

SPIRITUAL GIFTS - FAQs

*Your spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of others,
just as other people were given gifts for your benefit.*

Rick Warren¹

*"Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant."
1 Corinthians 12:1*

Rob Cutshaw, was a rock hunter with a small roadside shop in Andrews, North Carolina. He sold the rocks to tourists, collectors, and jewelry stores. From experience he knew which rocks would sell, but used appraisers to determine their value.

One day Rob found a sparkling blue rock that he described as “purty and big.” Cutshaw tried unsuccessfully to sell the rock and decided to hide it in his house. He thought the rock might sell for \$500, but was willing to take less to pay his power bill. It’s a good thing he didn’t sell because the rock turned out to be the most valuable sapphire in history. “The Star of David” weighs almost one pound with an estimated value of \$3 million dollars.²

It may be hard to believe, but you are far richer than Rob Cutshaw. If you’ve accepted Christ, you are wealthy beyond measure with all the resources of heaven available to you.³ At any moment, you can ask in His name for whatever you need and He will give it to you.⁴ *"We are certain that God will hear our prayers when we ask for what pleases him. And if we know that God listens when we pray, we are sure that our prayers have already been answered."*⁵

Spiritual gifts are so important that they will be the focus of this chapter and the next four. What you **DO** in your calling is based on the gifts and natural abilities (see *Chapter 12*) that God has given you.

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My spiritual gift is teaching; therefore, my assignment is to use my gift of teaching. Unfortunately, many believers treat their spiritual gifts like buried treasure – unknown, hidden, and unused.

Christians are not supposed to be ignorant about spiritual gifts.⁶ George Barna found that 78% of self-identified Christians have heard about spiritual gifts; unfortunately, only one-third of those people are actually using them. Where are the other two-thirds? Why aren't they using their spiritual gifts? And why haven't the remaining 22% at least heard about spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are the buried treasure of the Church. God gave them “...to prepare God's people to serve and to build up the body of Christ.” It's vital that all believers – 100% - know and use their gifts.

If even one believer doesn't, the Church isn't as strong and effective as it could and should be.

Spiritual gifts are the untapped resource of the Church.

THE BASICS

One of my favorite poems, written by T.S. Elliot, is included in his short story *The Elephant Child*.⁸

*I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.*

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Every first year journalism student will recognize the “Five Ws + H”: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?* It’s a time-tested formula for providing the “full” story on a topic. There’s so much information about spiritual gifts will use a question and answer format to provide the “full story.”

1. *Where are spiritual gifts discussed in the Bible?*

There are three main passages related to spiritual gifts: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; and Ephesians 4. In addition, the gift of intercession is discussed in 1 Corinthians 1:3-11, and the gift of hospitality is mentioned in 1 Peter 4:9-11.

2. *What is a spiritual gift?*

Every Christmas morning my brothers and I raced to our living room where the lights on the tree glistened as they reflected off the ornaments. My excitement grew as I tore off the wrapping paper wondering what might be inside. This same sense of awe should fill your soul as you open the gift that God has given you - a *spiritual gift*.

A spiritual gift is the Holy Spirit working through a believer to bring about spiritual impact on others. The Bible itself defines a spiritual gift as “... *the manifestation of the Spirit ...*”⁹ The word *manifestation* means to reveal, express, demonstrate, or make known. As you serve others, the Spirit reveals, expresses, demonstrates, or makes known His presence through your ministry.

As a new Christian I thought of a spiritual gift as one of my abilities that the Holy Spirit supercharged so I could serve others. Now I realize that, if a spiritual gift is “... *the manifestation of the Spirit ...*,” a spiritual gift is not some THING; a spiritual gift is some ONE. The Holy Spirit IS the gift.

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The Holy Spirit is like the wind that you can't actually see; instead, you see its' effects. The tree leaves flutter; the lake water ripples; the flags flutter; and you feel it on your face. You don't actually see the Holy Spirit, but you observe the effect of His presence.

Diamonds are the most desirable and valuable gemstone in the world. The Holy Spirit is like a diamond; the facets of the diamond are the individual spiritual gifts. Like a diamond, the Spirit is a beautiful, desirable, and precious unit with many individual parts; therefore, each spiritual gift is a reflection of the Holy Spirit as a whole. When light shines on a diamond, it sparkles and displays many beautiful colors. The fire and brilliance of a diamond comes from its reflection of light. Similarly, the Light of Jesus Christ radiates through spiritual gifts to display the fire and brilliance of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Who has spiritual gifts?*

Every Christian has least one spiritual gift, and perhaps several gifts. Only Christians have spiritual gifts because only believers have the Holy Spirit living within them. The Spirit's role is vital, for without Him, there would be no spiritual gifts.

4. *Who gives you your spiritual gifts?*

God gives spiritual gifts to you. Remember: THE spiritual gift is THE Holy Spirit. Since God sent Him to live within you, God is the one who gives you your gifts. Jesus told His disciples, *"I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."*¹⁰

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5. *When do you receive your spiritual gifts?*

People bring presents on your birthday to celebrate the day you were *physically* born. In the same way, you receive your spiritual gifts at the moment you are *spiritually* born – when you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. At that instant the Holy Spirit indwells you, and among other things, imparts your spiritual gifts and promises to never leave nor forsake you.

6. *Why are spiritual gifts given?*

Fathers give their children gifts because they love them. Similarly, your Heavenly Father gives spiritual gifts to you because you are His child and He loves you. *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”*¹¹

While it’s wonderful to receive a gift, it means little unless you actually *use* the gift. God gives you your gifts to serve others. Spiritual gifts are *“given for the common good.”*¹² God works through your gifts to serve others; similarly, God works through others through their gifts to serve you. As all believers use their gifts, the Body of Christ is strengthened and the Kingdom of God is extended.¹³

7. *Why is it important for you to know your spiritual gifts?*

There are at least three benefits in knowing your spiritual gifts. First, it is the main answer to why God put you on earth. *“Anyone who has the gift of serving should serve. Anyone who has the gift of teaching should teach. Whoever has the gift of encouraging others should encourage. Whoever has the gift of giving to others should give freely. Anyone who has the gift of being a leader should try hard when he leads. Whoever has the gift of showing mercy to others should do so with joy.”*¹⁴ Next, knowing your gifts points to the role you should play in the church. If your gift is shepherding, volunteer for the small group ministry. If your gift is intercession, be part of the prayer ministry. And if it’s evangelism, become part of the evangelism team.

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THE SPECIFICS

8. *How many spiritual gifts are there?*

Bible scholars disagree on the exact number because there are three lists of gifts and they're all different.¹⁵ Some scholars believe these lists were only meant to be examples, and that other gifts exist that weren't mentioned. This book will focus on 21 gifts for two reasons. First, all the gifts in this book appear in at least one of the three lists. The second reason is that the gifts in this book are associated with a Greek word called *charisma* that means supernatural power.

9. *How many spiritual gifts are given to each believer?*

Every believer has at least one spiritual gift but no one has all the gifts.¹⁶ Some believers have one gift; others have multiple gifts. The number of gifts is unimportant; rather, it's your faithfulness and obedience in using your gifts.¹⁷

10. *Can you choose your spiritual gifts?*

You don't get to choose your birthday gift. People choose a present for you that they think is perfect for you. Similarly, the gifts you receive from God are "... *just as he determines*"¹⁸

When I was 13 years old the Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and from that day on I've been an avid fan. I love their songs and associate their music with many of my teenage memories. One birthday my children gave me the most perfect gift I could've received – a boxed set of all of the Beatles songs ever recorded. Tears streamed down my face as I realized my children love me so much

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that they know which gift would be perfect. Likewise, God loves you so much that He gives you the spiritual gifts that are perfect for you.

11. *How does God determine which spiritual gifts you receive?*

God gives you the gifts you need to undertake your calling - the unique assignment from God. You can be confident that He has equipped you with every gift you'll need to accomplish your assignment.

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12. *Will your spiritual gifts change over time?*

Your spiritual gifts will not change over time. God gives you all of your spiritual gifts at the moment you receive your gifts. Check research. Work on this section.

One time I received a nice gift and was ready to move on to the next present. Suddenly the person who gave me the gift said, *"Wait! There's another gift underneath the first one."* Although I hadn't seen it at first there was a second gift in the box. Over time, as you gain more ministry experience, there may be other gifts waiting to emerge.²⁰

13. *Which spiritual gifts are the most important?*

Every spiritual gift is equally important and necessary to the functioning of the Church. *"No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, 'Get lost; I don't need you'? Or, Head telling Foot, 'You're fired; your job has been phased out'?"*²¹ All the gifts are needed, and all the gifts are important.

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THE APPLICATION

14. *Which spiritual gifts are your spiritual gifts?*

When believers talk about “my spiritual gift,” they’re referring to the gift that the Holy Spirit consistently works through us. My spiritual gift is teaching. I know it’s my gift because whenever I teach the impact of my teaching is far beyond my own abilities. Therefore, I can’t take any credit for the result. I can only thank the Spirit for choosing to work through my teaching.

15. *How do you identify your spiritual gifts?*

The best way to know which gifts you have is to start serving! Get involved in ministry. Explore many different opportunities. Notice which activities energize you, rather than exhaust you. Be aware of God’s impact on others. Does anyone tell you that God used you? Ask mature believers what gifts they see in you. Most of all, notice when the impact is greater than your abilities. Look for God at work.

16. *What about using spiritual gift assessments to identify your gifts?*

There’s nothing wrong with spiritual gift assessments – just don’t depend on them. The results often indicate what your strengths are – not what your spiritual gifts are. Your results will be less accurate if you have limited serving experience. You can’t determine how God works through you in ministry through a paper and pencil test. It can only be seen through personal experience in real life.

THE CLARIFICATION

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17. *How does your role in spiritual gifts differ from that of the Holy Spirit?*

Spiritual gifts are like the electrical system in your home. You're the wire; the Spirit is the electricity. The current flows through the wire, and when discharged, that energy transforms, alters, and changes the situation. When you serve others, it's the Spirit's power flowing through you to impact others. You are the plug in the socket, but it's the power of the Spirit that brings about the results.

18. *How do spiritual gifts differ from abilities?*

Everyone has abilities, but only believers have spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts reflect God's power while abilities are a result of your strengths.²² Spiritual gifts have a spiritual impact that exceeds that of human abilities. This topic will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

19. *Do the gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues still exist today?*

The spiritual gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, and miracles are controversial. This book teaches that all gifts – including the so-called “miraculous gifts” – are still at work because the Holy Spirit is still on earth. Since the individual gifts are various aspects of the Holy Spirit, it's unlikely that parts of Him are no longer functioning. If you hold an opposing view, let's agree to disagree and trust God to work however He chooses.

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20. *What accountability exists for using your spiritual gifts?*

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Someday you will stand before God and give an accounting of your life.²³ In *The Purpose Driven Life* Rick Warren writes that God will ask you only two questions.²⁴ First, “*What did you do with my Son?*” Your answer will clarify whether or not you accepted God’s free gift of *salvation* through Christ.

The second question is, “*What did you do with all I gave you?*” Although you are not saved by serving others, God expects you to serve others *because* you have been saved. Your answer to the second question will assess your *stewardship* of everything God has entrusted to you.

Imagine the joy of answering these questions and hearing God speak those words you long to hear. “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*”²⁵

21. *How does God use my spiritual gifts to impact others?*

Spiritual impact occurs when spiritual gifts are used to move people closer to Christ. The Spirit works through a believer and the outcome is a change in spiritual life of others. But to have spiritual impact, you must have a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Focus on building your relationship with Him, then identify your gift and start using it.²⁶

22. *What final advice would be helpful in identifying and using your spiritual gifts?*

Be patient. God will make your gifts clear in time as you faithfully serve others. Don’t be overly concerned about what you are doing for God. He’s far more concerned about what He’s doing within you to make you more like Jesus Christ. Your *character* - who you are - is God’s chief concern. Your

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conduct - what you do – also is important to Him, but in second place. Remember: *what you do* flows out of *who you are* - not the other way around.

SUMMARY

Spiritual gifts are the hidden treasure of the Church. A spiritual gift is the way the Holy Spirit chooses to reveal Himself through you as you serve others. Only believers have spiritual gifts because only Christians have the Holy Spirit living within them. You receive your gifts from the Holy Spirit at the moment you accept Christ so you can help others come to and mature in Christ.

Bible scholars disagree on the exact number of gifts, but the ones mentioned in this book are specifically listed in the Bible. All believers have at least one gift and no believer has all of the gifts. You can't choose your gifts; instead, God gives you the perfect gifts for the work He has assigned to you. Your gifts will not change, but other gifts may emerge as you gain ministry experience. All spiritual gifts are equally important and necessary for the smooth operation of the Church.

The phrase "my spiritual gifts" refers to the gifts that the Spirit consistently uses through you. While spiritual gift assessments may be helpful, the best way to identify your gifts is to serve. The Holy Spirit works through you to have spiritual impact. He is the one doing the work; you are His partner in ministry. The "miraculous gifts" - healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy – are controversial. I believe that all spiritual gifts are in use today.

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You are accountable to God for your spiritual gifts. It's important for believers to identify and use their gifts to serve others. Be patient, serve in a ministry, and notice how God works through you to have impact beyond your own abilities. Ultimately, character is more important to God than what you do for Him. Focus on becoming more like Jesus Christ by building an intimate relationship with Him. And be willing to serve as He reveals your spiritual gifts.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Warren, Rick.
- ² The Atlanta Journal Constitution, May 17, 1987 from <http://www.higherpraise.com/illustrations/treasure.htm>
- ³ Ephesians 1:3
- ⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:14
- ⁵ 1 John 5:14-15 (CEV)
- ⁶ “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” 1 Corinthians 12:1
- ⁷ Ephesians 4:12 (NLT)
- ⁸ Kipling, Rudyard. *The Elephant Child*
- ⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:7b
- ¹⁰ John 16:7
- ¹¹ 1 John 3:1a
- ¹² 1 Corinthians 12:7c
- ¹³ Romans 12:4, John 17:4, 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Ephesians 4:12-15
- ¹⁴ Romans 12:7-8 (NCV)
- ¹⁵ Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 27-31; and Ephesians 4:11-12
- ¹⁶ “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.” Romans 12:7
- ¹⁷ “Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well.” 1 Peter 4:10 (CEV)
- ¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:c
- ¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 and 11
- ²⁰ Philippians 3:12-16
- ²¹ 1 Corinthians 12:21 (MSG)
- ²² “You will not succeed by your own strength or by your own power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD All-Powerful.” Zechariah 4:6b (NCV)
- ²³ “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Romans 14:12

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²⁴ Warren, Rick. The Purpose Driven Life

²⁵ Matthew 5:21

²⁶ “If [his gift] is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach, if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” Romans 12:7