

DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS



It is exciting to discover the spiritual gifts God gives to each of us. We feel loved and valued, something like opening a beautifully wrapped birthday present. Everyone has at least one spiritual gift. Doing a "spiritual gifts" assessment, as well as soliciting feedback from those who know us, can help us determine the gifts God is hoping to develop within us. However, two other factors can help us discover our gifts: **The Cross** and **personal fulfillment**.

The **Cross** here means that truly discovering our spiritual gifts challenges us to **release control** of anything and everything and everyone in our lives, releasing it all into the nail-pierced hands of Jesus. This leaves us with OPEN HANDS, ready to receive the spiritual gifts Jesus wants to give us. So we die to our old self-centered nature so that the explosive new life of God might be born in us. (See Romans 6: 3-4; Philippians 3: 10-11.) The Cross reminds us of our own powerlessness. It compels us to *trust completely* in God's Power to open up a whole new reality for us. And that is a gift too!

The ingredient of **personal fulfillment** within God's call to us does not sound very "Christian." Indeed, it sounds selfish. Yet, before a divine call becomes a successful ministry, the seeds of a personal excitement for that particular spiritual gift will be planted in our heart. Psalm 37: 3-4 speaks of God granting us "the desires of our heart" as we commit ourselves to walking in His Presence. The Lord will create an awareness within us that such-and-such (a spiritual gift or ministry) will be **a tool for wholeness** for me. Somehow I know that I will be a more complete human being, a better person, through practicing this gift - *not that it will be easy*. It is knowing that to receive the gift brings me into a closer, more dynamic relationship with the Giver. In fact, all my relationships become more positively charged with love and greater awareness: with family, with friends, with the earth around me, and with myself!

Some points to consider...

- **Beware of focusing too much upon the gift and losing sight of the Giver.** Jesus reminds us that it is not what we can do for God but what God has already done for us that is most important. (See Luke 10: 17-20.) Idolatry takes on some very subtle disguises. Surrender to God's loving authority in your life through regular prayer, bible reading, and a small group fellowship. He will keep you on the right path (Isaiah 42:16).
- **Allow others' gifts to compliment your own.** The Apostle Paul likens the church to a human body. All the parts have an important function in helping that body to "live" fully (1 Cor. chapters 12-14). Additionally, let others help to identify and to encourage you in your particular gift. Be an active encourager yourself!
- **From the very start, pray about replicating yourself in your ministry area.** This is the principle of discipling (See 1 Kings 19: 19-21; John 3: 26-30). Ask the Lord to show you someone who can eventually come alongside you to learn how to exercise this

ministry. Your challenge is to *let go of any possessiveness* as you continue to release yourself into His Hands for future service.

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- **Be sensitive to burnout.** Know your limits in time and energy. Try majoring in only one or two gifts areas. Watch out for a "performance orientation" which basically says "I must do (endless) good works in order to be truly loved and accepted." This is the Great Lie. It is countered in the truth of God's Unconditional Love and Unlimited Power. (See Ephesians 2: 8-10; 3: 20-21.) Realize that **rest and play** are part of your divine call. (See Genesis 2: 2-3; Hebrews 4:1.)
- **Develop a sense of humor.** We become so easily tangled in the weighty bondage of our own narrow viewpoint. Seriously! The ability to laugh at a situation allows us a valuable perspective. The key to good humor is an openness to SURPRISE. Surprise shatters the prison doors where we can finally enter the open spaces and breathe deeply, taking in the larger landscape. (See Isaiah 55: 9; and Matthew 18:3.)

SOME GIFTS AND MINISTRIES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- Taken from the E.C.W. Handbook, Diocese of San Joaquin, CA

ADMINISTRATION - Making plans and decisions and giving directions that result in the attainment of goals. An organizer. (1 Cor. 12:28)

APOSTLESHIP - Taking spiritual responsibility over the church at large, speaking with authority to other churches and edifying the people. Apostles often establish new ministries. (Ephesians 4:11)

CELIBACY - Remaining single, enjoying it and not suffering undue sexual temptation. (Matt. 19:12 & I Cor. 7:7)

DISCERNMENT - Discerning between truth and error, good and evil, human and divine and between serving God and self. Discernment is given to each person as it is needed. (I Cor. 12:10)

EVANGELISM - Communicating the Gospel to non-believers in such a way that they open their hearts to Christ. This gift must not be confused with witnessing which is expected of all believers. (Eph. 4:11)

EXORCISM (Deliverance) - The ability to cast out demons and evil spirits. (Matt. 12:32)

EXHORTATION - Speaking the truth in love, but with such conviction that when others are challenged or encouraged, the Body is uplifted (Rom. 12:8).

FAITH - Knowing when a situation is not hopeless or when God is doing a miracle. This gift is given when needed to every member of the Body, but given in more abundance to some for ministry. (I Cor. 12:9)

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GIVING - Contributing money and time, based on knowledge and needs of people with the Body of Christ. Responsible use of money, influence, possessions and the gifts God has given you. Tithing for God's work at home and abroad is an important part of the gift of giving. (Rom. 12:8)

HEALING - Praying effectively for those who need healing - physical, spiritual or emotional. All believers should exercise this gift, but some will receive it as a ministry of healing. (I Cor. 12:9, Luke 10:9, James 5: 14-15)

HELPS - Helping with routine work in an organization or the parish, providing a foundation for other ministries to operate effectively. (I Cor. 12:28)

HOSPITALITY - Opening one's home to guests and strangers so that they may be strengthened physically and spiritually. Offering one's home for meeting and prayer groups. (Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:1-2, Acts 16:15, I Pet. 4:9, Matt. 25:35)

INTERCESSION - Persevering in prayer until the answer comes; or praying regularly for those who possess other gifts that they may be anointed to use them as the Lord guides. Praying for those who request prayers for healing, guidance and strength. (James 5:16, Luke 11: 5-13, 18: 1-13)

INTERPRETATION - The ability to make known in the vernacular, the message of one who speaks in tongues. (I Cor. 12: 10, 30; I Cor. 14:13)

KNOWLEDGE - The special ability to discover, accumulate, analyze, and clarify information and ideas which are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the Body. (I Cor. 12:8)

LEADERSHIP - Leading with great tact, natural authority, clear direction, delegating responsibility and calling out gifts of other; taking risks and moving people to accomplish purposes for the glory of God. (Rom 12:8, 2 Sam. 23:3)

MARTYRDOM - Suffering for the faith even to the point of death, while displaying a joyous & victorious attitude, bringing glory to God. (Acts 7: 54-60)

MERCY - Bearing another's burden, and by deeds or words giving assistance and guidance. Mercy is not only compassion, it is also empathy. (Rom. 12:8)

MISSIONARY - The ability to minister whatever spiritual gifts they have in a different culture. (Acts 13: 2-3, 10: 23-47)

PASTOR - Shepherding, counseling, and encouraging the believers in their Christian walk; feeding them from God's Word and taking responsibility for their general well-being in the Body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11)

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PROPHECY - The ability to receive clear and specific revelations from God for His people, when God wants to communicate directly in a given situation. (I Cor. 12:10, 14:1, 3-5)

SERVICE - The ability to perform tasks which benefit others, meet practical needs and bring joy to the one serving. (Rom. 12:7, Eph 6: 5-9)

TEACHING - Awakening others to the knowledge of God's Word. Imparting to them the facts of Christian life in such a way that they are equipped and strengthened for work in the Body of Christ. (Rom. 12:7, James 3:1)

TONGUES - The ability to speak in an unknown language to believers for public edification when accompanied by interpretation and to God for personal edification. (I Cor. 12:10, 28; 1 Cor. 14: 13-19)

VOLUNTARY POVERTY - The ability to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal life-style equivalent to those living at the poverty level in a given society, in order to serve God more effectively. (I Cor. 13: 1-3)

WISDOM - The gift of insight and understanding of life situations; perceiving what to do and how to do it. (I Cor. 12:8)