
- Developing a spiritually superior attitude

The gift of tongues must build up the body of Christ or it is not a gift of the Spirit! Well, now I've irritated everyone! Please take a moment to notice that these kinds of cautions are listed for all of the gifts; why would tongues be different? In fact, these attitudes do not build the Body of Christ, they create divisions, tear it down and pit brother against brother, and if you doubt me, just open your eyes and have a look around!

Evidence that someone may have this gift might include...

- You have spoken in a language unknown to you but known by your hearers, and people were saved as a result.
- You speak to God in a private prayer language and you sense His presence in a powerful way.

A final thought: Tongues and the miraculous gifts in general are very rare, but then miracles by their very nature have always been rare. The miraculous signs of Jesus drew big crowds because they were not commonplace, but rarity in and of itself, does not mean they aren't real, they're just rare.

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

The gift of Miracles

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28

The gift of Miracles is the ability to perform supernatural acts as an instrument or agent of God which altered the expected course of nature; its purpose is to change or alter the expected course of nature in order to draw attention to God and glorify His name.

Acts 2:22 says Jesus performed many miracles, and John 20:20-31 says that Jesus' numerous miracles were to prove he was God. Jesus commanded nature (Mark 4:35-41), cast out demons (Mark 5:1-13; Matt. 12: 22), walked on water (Mark 6:45-51), turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), and fed over 5,000 people with one boy's lunch (John 6:1-14).

The apostles did "many miraculous signs" (Acts 2:43), Stephen did "great" miracles (Acts 6:8), and Paul did "extraordinary" miracles at Ephesus (Acts 19:11). Also, Paul cast out demons (Acts 16:16-18), God blinded a sorcerer for Paul (Acts 13:6-12), and there were many miracles surrounding the ministries of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.

As far as I know, this one is even more rare than tongues. Yet, here's a question for you: Have you ever prayed for someone who is ill or injured, someone who is going to die, and then they were suddenly fine? I recall years ago a time when my father in law was near death from cancer. The church prayed for him, and a couple of weeks later, for no particular reason that the doctors could identify, he was declared to be cancer free; what happened? In 1989, I found myself in the hospital with carbon monoxide poisoning, and I awoke the next morning with the doctor just staring at me. When he noticed I was awake, he simply said, "I can't find a single medical reason for you to be alive right now." What happened?

Let's not be any too anxious to try to paint God into a corner!

Cautions about this gift are, thinking that you were the source of a miracle, and drawing attention to yourself or taking any credit for what happened.

Possible evidence that you might have this gift would include God having used you in a healing, that you have extraordinary faith, that God has answered your prayers with miraculous results, and that you tend to be bold and convincing in matters of faith.

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

The gift of Craftsmanship

Primary Text: Exodus 31:3-6 (This could be a sub-gift of Service)

The gift of Craftsmanship is the ability to use your hands and mind to benefit other believers through artistic, creative or a wide variety of construction arenas; its purpose is to enhance the physical surroundings of the body of Christ in such a way as to be attractive, functional and a glory to God.

Cautions for this gift are thinking that a self-centered hobby is a spiritual gift, and protecting and valuing your work over people.

Evidence that you might have this gift might be:

People ask for your creative input on church projects.

You have unique artistic abilities that find their greatest value and application in the local church.

You find great joy in using your hands to build and create for God's glory.

You tend to be resourceful and handy.

Possible ministry applications...

Handman

Arts and Crafts

Set up/Tear Down

Special Projects

Event Booths

The gift of Wisdom

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:

The gift of Wisdom is the ability to discern the mind of Christ and apply scriptural truth to a specific situation in order to make the right choices and help others move in the right direction. Its purpose is to apply scriptural truth and God's heart in everyday situations so that decisions can be made that are pleasing to God; it is often coupled with the gifts of teaching and knowledge.

Luke 2:40-52 says that Jesus was "filled with wisdom" as a boy and "grew in wisdom" as a young man so that the scholars of his day were "amazed at his understanding." Crowds who heard Jesus teach said, "What's this wisdom that has been given him?" (Mark 6:2). In Matthew 12:42, Jesus said that he was wiser than Solomon, and in Luke 21:15, Jesus said, "I will give you words and wisdom." We are also told that Jesus is the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24, 30).

Wisdom is also illustrated in the lives of Joshua (Deut. 34:9), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-28), and Daniel (Daniel 1:17-20; 2:19-23).

A person who has the gift of Wisdom is skilled in the art of Godly living, has a high level of Godly knowledge and the life experience to understand its application. Here's a little story: Ever since I was about 20, people have come to me asking for help with personal problems, very often centering around disputes and disagreements. One time, when I was in my very early 20's a married couple that was nearly twice my age sat me down and asked for help in their marriage; I was dumbfounded! (I hadn't even been on a date; what did I know about this sort of thing?) Well, they asked me to hear them out anyway, so I did. After they explained the situation, my mind was totally blank, and then I noticed that I was speaking. I didn't really quite understand everything I said to them, but it seemed to make a huge difference to each, and they

were profoundly grateful, and as far as I know, they are still happily together. It would be another 25 years before I understood what was going on in that instance, and others like it.

There are three basic cautions about this gift, and by now you can probably guess what they are:

- Believing that you are the source of the wisdom.
- Using wisdom with impure motives.
- Looking down on those who don't have the gift of Wisdom.

Evidence that you may have this gift would include:

- Making the right decision in difficult situations comes easily to you.
- People seek you out for Godly counsel about their problems.
- You have a practical nature when it comes to the applications of wisdom.
- You possess good common sense.

Maybe I should add this to cautions, but it occurs to me that there is also the danger of thinking that because you have this gift, you come to think you are always right, well you're not because you aren't the source of the wisdom, and at least in my case, God still teaches humility!

Possible ministry applications...

**Research
Teaching
Benevolence**

**Youth work
Mentoring**

**Counselor
Discipleship**

**Marriage Enrichment
Visitation**

The gift of Mercy

Primary Text: Romans 12:8

The gift of Mercy is the ability to feel sincere empathy and compassion in a way that results in practical relief for peoples' hurts, pain and suffering; its purpose is to bring relief, comfort and hope to people who are hurting in order to bring them to a place of peace and productivity.

Jesus taught on mercy (Matt. 5:7; 9:13; 23:23). He is repeatedly described as having compassion (Matt. 9:36; 15:32; 23:37; Luke 7:13) and was so filled with mercy that He sometimes wept (John 11:35). Jesus' mercy included an attentiveness to and concern for children (Matt. 19:14). Dorcas "was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36). Also, the good Samaritan is one of the most classic stories ever told on the subject of mercy (Luke 10:30-37).

The cautions are:

- A tendency to see life with a slightly negative perspective.
- The inability to say no, or thinking you can meet everyone's need.
- Actions based on emotions without logic.
- Failure to be firm when necessary.

Evidence that you may have this gift:

- You are drawn toward the hurts of others.
- You are easily and fully in control of your emotions.
- The suffering of others disturbs your soul.
- Peoples' feelings are more important to you than what they do.
- You cheerfully inconvenience yourself for the needs of others.

Possible ministry applications...

Counselor
Drug/Alcohol Recovery
Visitation

Divorce Recovery
Bereavement

Prison Ministry
Mission Work

The gift of Knowledge

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:8

The trouble with the world is not that people know too little,

But that they know so many things that just ain't so.

Mark Twain

Those who think they know it all are so annoying to those of us who do.

Robert Mueller

The only things worth knowing are the things you learn after you already know it all.

Harry Truman

The gift of Knowledge is the ability to seek out, gather, organize and clarify facts and ideas on a number of diverse subjects that benefit the Kingdom and the learning of believers. The purpose of this gift is to discover, gather and retain new truth and ideas to strengthen and enhance Christian living in the body of Christ.

This is a tricky gift because it isn't quite what we might think at first, for it isn't being smart or academically inclined or having a good memory. Have you ever come across a person who sits in a class, say a Sunday school class, and always has a verse to quote, but the verse doesn't always fit the situation or the context? Have you ever come across a preacher who can quote chapter and verse all day long, but whose messages don't quite make sense? These people may be very smart and they may know a lot of things, but they don't have the gift of knowledge because they can't quite always see how it pertains to the larger issue of building the body of Christ. They are usually technically correct, but they don't connect.

Related to this is the fact that, at least in my experience, the gift of knowledge is usually coupled with the gifts of wisdom and discernment, and hopefully teaching. When this happens, the person will not only be *correct*, but they will almost always *connect*.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus frequently quoted the Old Testament Scriptures from memory because he had committed himself to studying Scripture so faithfully. Jesus also rebuked the scholars of his day because they studied the Bible but failed to love him, which is the purpose of all Scripture (John 5:39).

Knowledge is illustrated in the lives of Ezra (Ezra 7:10), Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:13; 7:25; 8:9), and Timothy (2 Timothy 2:15).

Cautions about this gift include:

- Gathering information for the sake of information
- Pride or arrogance; display of knowledge.
- Being so "heavenly minded" that you are no earthly good.

Evidence relating to this gift:

- You enjoy study and research and do so for an extended period of time.
- You are able to retain large amounts of diverse information.
- You tend to be inquisitive and reflective.
- You desire to gather facts in a logical pattern.
- You have a passion to learn.

Years ago I had a professor who was really a role model for me; he was one of the finest theologians of the era, but never quite received the recognition one might have expected from his peers. The problem was that he didn't really play the game very well. There was a reason for that, and the reason was that he had this gift and his peers by and large did not. This gentleman was only interested in building the body of Christ; he could care less if he got the credit, for he would tell you that any credit associated with his efforts belonged to God alone... *and he meant it.*

Everything he taught in his classes was applied to life in his lessons. He never presented lists of verses and random facts, rather he taught God's Word. Other professors demonstrated their

great knowledge, this guy revealed Jesus Christ. Other professors had very interesting lectures, this guy's lectures changed lives. Other professors published; this guy gave everything away and encouraged us to use it to build up the Body. He didn't use his knowledge to argue or debate, he didn't show off or remind us who was the professor and who was the student; no never. Rather he lead us to where the truth was and then took a step back and let us see the One who is the way, the truth and the life.

That dear reader is what the gift of Knowledge looks like.

Possible ministry applications...

**Research
Teaching
Benevolence**

**Youth work
Mentoring**

**Counselor
Discipleship**

**Marriage Enrichment
Visitation**

The gift of Exhortation

Primary Text: Romans 12:8

The gift of Exhortation is the ability to appropriately communicate words of encouragement, challenge or rebuke in the body of Christ.

Before we move on, let's be sure that everybody has understood this gift clearly. There are three types or aspects of Exhortation:

1. Encouraging others is the most dominant, the most common manifestation of this gift. See Acts 14:21-23.
2. Challenging others is the second most common manifestation of this gift, see 1 Timothy 4:13-16.
3. Rebuking others is the least common manifestation of this gift, and is to be used very sparingly. Most often, we can accomplish the best results by encouraging and challenging people to do what is right, rather by rebuking them for what is wrong. See Acts 5 for the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

The purpose of the gift is to bring health and wholeness to the body of Christ through well chosen and anointed words.

Back in centuries past, it was not unusual for a sermon to have two parts that were delivered by two different people. First, the lesson from the Word would be given by a preacher who would preach for an hour or two, and then the Exhortation would be delivered by another, encouraging, challenging and rebuking for another hour or so...

Cautions about this gift:

- Being anything less than 100% sincere when encouraging.
- Rebuking without love.
- Getting over-loaded with people demands.

Evidence that you might have this gift:

- Encouraging others comes easily to you and you enjoy it.
- You are not fearful to rebuke if necessary.
- You have good self image and are generally a confident person.
- You are able to motivate others; one-on-one, in small groups or in larger groups.
- You have good people skills.

Possible ministry applications...

Greeter

Counselor

Usher

Teacher

The gift of Teaching

Primary Text: Romans 12:7 (Acts 18:24-28 provides a great illustration of it)

The gift of Teaching is the ability to employ a logical and systematic approach to biblical study in preparation for clearly communicating practical truth to the body of Christ; its purpose is to strengthen the faith of the body of Christ and to help equip the body for mature Christian living.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus was commonly referred to as *Rabbi*, which means "teacher." Matthew 4:23 says that "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching," and Matthew 7:28-29 says that "the crowds were amazed at his [Jesus'] teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." Other examples of teaching in Scripture include Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26), Paul (Acts 19:8-10; 20:20; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 2:7), elders/pastors (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17), Timothy (1 Timothy 4:11,13; 6:2), and godly women (Titus 2:2-4).

Cautions for the gift include:

- You may get "lost" in the details of study and become sidetracked from the ultimate purpose of the study.

- Placing too much emphasis in the “glory” of being up in front.
- Developing an attitude of spiritual superiority towards people who don’t understand the Bible as well as you do.

Evidence that you may have this gift:

- You enjoy teaching groups of people to understand God’s Word.
- You get a great sense of joy and satisfaction when people you have taught grow in their spiritual maturity.
- You are organized in your thinking and approach to God’s Word.
- Others listen to and enjoy your teaching of the Bible.

Having this gift does not mean that you are an effective communicator or public speaker, and not everyone with this gift will be a good “classroom” teacher. Many with this gift are great writers but poor speakers, others assist the one who goes “up front.” It might just be that you have this gift, but still need to acquire the skills of a public speaker. In addition, this is one of the gifts that takes time and often, training to develop, and certainly is one that requires a high degree of maturity before it can be effectively used to build up the Body.

Possible ministry applications...

Mentor

Discipleship

Youth Worker

Teacher

The gift of Pastor/Shepherd

Primary Text: Ephesians 4:11-14

The gift of Pastor/Shepherd is the ability to assume responsibility for the spiritual growth and Christian community of a group of believers, and its purpose is to provide loving leadership and encouragement for people within the body of Christ to grow spiritually and be built into the local church.

Cautions about this gift include:

- Anything less than 100% sincerity in encouraging people in their faith.
- Having a sense of superiority about people who are less mature spiritually.
- Becoming cynical about the motives of other people.
- Shepherding people with the wrong motives.

Evidence that you might have this gift might be:

- You receive joy from seeing others walk more closely with Jesus Christ.
- You care deeply about the spiritual welfare of the people in your local church.
- You are loyal and dedicated to your local church.
- You have the gift of Teaching and/or Exhortation
- You are process oriented and people are your focus.

Obviously, this would be a good gift for your pastor to have, and certainly it would be handy for Elders (or whatever you call them in your locality) to have, yet it isn't always the case for everyone in leadership. We need to remember that Church is a team sport, and within any local leadership, there will be multiple gifts that aren't all held by one person. I've been in church leadership a long time, and I don't have this one, but one of the others always did, and there were plenty of times when someone with this gift would help me to see that I was about to trample over someone in my desire to get things moving, and thus we made a good *team*. Yep, the other guys might get a nudge from me to keep on target, and I might get a nudge from them to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others: Teamwork!

Possible ministry applications...

Lay Pastor	Discipleship	Visitation	Training
Youth Work	Home Bible Study	Outreach	Follow-up
Teachers			

The gift of Apostleship

Primary Text: Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Acts 15:22-35

The gift of Apostleship is the ability to provide spiritual leadership over a number of pastors and churches, resulting in tangible fruit for ministry. Its purpose is to strategically and spiritually lead, equip and organize others for the specific mission of building the local church.

This is not to be confused with an "Apostle" in the New Testament church in the sense of the "Twelve" who first traveled with Christ, or with Paul who was later recognized by Divine action as an Apostle. This type of Apostle is described in 2 Corinthians 12:12, and is NOT what we are talking about here. (See also ., Matthew 10:1; 19:28; 20:17; Mark 3:13-19; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; Luke 6:12-16; 8:1; 9:1; 22:19-30; John 6:70-71; Revelation 21:14) The Twelve had certain "qualifications" or requirements which include being an eyewitness to the life and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21-26). Another requirement is miraculous power (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 8:18; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4).

In addition, any position that is associated with the line of “Apostolic Succession” as used in the Catholic tradition, or anyone who has taken upon himself this title in a manner related in any way to Apostolic Succession, is outside the scope of this study and not what we are talking about here.

In Scripture, such people as Barnabas (Acts 14:3-4, 14), Apollos and Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 4:6-9), Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), James (Galatians 1:19), and Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6). They, like apostles today, were gifted individuals sent out to move from place to place in order to begin and establish local churches (Acts 13:3-4). This gift also includes the capacity to minister cross-culturally (Acts 10:34-35; Ephesians 3:7-8). Today, church planters and missionaries are operating out of their gift of apostleship as well as those Christian leaders God raises up to lead and influence multiple churches and pastors.

The function of apostle as seen in Acts 15:22-35:

1. Selecting ministers to send to other churches.
2. Spiritual authority and guidance.
3. Develop Biblical policy for the church.

Yes, the word “apostle” creates some confusion in our time!

Cautions about the gift:

- Misusing the authority granted to you.
- Following your own agenda rather than God’s.

Evidence that you might have this gift might include:

- You have the spiritual gifts of Leadership and Faith.
- You have an unusual anointing on your leadership.
- You have the spiritual gifts of Administration and Wisdom.
- You possess a desire to pioneer and establish new ministries in churches.
- The body of Christ has and continues to affirm you in or toward a leadership role.

Possible ministry applications...

Missionary

Outreach

Church Planter

Overseer

The gift of Missionary

Primary Text: This gift is inferred in Acts 8:4; 13:2-3; 22:21; Romans 10:15

The gift of Missionary is the ability to minister effectively in cultures other than your own. The purpose of this gift is to advance the Great Commission on a worldwide basis.

Not all missionaries have this gift; that is just a fact. If you stop and think about it, why should anyone in a different culture listen to you? You look different, your dress differently, your frames of reference when you try to communicate are incomprehensible, you may not even speak the language... and you're pushing a "foreign religion." From a communication perspective, everything is stacked against you.

Yet in spite of all of this, there are those certain missionaries through whom God does things that are nothing short of amazing, and that is the gift in action.

Cautions about the gift include:

- Being caught up in the glamour of world travel.
- Approaching world missions work as an escape from a lack of fruit in the local church.
- Placing foreign missions work at a higher priority than any other efforts of the local church.

Evidence that you might have the gift might be:

- You adapt well to other cultures.
- Foreign languages come easily to you.
- You are generally flexible by nature.
- You are committed to evangelism.

Possible ministry applications...

Mission Ministry

Evangelism

Outreach

The gift of Prophecy

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:10; see also 14:1-4; Acts 2:37-40; Acts 7 and 26.

The gift of Prophecy is the ability to boldly declare the truth of God, regardless of the consequences, calling people to righteous living. The purpose of the gift is to deliver the truth of God with divine insight and authority in order that people repent of sin and live for God.

There are so many misconceptions within the community of believers about prophecy and the role of a prophet, both in Bible days and in the here and now. We often seem to think that Biblical prophets were sent by God to tell the future, yet that is simply not the case and that attitude has led to so much division and confusion. The prophets of the Old Testament were men who brought a message from God to His people, and for the most part it was a message of warning. Sometimes there was some part of the message that dealt with future events, but if you look carefully, most of these were messages of coming judgment if the warnings were not heeded, sometimes God's judgment was already assured, and still others it was about the hope that was to come in Christ, but it was never just so you'll know the future.

Common attitudes in the church about the concept of prophet in the church today are wide and varied. Many, if not most, would say that there are no prophets in the church age, and in the sense of an Old Testament prophet, I would agree... but keep in mind that a prophet is someone who delivers a message from God, and in that sense a preacher who is faithfully preaching the Word of God is delivering His message.

Yet not all preachers have this gift, in fact not many do. When I preach, I do so with boldness and confidence and why shouldn't I? After all my confidence is in the Word not myself. Sometimes I might influence someone's thinking when I preach... but I don't have this gift. I have a friend who does, and when he presents the truth to someone about sin in their lives, attitudes and behaviors frequently change right then and there. I can imitate him, but I don't get that result at all; he has the gift of prophet, I have the gift of teaching. For him it's about sin, for me it's always about teaching. He is a pain in the neck sometimes... but God uses him in cases I can't reach... and vice versa: Church is a team sport!

Cautions about the gift:

- Confusing your own self-righteousness with declaring God's message.
- Relating to people as groups rather than as individuals.
- Relating to people too harshly.
- Lacking in flexibility.
- Focusing more on law than on grace.

Evidence that you have this gift might be...

- A bold sense of confidence in speaking for God.
- A hatred for sin.
- A passionate reliance on the Word of God.
- A desire to see lives changed as a result of hearing God's truth.
- You possess the gift of Discernment.

Possible ministry applications...

Preacher

Teacher

Vision

Leader

The gift of Evangelist

Primary Text: Ephesians 4:11-14, see also Acts 21:8

The church is a lot like manure: Pile it up in one place and it stinks up the neighborhood.

Spread it around and it enriches the world.

Luis Palau

The gift of Evangelist is the ability to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others in such a way that many non-Christians believe in Christ and are converted to Christianity. The purpose of the gift is to actively initiate and develop relationships with the unsaved in order to share the salvation message and lead them to repentance from sin to eternal life in Christ.

All of us are called to be prepared to share our faith when the opportunity arises, but most of us do not have the gift of evangelist. I know a preacher who has this gift, and I must say it is amazing to watch him in action. I've met him for lunch quite a number of times and it's always the same: If we have to wait for a table, he's talking to other people who are waiting, and the fact that he's a preacher always seems to come up somehow, and the people he speaks with always seem to get an invitation to church. The same happens with the servers and anyone waiting in line to pay when we leave, and even more surprising is how many of these people show up on Sunday... and keep showing up; I really don't see how he does it: He has this gift.

Again, we are all called to share our faith, but a person with this gift can produce results for the gospel that are above and beyond just sharing, and they are always looking for someone to speak to about Jesus, and the people they speak to seem receptive in uncommon numbers.

Some examples from Scripture: Luke 19:10 says that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." People accused Jesus of being "a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners'" because he had many evangelistic relationships with sinful people (Matthew 11:19). Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5) are also examples of evangelists.

Cautions about the gift:

- Looking down on those who do not have the gift of Evangelist.
- Pressuring people to receive Christ before they are ready.

- Losing sight of the fact that the primary focus is to share the Gospel, not to “win a convert.”

Evidence that you might have it might include...

- You have a passion and confidence for sharing your faith.
- You eagerly develop *authentic* relationships with the lost with hopes of witnessing to them about Jesus.
- You have a strong grasp of Scripture.
- People are drawn toward Christ through you.

Possible ministry applications...

Outreach

Prison Ministry

Visitation

Counselors

The gift of Intercession

Primary Text: Colossians 1:9-12

The gift of Intercession is the ability to pray for significant lengths of time, on a regular basis, and often observe specific answers to those prayers. The purpose of the gift is to pray fervently according to the Spirit of God for specific needs in the body of Christ, as well as for the lost.

Cautions about this gift include...

- “Hearing from God” and thinking you are the final authority.
- Spiritual superiority resulting in pride.

Evidence that you might have this gift can include...

- You see frequent and specific answers to your prayers.
- You pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis.
- You have a passion to pray for the lost.
- You find a great fulfillment in deep and intensive prayer.
- You pray for others and “Kingdom issues” far more than you pray for yourself.
- You have a daily awareness of ongoing spiritual battles.

Possible ministry applications...

The gift of Healing

Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28

The gift of Healing is the ability to be used as a human intermediary through whom God's supernatural power is applied to a person's physical or emotional needs. The purpose of the gift is to bring emotional wholeness and physical health to the body of Christ as well as to lift and exalt the name of Jesus.

Once again, I would mention that the miraculous gifts, as this one is generally considered to be, are quite rare, and they are not given to make a celebrity out of the recipient, thus I would suggest that if we should see someone doing "healings" in front of a large audience on television, that we are not likely to be watching someone with the spiritual gift of healing at work!

Matthew 4:23-24 and 9:35 speak of Jesus' many healings. The Twelve had the gift of healing (Matt. 10:1), as did the Seventy (Luke 10:8-9), Peter (Acts 5:14-16), and Paul (Acts 3:1-8). Additionally, church elders are supposed to pray for the sick so that God might heal them (James 5:13-16).

This obviously brings us to some cautions about the gift, and they include:

- Thinking that you can heal others whenever you desire.
- Believing that it is your power and not God's.
- Believing that if the sick person just had more faith they would be healed.
- Believing that it is always God's will that someone be healed.

That last one deserves a little extra consideration, for it is natural for us to assume that God always wants a person to be healed of whatever they may suffer from, however this is not necessarily the case. I know that may sound harsh, but it is true. Remember, we were not promised an easy life on this earth, for did not Jesus teach that the servant is not greater than the Master? Instead, Jesus told us that like Him, we would face pain and temptation and sacrifice in this life, and it is common enough that an illness is the means by which we pass from this life of tears into a life of perfection in His presence. Thus in all things, our focus should be upon His will and not our own.

Evidence that you might have this gift can include...

- Others have been healed when you *pray* for them.
- People have sought you to *pray* for a physical healing.
- You have a great measure of faith and spend much time in *prayer*.

I hope that you noticed that each of these involves *prayer*, for prayer is the source of any power that is being used in this gift.

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

The gift of Giving

Primary Text: Romans 12:8 (see also Mark 12:41-44)

The gift of giving is the ability to *cheerfully* and *generously* contribute personal resources to God's work. The purpose of the gift is to discover and provide for the needs of the body of Christ in such a way that God is glorified, not the giver.

A person with this gift is uncommon, for they are not the ones who give something extra when a need is presented and call it good. Instead, these are people who look for needs to fill, they go above and beyond any reasonable expectation; if there is a need, this person is all over it. The gift is usually associated with money, but sometimes it might be labor or expertise or a skill set. Such a person does not wait to be asked, they learn about a situation and just show up. They seek no recognition, they seek no repayment and frequently and sometimes exclusively give secretly for they don't want others to know who gave the gift or met the need. Again, this is an unusual spiritual gift and it goes well beyond just being a loving and caring person.

Roughly 25 percent of Jesus' words in the Gospels are related to our resources and stewardship of them. Though he was poor, Jesus not only fed thousands (Mark 6:41) but also gave us his life as a gift (John 15:13). Elsewhere in the Bible, the widow (Mark 12:42-43), Tabitha (Acts 9:36), Barnabas (Acts 4:34-37), and the Macedonian church (2 Cor. 8:1-2) all had this gift.

As in Mark 12:41-44, the amount of the gift is not what causes it to be generous; it's the proportion of the gift. The widow gave all she had, even though the amount was small: It was all she had. People who have the gift of giving give what they have and try to find more ways to give.

As you can see, there are cautions about this gif. Obviously giving with the wrong motive would be a cautionary area, and giving with the idea of controlling others and pride are cautions. Yet for a person *who really has the gift*, not being able to say "no" is an even bigger caution. The first three things I listed are really signs that the person doesn't have the gift.

Evidence of the gift would be:

- You tend to give quietly and/or secretly.

- You take the initiative to find things to contribute to.
- You experience deep joy and satisfaction through giving.
- You are resourceful or have the ability to make money.
- It is easy for you to give large amounts of money.
- You are more concerned with meeting the need than you are with how much money you actually give

Possible ministry applications...

**Meals and Lodging
Specific projects**

**Fund raiser
Specific needs**

**Missionary Support
Sponsoring Students**

Benevolence

Let's Figure Out Which Gift(s) You Have

Most of the time, this is where you take a test that is comprised of a whole bunch of questions and then the answers are tallied up and you get results: You have the following gifts...

Before we are completed with our study, I'll give you a link to a very good assessment test, but it isn't quite that simple. As we've been going through the various gifts, I'm sure that some of you have thought that you have this or that gift... and you may well be right. Some of you have been through classes and taken tests in the past indicating this or that gift as well and they are probably correct. I like to add a little bit before reaching any conclusions that many others don't do, and the reason is that it is sometimes hard to tell the difference at first, between a spiritual gift and a natural talent or inclination, or even training and experience.

As an example, I have training and experience in various aspects of administration, and I always score very high on the tests for this; one time I was even made a church treasurer because I'm pretty good at that kind of thing. The only problem is that I absolute can't stand it! Yuk!! I highly doubt that I have this as a spiritual gift, but I can pitch in and help when necessary. I am not a "detail" guy, I'm a "big picture" kind of guy, and that shows up in the way I teach, and I do have the gift of teaching. Thus, the way I approach things seems simpler than the way a detail person would, because I give enough details to see the larger point without the little details that make it harder to discern.

See the difference?

So, here's what I propose: In the next two sections, I'll give you a bunch of personality related questions for you to consider; we'll use forms for this. After that, I'll provide a link to an online test, and then we'll get back together here with one or two more question sessions to help you complete the picture. Finally, I'll discuss how to put these gifts into action in everyday life.

Your Personality

All of us were created by God and God knows every bit of us, including every aspect of our personalities. In fact, God knows you better than you know yourself. In His wisdom and by His grace, He has given each of us a spiritual gift above and beyond our natural talents, inclinations and abilities. It only makes sense that like the rest of His creation, our personalities and gifts should be orderly and in harmony. In this section, we'll do a little exercise to identify something about ourselves and begin to make a sort of composite drawing of who we really are. In doing the exercise, please bear in mind that nobody is asking you to put your answers on a billboard anywhere; this is your information, so don't worry about what others might expect or think.

We have a form for this purpose on the next page...

PERSONALITY PREFERENCE ASSESSMENT FORM

God created you in a wonderfully unique way. He made no mistake when He designed you, and you are at your best when you are most yourself!

This simple assessment tool will help you define a sketch of your personality preferences. The categories of “leanings” you select will give you insight to which ministry you would probably enjoy the most and be most productive in.

It may be difficult to “force” yourself to choose one of the two words in each set. It is understood that you may have a little of each, but you should naturally lean towards one or another. The purpose of this tool is not to “box” you in, but help you identify the real you. (**Remember:** Don’t answer how you would like others to see you, but according to what you believe you truly are.)

I most prefer to work with:

Check only one.

PEOPLE
(Direct people contact)

PROJECTS
(Tasks, Systems, Events)

I work best in situations that are:

Check only one.

PLANNED
(Structured and Organized)

PROGRESSIVE
(Fluid and free flowing)

I most prefer to work in situations that I can be:

Check only one.

PRECISE
(Accurate and Factual)

PLAYFUL
(High-Spirited or Creative)

I most prefer situations in which I can be:

Check only one.

PIONEERING
(Inventive or Innovative)

PATTERNED
(Established and Stable)

Write the four words that you marked:

This grouping of four personality preferences will paint a picture of the unique person God created you to be and give you insight to the ministry you will be most fulfilled in.

Take your four responses and write them down; they begin to paint a picture of the unique person that God created you to be. If you are currently involved in ministry and/or you have been thinking you have this or that spiritual gift, these selections should confirm that ministry or thought. In any case, this list of responses will come up again later on...

From here on out, you will notice that I will be writing about *ministry*, but let's not be confused about what that means. After all, this is a Bible study on spiritual gifts; I'm not talking about "ministry" in any clergy – laity context; there is no such thing in the New Testament, it came much later, and we can discuss whether that is good, bad or indifferent some other time. Right now we are talking about ministry, which is service, and we are all called to serve. Remember what the purpose of spiritual gifts is?

- To glorify God
- To build up the body of Christ
- To develop unity in the body of Christ
- To develop maturity in the body of Christ

And... let's not forget that the spiritual gifts were given for the common good of the members of the body of Christ, thus the gifts are to be used in service within the body of Christ, and that is what "ministry" is.

Questions and More Questions...

This form contains a series of questions for you to consider about areas of Christian service that may or may not be of interest to you. The point of this exercise is to help you identify which areas of service are areas for which you have passion or enthusiasm, because this will help you come to recognize where your spiritual gifts may be and where they might not be; this exercise is a tool, in other words.

OK, here goes... I would suggest that you jot down your answers on the form on the next page.

MINISTRY PASSION ASSESSMENT FORM

Passion is a God given inner motivation that stirs your heart and causes you to wholeheartedly embrace a particular ministry. Your passion creates in you an interest, concern, and desire to make a difference between just “helping out” and sensing that you are fulfilling a God designed mission for you. These questions will help you identify your ministry.

1. The area I most like (would like) working in is:

Choose no more than two

- Specific tasks or projects
- Direct contact with people
- Information (study/research)
- Creative ideas, vision, dreaming up new things
- Planning and organizing (people or projects)
- Other _____

2. The people I most like to work with are: (For whom do you have the greatest concern or burden?)

Choose no more than three.

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Senior Citizens | Divorced Single Adults | Young Married Couples |
| Unemployed | Teenagers | College Students |
| Toddlers | Chronically ill/hospitalized | Handicapped Children |
| Poor | Handicapped Adults | Prisoners |
| Homeless | Engaged/Newlyweds | Elementary-aged kids |
| Single Parents | Immigrants/Refugees | Men |
| Women | New Christians | Visitors |
| New Members | Infants | Others _____ |

3. In which areas do you have the strongest feelings and desire for improvement or change?

Choose no more than three.

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| AIDS | Abortion | Health Care |
| Marriage Problems | Poverty/Hunger | Crime |
| Racism | Illiteracy/Education | Homosexuality |
| Latch-Key Kids | Drug/Alcohol Issues | Politics |
| Environmental Issues | Other _____ | |

4. Which general ministry area appeals most to you?

Choose no more than two

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| World Missions | Stewardship (finance) |
| Discipleship (spiritual growth) | Business/Administration |
| Evangelism (personal witnessing) | Caring/Nurturing |
| Communication/Marketing | Worship/Music |

5. I prefer serving:

Up front

behind the scenes alone

In a team

6. If you could do anything and not fail (money and time were not issues), what would you do for God? (Go ahead, dream big!)

7. What ministries do you know you don't want to participate in?
-

8. If you were receiving the Humanitarian of the Year on national TV, what specifically would you like to be recognized/honored for?

9. How would you like your tombstone to read?

What is your personal ministry passion assessment?

From the information you have listed for the above questions, write out a brief sketch of what you believe your ministry passion to be. Don't worry about "getting it right" or writing it perfectly. Just write a simple phrase or sentence about your ministry passion. (A helpful hint of how to do this is to "connect" some of the dominant themes in the answers you have given in this ministry passion statement.)

AFTER YOU COMPLETE THIS EXERCISE, and not before (for best results) you are ready to take the spiritual gifts “test”. The link below will take you to a very good free test that you can take on your computer; I use this test when I teach spiritual gifts in churches and have found it to be excellent.

Note: This test is produced by Team Ministries. I am in no way associated with them; there isn’t any “monkey business” going on here; there are no tricks and you will not be asked for a credit card or anything like that. However, you will need to provide a name and email and you’ll receive a report on your results. As you might expect, they will send newsletters and so forth after that, but I have found that if you “unsubscribe” they will stop.

So, if you are cool with that, then go take the test now: <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi?intro=1>

On the next few pages are some possible ministry applications for your gift(s)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS MINISTRY MATCH GUIDE

The following list of ministries that fit under specific spiritual gifts is only intended as an example of how the gifts *might* translate into action. Because we are so new in this process, we have listed not only our existing ministries, but we have also added some that we may develop in the future under the necessary gifts for making them happen.

HELP/SERVICE

Telephone Ministry	Cookie Ministry	Children's Work	Church Camp
Nursery	Transportation	Usher	Greeter
Communion Prep	Set Up/Tear Down	Parking Lot	Photography
Visitation	Drama	Electronics	Coffee

LEADERSHIP

Head Usher	Ministry Head	Trainer	Director
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HOSPITALITY

Usher/Greeter	Host	Open Home	Welcome Center
Home Study	Chats	Event Booths	

ADMINISTRATION

Ministry Head	Special Events	Finances	Marketing/PR
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DISCERNMENT

Counselor	Visitation	Benevolence	Divorce Recovery
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FAITH

Prayer Partner	Visitation	Encouragement	Counseling
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MUSIC

Praise Team	Musical Band	Kid's Music	Easy Worship
			Technicians

TONGUES/INTERPRETATION

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

MIRACLES

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Handman Arts and Crafts Set up/Tear Down Special Projects Event Booths
HEALING

(Because it is a supernatural sign gift, anyone who has it would already have an obviously specific calling for this gift.)

GIVING

Meals and Lodging Fund raiser Missionary Support Benevolence
Specific projects Specific needs Sponsoring Students

MERCY

Counselor Divorce Recovery Prison Ministry
Drug/Alcohol Recovery Bereavement Mission Work
Visitation

KNOWLEDGE/WISDOM

Research Youth work Counselor Marriage Enrichment
Teaching Mentoring Discipleship Visitation
Benevolence

EXHORTATION

Greeter Counselor Usher Teacher

TEACHING

Mentor Discipleship Youth Worker Teacher

PASTOR/SHEPHERD

Lay Pastor Discipleship Visitation Training
Youth Work Home Bible Study Outreach Follow-up
Teachers

APOSTLESHIP

Missionary Outreach Church Planter Overseer

MISSIONARY

Mission Ministry Evangelism Outreach

PROPHECY

Preacher Teacher Vision Leader

EVANGELISM

Outreach Prison Ministry Visitation Counselors

INTERCESSION

Prayer Warriors Prayer Ministries

The Last Step

If you have completed the exercises I've given you and taken the test, you are ready for this last step; ah yes, another little exercise.

Before I get into it, a short word...

I am going to assume that you are already active in your church and its ministries; who knows? Maybe you are the preacher! If this is true, that you are already active in Christian service, then you may have noticed that in many of the gift descriptions, under evidence, there is something that might say "people ask you to..." This is important, because if you are already serving, the people you are serving with already have a fair idea what your gifts are, even if they don't know much of anything about spiritual gifts. Active and mature Christians can often discern the difference between natural talent and a gift... again, even if they don't know anything about spiritual gifts as such, for they can tell that when a gifted person is serving within their gifted area, there is just something "different" about them. So, where I am going with this is simply that you might talk to the people you are serving with to see if they might be able to help you confirm your gift. You might also direct them to this study...

OK, here we go on the last exercise, it's on the next page...

MINISTRY RESUME

Name: _____ Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ Skills: _____

Using what you have learned about yourself from your Spiritual Gifts Test, your Ministry Passion Assessment Form, your Personality Preference Assessment Form, and the counsel of mature Christians who know you complete the following sections to develop your Ministry Resume!

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

List up to five of your primary spiritual gifts from your Spiritual Gift Test:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

MINISTRY PASSION

Note the conclusion of your ministry passion from the Ministry Passion Form:

PERSONALITY PREFERENCE

List out your four areas of personality preference from the Personality Preference Form:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Check the one that best describes you.

New or young Christian

Regardless of how long you've been a Christian, you are still learning the basics of Christianity.

Consistent/Growing Christian

You know the basics of the Bible and God's will for your life, and you are consistent in your walk with God.

Guiding/Discipling Christian

You have progressed beyond the basics to guiding and discipling others Christians who are younger in their faith

Christian Leader

You are influencing other Christians in a positive way to make a contribution to the overall mission of the church.

AVAILABILITY

Check the one which tells how much time you have available for Christian service each week.

- 20 hours each week
10 hours each week
1 hour each week
5 hours each week
Other _____

MINISTRY SELECTION

Consider the spiritual maturity section carefully because they are vital, and most people are not quite as spiritually mature as they think they are... or that they say they are. If you have teenagers, you have probably noticed that the ones who are most often claiming to be the most mature are really the least mature! This is important because if you should have gifts like teaching, leadership, wisdom, prophet and discernment, but you are not yet disciplining, I can almost guarantee that you will fall victim to most of the cautions I listed about those gifts if you jump into those roles too soon; they take time to develop.

Now go back and look at what you have compiled in this exercise. Are your gifts and your personality and your passions in sync? If so, then you should get serving! If there are some conflicts, please consider the following points:

1. The test was made by humans who are not perfect; nothing devised by humans is perfect and maybe you should discount that result.

2. If your gift is teaching, but being in front of a group results in paralyzing fear for you, then maybe blogging is your best teaching medium right now. Or, it could also be that your time for teaching has not yet come, and that God will open the right doors for you down the road when you are ready.

What usually happens right about now, if you've done everything I've suggested, is that in one or more areas, you will come to understand why things have taken place in your life; maybe a light bulb comes on in your head. You will quite possibly gain a new confidence in one or more areas and better see how and where you fit into the body of Christ.

For most people, confirmation of a spiritual gift, any spiritual gift, is not a weight of obligation, but more of an empowerment and liberation to be free to serve God in the manner in which He intended for you, a manner that brings amazing satisfaction and joy into your life. It also will usually reveal why you serve in one area and why somebody else serves in another way, and to recognize that one is not better than the other, but that all areas of service are equally amazing and equally important in our mission of building the body of Christ together, as a team, and for His glory.

A Final Thought or Two

The study of spiritual gifts really isn't one of those things that you just button up and file away, so I suppose that in truth, none of my thoughts is really quite "final," yet there is a time to move on to other things and let a study simmer for a while before coming back to it again.

How can we put our gifts into use in real life?

That question is both easy and hard to answer, because it is multidimensional in nature. The easy part is this: Start serving in a ministry area that relates to your gift. If your gift is one of those that needs to be developed, then put yourself in an environment where development can take place. See? Simple!

Of course, your church environment can complicate things if this sort of thing isn't encouraged there. Like anything else, you might need to do a little investigating to determine how much you will be allowed to do, particularly if you aren't well known in the congregation. Should you have a gift such as teaching, and you are in a church that only allows denominationally trained teachers, then you can either get their training or find a congregation without that requirement.

Obviously, I can't list every single possibility here, but I think you get the idea.

There is another possibility that is even more of a challenge, and that is that you might be what I sometimes call a "lone Christian," meaning that you choose not to be involved in a church at all. If this is the case, your gifts are going to be very hard to really put to use. Yes, I know you can worship in nature, at the seashore, at home, on the bus and at the mall... great. Yet if you have followed this study, surely it has occurred to you by now that shunning community with other Christians isn't the way God set things up.

I realize that many people might have had a bad experience of one sort or another. I also realize that there are some lousy churches and church leaders out there. Do you think that they are all bad? If so, how would you be in a position to know that?

We all know what the word "assume" spells...

If you aren't in a church, then go find a suitable church... there are churches that are nothing short of awesome out there! Are they perfect? Well, probably not, so you'll fit right in!

OK, that's probably sufficient to make the point; use your gifts for God's glory and to build the body of Christ! Take the risk, make the effort, and you will be glad you did!