

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ¹

CRAFTSMANSHIP – Exodus 31:3-11

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to advance God’s kingdom through artistic and creative expressions.²

Related Verses: Exodus 35:30-35; Exodus 36:2; 2 Chronicles 34:9-13

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS ³ (i.e. Discernment) – 1 Corinthians 12:10

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to know whether a statement, action, or motive has its source in God, our flesh, the world, or Satan.

Related Verses: Matthew 16:23; Mark 13:22; Acts 5:1-11; Acts 8:9-25; Acts 13:8-11; Acts 16:16-18 (cf. Mark 13:22; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:1; Ephesians 6:12; John 8:44; Heb 5:12-14; 1 John 4:1)

EXHORTATION – Romans 12:8

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to effectively encourage, comfort, challenge, or rebuke others to help them live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Related Verses: Romans 15:14; Acts 14-21-22; Acts 9:26-28; Colossians 4:7-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; Hebrews 10:24-25; Peter 5:1-3

¹ Before working through this chart, one should be aware of four viewpoints of this author. (1) Based on Scriptural data, this author’s defines spiritual gifts as special abilities given by God through the Holy Spirit to empower believers for ministry to the body of Christ. (2) In light of that definition, the spiritual gifts listed in this chart include all spiritual gifts (whether Old and New Testament) that are supported biblically. So while this author believes there may be spiritual gifts not addressed in the Bible, this chart will only identify and define spiritual gifts that find Biblical warrant. (3) This chart includes all Biblical spiritual gifts that fit the above definition, regardless of whether they are specifically labeled as spiritual gifts in Scripture (e.g. hospitality and intercession). (4) Based on study, the author believes there are at least three gifts (teaching, service, and leading from Romans 12:6-8) that are identified by a synonymous name elsewhere in Scripture (word of knowledge, helps, and guidance respectfully from 1 Corinthians 12:8, 28). Thus, a definition of what the Bible identifies as a word of knowledge has been defined under teaching, and so on.

² Such expressions listed in Exodus 31 alone include: design, woodworking, masonry, construction, etc. Today, this gifting might include artistic and creative expressions such as writing, graphic design, etc.

³ It is likely that this gift is directly related to prophecy. In fact, in the same way that the interpretation of tongues regulates tongues in the public setting, distinguishing of spirits regulates prophecy in the public setting. This relationship between distinguishing of spirits and prophecy can be further seen by (1) Paul’s exhortations to “discern” or “weigh” prophecies in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 14:29; (2) Paul’s grouping of these two gifts in verse 10 much in the same way he has grouped tongues and their interpretation in the same verse and (3) the same grouping of prophecy and discernment in 1 Corinthians 14:26-29.

EVANGELISM – Ephesians 4:11

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to readily share the gospel with unbelievers in such a way that those who hear often become Jesus' disciples.

Related Verses: Acts 8:4-40; 21:8; Acts 14:21; 2 Timothy 4:5

FAITH⁴ – 1 Corinthians 12:9

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to trust God to bring about certain things for which there is no recorded promise in Scripture.⁵

Related Verses: Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24; Acts 18:9-11; Acts 27:21-26; 1 Cor. 13:2

GIVING – Romans 12:8

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to contribute significant material resources to the Lord's work freely, cheerfully, and sacrificially.

Related Verses: Mark 12:41-44; Acts 9:36-39; 2 Corinthians 8:1-3; Philippians 4:14-19

HEALING⁶ – 1 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Corinthians 12:29

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to cure illness and restore health apart from the use of natural means.

Related Verses: Luke 6:18; Acts 3:1-8; Acts 14:8-10; Acts 28:7-9

⁴ The spiritual gift of faith, or charismatic faith, must be differentiated from two other types of faith: conversion faith by which we receive justification (e.g. Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:28; etc.) and persevering faith that believers exercise on a daily basis as we look to God based on all that He has promised to do (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Hebrews 11:1-12:3, etc.)

⁵ Although it is ordinarily the custom of the Holy Spirit to equip believers with the same gifts over time, some gifts seem to be given on a more occasional than permanent basis. It is the opinion of this author that the spiritual gift of faith, healing, and miracles fit this category and should be considered more spontaneous and occasional gifts rather than permanent or residential gifts. There are two reasons for such thinking. (1) Each of these spiritual gifts depends upon God's sovereign will in answering prayer (e.g. Paul's request to have the thorn in his flesh removed). That is to say it isn't always God's will that someone be healed or prayer answered "yes" in the same way it is God's will that believers be taught or led or exhorted every time they gather for worship (cf. Colossians 3:16, 1 Timothy 4:13, etc.). (2) Scripture gives examples of those gifted in faith or healing or miracles who are unable to consistently "move mountains" or heal or perform miracles (e.g. Paul... compare Acts 14:8-10 and Acts 28:7-9 with Philippians 2:25-30 and 1 Timothy 5:23 and 2 Timothy 4:20) and yet Scripture never gives examples of those gifted to teach or lead or exhort who were unable to consistently do so.

⁶ See footnote 5.

HOSPITALITY – 1 Peter 4:9

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to provide an open house and a warm welcome to both guests and strangers in need of food and/or lodging.

Related Verses: Romans 12:13; Acts 16:14-15; Hebrews 13:1-2; 3 John 5-10.

INTERCESSION – Ephesians 6:18

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to pray faithfully for others in such a way that God consistently answers those prayers as requested.

Related Verses: Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; James 5:16-18

LEADERSHIP (also referred to as “ADMINISTRATION”⁷) – Romans 12:8, 1 Corinthians 12:28

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to guide, motivate, and mobilize God’s people to accomplish His purposes.

Related Verses: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; Nehemiah 2:11-20; 4:14; 12:27-43; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

MERCY – Romans 12:8

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to feel empathy and compassion for hurting people and to translate that feeling into demonstrations of Christ’s love.

Related Verses: Matthew 25:34-40; Acts 9:36; James 2:15-16.

⁷ The Greek word for “administration” in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is *kybernesis*, a term used elsewhere in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) and New Testament as either a pilot / captain (Proverbs 23:4; Ezekiel 27:8, 27, 28; Acts 27:11, and Revelation 18:17) or guidance (Proverbs 1:5; 11:14; 12:5; and 24:6). Collectively, these texts imply that *kybernesis* is a metaphor for leading and guiding a ship. (And such a metaphor would be quite fitting, given that Corinth was a maritime community.) So instead of translating *kybernesis* as “administration” which conjures up the idea of administrative skills in a business setting, a more faithful translation would be “acts of guidance” or “those who have the gift of leadership” as in the New Living Translation or “gifts of leadership” as in the NET Bible. And because there is no contextual distinction between the *kybernesis* and the gift of leadership described in Romans 12:8, these two words have been grouped under the one spiritual gift of leadership.

MIRACLES⁸ - 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29

Definitions: The Spirit-empowered ability to serve as human intermediaries through whom God performs extraordinary works as an expression of His presence and power.⁹

Related Verses: Acts 5:1-11; Acts 13:9-11; Acts 19:11-20; Romans 15:17-19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4

MUSIC¹⁰ – 2 Chronicles 34:9-13

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to use one's voice or to play a musical instrument to praise the Lord and build up the church.

Related Verses: 1 Samuel 16:16; 2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Chronicles 16:41-42; 2 Chronicles 5:12-13; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16-17

⁸ See footnote 5.

⁹ This would include virtually all different types of supernatural works (thus the emphasis of the word "gifts" in 1 Corinthians 12:10, 29) with the only exception being healing, since healing works are included in the "gift of healing."

¹⁰ It might be better to consider this gift more broadly as "performing arts" or something of the equivalent so as to include areas of contemporary expression such as poetry, dance, and drama.

PROPHECY¹¹ – Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to speak forth something that God has spontaneously brought to mind¹² in merely human words¹³ for the primary purpose of edifying, encouraging, directing, and consoling fellow believers.¹⁴

Related Verses: Acts 11:28; 1 Corinthians 14; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20

SERVICE (also referred to as HELPS¹⁵**)** – Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to see and meet the needs of others by willingly helping them in practical ways.

Related Verses: Acts 6:1-7; Acts 20:35; Romans 16:1-2; Philippians 2:19-23; 2 Timothy 1:16-18; Titus 3:14

¹¹ This definition of prophecy is based on the understanding that New Testament prophets don't carry the same authority as Old Testament prophets. Given the broad range of meaning of "prophecy" in the New Testament era, most would have understood a prophet not as someone who speaks the very word of God, but rather someone who speaks based on external influence (see Luke 22:64 and Titus 1:12 where "prophecy" is used in such a way). So rather than making a parallel between Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets, a more appropriate parallel (at least in terms of speaking authoritatively) would be to understand New Testament apostles as the counterpart to Old Testament prophets. This is why the New Testament apostles prepared for their absence by encouraging Christians to heed the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:16) rather than the word of prophets.

¹² Even though the content of prophecy is based on a message or "revelation" (1 Corinthians 13:2, 14:30) from God (whether through audible words, thoughts, mental pictures), it should be pointed out that not all "revelation" becomes Scripture (Matthew 11:27; Ephesians 1:17; Philippians 3:15). In fact, rather than viewing such revelation as the inerrant, infallible, word of God for all people, it is described as communication from God for specific people. So prophecy is a type of revelation from God that concerns specific people and situations that He never intended to become Scripture.

¹³ Prophecy is subject to error not because God's revelation is subject to error but because the prophet does not always hear, interpret, and apply that revelation correctly (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:9). This is why prophecy is to be evaluated (Acts 17:10-11, 1 Corinthians 14:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:20) rather than obeyed without question (consider Acts 21:4, 21:10-11). Given the fallibility of this gift (as with all gifts), a prophet would be much more in line with Scripture to begin their prophecies by saying "I think the Lord is showing us..." or "I believe the Lord is putting on my mind that..." rather than "Thus says the Lord."

¹⁴ Though there are examples in Scripture of prophecy as a prediction and / or warning of a future event (Acts 21) and a means of identifying and imparting spiritual gifts (1 Timothy 4:14), the primary purpose of prophecy seems to be to edify, encourage, direct, and console fellow believers (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 25).

¹⁵ As mentioned in footnote 1, Biblically there is no distinction between the special abilities to serve or help. Thus it is a fair assumption that Paul is using two synonymous words to define one gift.

SHEPHERDING (i.e. Pastoring) – Ephesians 4:11

Definition: The Spirit-empowered ability to watch over, care for, and feed members of the body of Christ by guiding, admonishing, and discipling them toward spiritual maturity.

Related Verses: John 21:16-17; Acts 20:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3

TEACHING (also referred to as WORD OF KNOWLEDGE ^{16 17}) - 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:8

Definitions: The Spirit-empowered ability to explain and apply God’s Word so that those who hear are spiritually nourished.

Related Verses: Proverbs 2:6; Acts 15:35; Acts 18:11; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 5:12; 2 Timothy 3:16; James 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2

¹⁶Many consider words of knowledge and words of wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8) to be more “miraculous” in nature... that is, an ability to receive a special revelation from the Holy Spirit in order to speak a word of wisdom in a situation or a word of knowledge of a situation (typically in the life of a believer in the congregation). But this writer has opted for the non-miraculous understanding of these gifts for the following reasons. (1) The words Paul uses for “word” (*logos*), “wisdom” (*sophia*), and “knowledge” (*gnosis*), are ordinary words used most frequently to refer to human knowledge or wisdom and never revelation. (2) In the context which these gifts are found (1 Corinthians 12:8), it would make sense for Paul to highlight a couple of non-miraculous gifts if he wanted the Corinthians to understand the spiritual nature of all gifts, whether miraculous or non-miraculous. (3) There is already a gift that describes the ability to receive revelation from the Holy Spirit – “prophecy.” And given their distinction in less than two verses apart (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10), it seems these gifts would be different and thus contribute to the forthcoming analogy of one body, many members (1 Corinthians 12:12ff).

¹⁷ Of all of the spiritual gifts, words or utterance of knowledge and wisdom seem the most difficult to define because the only place they are specifically mentioned is 1 Corinthians 12:8. Thus more so than other gifts, we should be less dogmatic and more tentative in how we understand these two gifts. That said, this author would argue that a word of knowledge is virtually synonymous with the gift of teaching and can be viewed as two names that identify the same gift. There are two reasons for such a conclusion. (1) The only type of knowledge that would edify believers and glorify God in the context of the worship service would be knowledge concerning God (as opposed to knowledge concerning psychology or philosophy or biology). And given that knowledge is based on previous revelation from God (see footnote 16), that knowledge must come from Holy Scripture. And those that have the ability to give a word or utterance about Holy Scripture in a fruitful way are also called teachers! (2) Paul seems to be addressing parallel ideas in 1 Corinthians 14:6 and so where there is a correlation between revelation and prophecy, there is also a correlation between knowledge and teaching. That is to say, prophecy is the product of spontaneous revelation whereas teaching (or a word of knowledge) is the product of knowledge.

TONGUES (SPEAKING) – 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30

Definitions: The Spirit-empowered ability to pray (1 Cor. 14:2, 14), worship (1 Cor. 14:15), give thanks (1 Cor. 14:16), or speak (1 Cor. 14:18) in a language other than your own¹⁸ that requires order and interpretation when done in public (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

Related Verses: Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:46; Acts 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12-14

TONGUES (INTERPRETATION)¹⁹ – 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:30

Definitions: The Spirit-empowered ability to put into words or articulate the meaning of a public utterance of tongues into the language of the congregation.

Related Verses: Genesis 41:14-16; Daniel 2, 4, 5:14-16; 1 Corinthians 14

WORD OF WISDOM²⁰ – 1 Corinthians 12:8

Definitions: The Spirit-empowered ability to understand circumstances and life from God's perspective and communicate to believers how to live in light of that perspective.

Related Verses: Proverbs 9:10; 1 Kings 3:16-28; Acts 6:10; Acts 15:13-20; 1 Corinthians 6:5-6; Colossians 1:28

Helpful Resources for Further Reading:

The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts by Sam Storms (Regal, Ventura, 2002)

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, Chapters 52-53, pages 1016-1088 by Wayne Grudem (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1994)

Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them by Alvin J. Vander Griend (Faith Alive, Grand Rapids 1996)

The First Epistle to the Corinthians of the New International Commentary of the New Testament by Gordon Fee (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1987).

I Corinthians of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament by David Garland (Baker, Grand Rapids, 2003)

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¹⁸ Though some believe that tongues is merely speaking a foreign language not previously known to the speaker, the only precedent Scripturally for that understanding is what occurred at Pentecost, which is a one-time event in redemptive history that was to be a sign to unbelievers. Rather the norm seems to be that tongues are actually an unknown, heavenly language (1 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Corinthians 14:2) that will not be understood apart from interpretation of that unknown language (1 Corinthians 14:5, 26ff.)

¹⁹ A helpful distinction between prophecy and the interpretation of tongues is that whereas prophecy is the communication of a message FROM God, the interpretation of tongues is the translation of praise TO God.

²⁰ See footnote 16 and 17.