

POWER UP!

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

GUIDE TO POWERING UP

A PRIMER ON
SPIRITUAL GIFTS

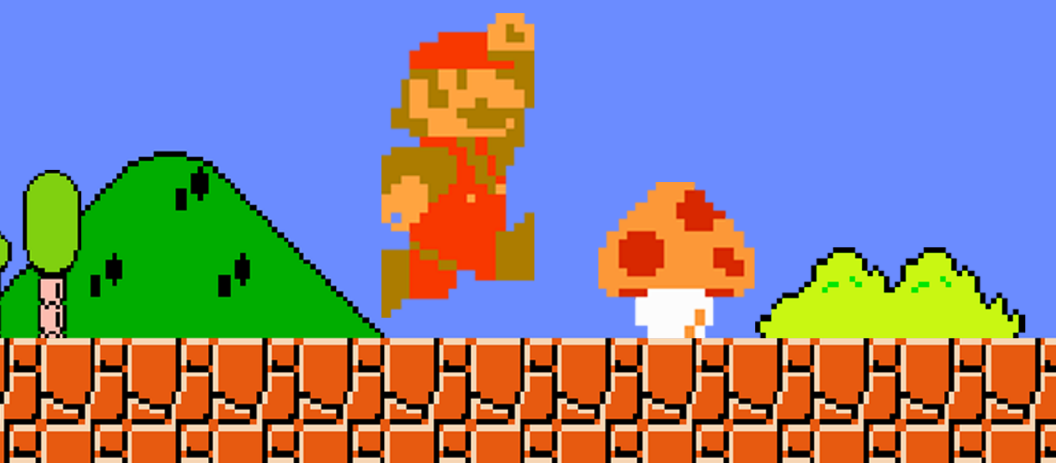


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I. Introduction

Over the past one hundred years, spiritual gifts have become a topic of major debate within the church. Pentecostal and other charismatic churches have caused most Christians in all denominations to re-evaluate spiritual gifts. This is especially the case for “supernatural gifts” such as prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues. This renewed interest in spiritual gifts has caused many to ask questions and ultimately remain more confused than before on the issue. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 the apostle Paul discusses spiritual gifts at length. As Vintage Church journeys through our sermon series on 1 Corinthians entitled “In the City. For the City.”, we will discuss the topic of spiritual gifts from 1 Corinthians 12-14. This mini-series is entitled “Power Up.” It is our hope that this mini-series will bring clarity to the issue of spiritual gifts and provide freedom to serve Christ and his church however he has gifted you.

II. What Are Spiritual Gifts?

Simply put, the definition of a spiritual gift is the manifestation of God’s grace on the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament a handful of words are used for spiritual gifts, but the primary word used is charismata. This is where we today get the word charisma or charismatic. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul uses this word to describe spiritual gifts. The root word of charismata is charis which means grace. As we’ve already mentioned, these gifts are related to grace in that they are manifestations of God’s grace.¹ One definition of spiritual gifts is this: “any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church.”² Another way spiritual gifts is defined is: “an ability given by the Holy Spirit to express our faith effectively (in word and deed) for the strengthening of someone else’s faith.”³ We will unpack these definitions more throughout this booklet, but for now it is important to see that spiritual gifts are Holy Spirit-empowered abilities, whether it be an enhancement of natural abilities or a supernatural ability, for Christian service.

¹J.G.S.S Thomson and W. A. Ewell, “Spiritual Gifts,” in the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1135.

² Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 1016.

³ John Piper, “Spiritual Gifts” (sermon, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, March 15, 1981), <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/spiritual-gifts> (accessed January 17, 2012).

III. What are the Spiritual Gifts?

Four Places in the New Testament in particular speak about spiritual gifts. These include Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, and Ephesians 4:7-12. 1 Peter 4:10-11 also mentions spiritual gifts. Here is a detailed table of all the gifts listed in each passage:

Romans 12:6-8	1 Cor. 12:4-11	1 Cor. 12:28-30	Ephesians 4:7-12
“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us”	“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”	“God has appointed in the church”	“And he gave...”
		apostles	the apostles
prophecy	prophecy	prophets	the prophets
			the evangelists
	ability to distinguish between Spirits		
	utterance of wisdom		
teaching	utterance of knowledge	teachers	the shepherds and teachers
exhorting			
	working of miracles	miracles	
	gifts of healing	gifts of healing	
service		helping	
leading		administrating	
	various kinds of tongues	various kinds of tongues	
	interpretation of tongues		
giving			
	faith		
mercy			

This is obviously a large list of various spiritual gifts. These gifts can basically be classified into three different types of gifts: speaking, serving, and supernatural gifts.⁴ This list is by no means an exhaustive list of gifts. Rather, these examples are more illustrative of the various types of gifts. Our classification of spiritual gifts then should be more fluid than rigid, realizing and understanding that God can and will gift his people and his church however he desires.

IV. What Does the Bible Teach about Spiritual Gifts?

The most important element to understanding spiritual gifts is understanding when we receive them as believers in Jesus Christ. Salvation and all that encompasses it is appropriated or carried out by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that applies the saving work of Jesus upon our lives. Therefore the Spirit is responsible for empowering us with whatever spiritual gift(s) we receive. The question is: when do we receive this empowerment. The Bible teaches that at conversion (i.e. repentance and faith in Jesus), we are justified (made right before God) and regenerated. Regeneration is what Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 5:17 when he writes "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Our hearts are transformed which ultimately leads to a transformed character and life.⁵

Some (mostly charismatics and Pentecostals) believe that there is a second blessing or second anointing from the Holy Spirit besides that which leads to regeneration. The Bible, however, teaches that at conversion we receive the Holy Spirit which regenerates and empowers us. Some cite the examples of Pentecost in Acts 2 or the conversion of Samaria in Acts 8 as a two-stage Spirit experience. These examples are descriptive, illustrating the transitional time between the old covenant and the new covenant. Thus they are not prescriptive for today. Galatians 3:14 is just one instance that demonstrates the Spirit regenerates and empowers at conversion. Paul writes "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

Although we've already hinted at it, the the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us with spiritual gifts. Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 12:11. Here he says "all these (spiritual gifts) are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportsions to each one individually as he wills." It is important to see that the Holy Spirit gives the gifts as he wills. It is not the work or result of human effort; it is only the work of the Holy Spirit. Also tied to this is Paul's discussion of the body and its members in 1 Corinthians 12:12-28. Take some time now to read this passage. In this section Paul makes mention of how the church is

⁴ Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 674.

⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 92.

one body consisting of many members or parts. Like the human body, which needs feet, hands, ears, eyes, etc., so the body of Christ needs the various members which all function differently but together. This passage clearly demonstrates how each individual and his or her spiritual gift is important to the church. The diverse range of gifts are needed in the church for it to be productive in the kingdom of God.

Although you might not know right now what your spiritual gift is, it is important to understand that you and all Christians have been empowered by the Holy Spirit with a spiritual gift. 1 Corinthians 12:7 states “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Here Paul promises each individual believer has been gifted by God in some way. Later we will discuss ways you can discover your spiritual gift(s). No one person has all the spiritual gifts as well. In Romans 12:6 Paul writes “having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 says something similar. Paul writes “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?,” referring to the fact that there are a variety of gifts held by various different individuals. Finally we must remember that certain spiritual gifts do not prove spirituality. The Corinthian church itself had many supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, “but they lacked spiritual maturity and holiness.”⁶

Above all, spiritual gifts should be practiced appropriately. Although Scripture is not incredibly clear about the use of spiritual gifts, it is clear on the fact that these gifts should be practiced under the leadership of the local church. Paul tells the Corinthians that “all things (including the practice of spiritual gifts) should be done decently and in order” (1Corinthians 14:40). Therefore when we practice spiritual gifts today they should be practiced in order and decency under the leadership of the church elders and leaders. This is important because spiritual gifts are not meant to cause division but are meant for the “common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). Ephesians 4:11-16 teaches that spiritual gifts are for the “building up of the body.”⁷ Most importantly, however, spiritual gifts are meant to glorify God. Peter tells the church this in his first letter. He shares that spiritual gifts are to be used “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). May we use our spiritual gifts to build up the church and glorify our God.

⁶ Winfield Bevins, *A Primer on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (2010), 31.

⁷ Juan Sanchez, “Questions About Spiritual Gifts: What is the Purpose of Spiritual Gifts?” The Gospel Coalition <<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2010/05/04/questions-about-spiritual-gifts-what-is-the-purpose-of-spiritual-gifts/>>.

V. What are the Views on Spiritual Gifts?

Without a doubt all Christians believe spiritual gifts are still active and a part of the local church today. Christians, however, do disagree on whether the supernatural gifts are still active in today's church. These gifts include prophecy, tongues, and miraculous healing. Four primary views exist regarding the continuation of supernatural spiritual gifts. These are:⁸

Cessationist	Open, but Cautious	3 rd Wave	Charismatic/ Pentecostal
Supernatural gifts ceased after the apostolic age (1 st Century A.D.) due to the canon of Scripture closing. Today God only speaks through the Bible.	Supernatural gifts are still given to believers today and should be practiced by the church. These gifts, however, should be tested according to the truth and guidelines of Scripture.	Supernatural gifts are still given to the church by the Holy Spirit and should ordinarily accompany the proclamation of the Gospel.	Supernatural gifts are still given to the church. Believers, however, receive a second empowering of the Holy Spirit post-conversion which is marked by speaking in tongues.

VI. What are Some Incorrect Views on Spiritual Gifts

There are various incorrect views regarding spiritual gifts that we need to discuss and be aware of. First, is cessationism. As previously mentioned, cessationists believe that all supernatural gifts ceased with the death of the apostles. Cessationists believe this because they consider gifts such as prophecy and tongues to be a form of revelation. We believe beyond a shadow of doubt that the canon of Scripture is closed. No other revelations or book can and will be added. The question then is this: is prophecy and tongues today new revelation? Scripture does not seem to deny the possibility of these gifts today if the prophecy and/or tongues aligns with the Bible and is edifying to the church. Therefore there is no evidence suggesting that gifts such as prophecy, tongues, or healing have ceased for the church today.

⁸ These views are addressed in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today: Four Views*, edited by Wayne A. Grudem.

In order to understand some of the errors in Pentecostalism it is important to understand its history. This movement began with a revival in Topeka, Kansas in 1901. There Charles Fox Parham taught that speaking in tongues was the initial sign that someone had been saved. This was to be a normative sign for all Christians. Parham came into contact with another individual, William J. Seymour, who was a part of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California in 1906. From this charismatic revival spurred the formation of what we know today as Pentecostalism.

One of the major elements of Pentecostal theology is the belief in a second salvific experience. Like most Christians, Pentecostals believe at conversion, an individual is regenerated and made new. Pentecostals, however, also believe there is a second experience where the Holy Spirit is "poured out" upon believers. They are then "baptized with" or "filled with" the Holy Spirit. This second blessing does not agree with Scripture. ⁹As we've already discussed, at conversion a person is regenerated and empowered by the Holy Spirit at the same time. Also directly related to this, is the Pentecostal belief that speaking in tongues is a sign of salvation for all believers. Thus every Christian should receive the gift of tongues. The problem with this interpretation is that the Bible does not teach this. Paul writes that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers as he wills, not as humans will (1 Corinthians 12:11). He also notes that not everyone has the same gifts. Christians are gifted differently so that they can work together, building up the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). What good would it do if all Christians had the gift of tongues?

Many pentecostals also find speaking in tongues to be a more superior gift than all the other gifts. Once again, Paul speaks directly against this as well. In 1 Corinthians 14:5 Paul writes "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up." 1 Corinthians 14:19 also states "in church I (Paul) would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue." These verses illustrate Paul's belief that prophesy and possibly other spiritual gifts were more important than speaking in tongues. These verse also speaks to another issue within Pentecostalism. In 1 Corinthians 12:5 Paul states that if someone speaks in tongues an interpreter needs to be present. Otherwise, no one in the church will know or understand the message. Many Pentecostals will speak in tongues without an interpreter, leaving everyone unaware of what he or she said. This is not edifying to the body of Christ. These are just a small handful of errors related to spiritual gifts. Nonetheless to faithfully serve the church it helps to be aware of these errors.

⁹ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 448.

VII. What is Vintage Church's Stance on Spiritual Gifts?

Vintage Church believes that spiritual gifts are an ability given by the Holy Spirit to every believer upon conversion in order that the Kingdom of God would continue to advance through the church of Jesus Christ. All (speaking, serving, supernatural) gifts require faith and constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit and should be exercised under the authority of the Bible through the leadership of the church. Every follower of Jesus should use their gift(s) to serve Jesus and others as the church.

VIII. How Do You Discover Your Spiritual Gift(s)?

We might have more knowledge about spiritual gifts now, but we still have to ask ourselves: "God, how have you gifted me to serve the church?" Some of you might already know your spiritual gifts(s). Others might have an idea. Some of you have no idea how you have been gifted to serve the church. There are incredible tools that can help you discover your spiritual gift. The problem is they are all flawed. So use the various tools available but in the end PRAY! Pray that the Holy Spirit would bring you clarity about your spiritual gift. Nonetheless here are a few tips to help you discover your spiritual gift:

- Find out the needs of your church. Sometimes in discovering the needs of your church you can begin to find how God has gifted you.
- Ask yourself "what do I enjoy to do?" Chances are the thing(s) you enjoy to do is exactly the thing God has gifted you in.
- Take a spiritual inventory. This is not the "end all, be all" in regards to knowing your spiritual gift, but there are some excellent tools out there that can help you understand your gifts, talents, and weaknesses. (For a inventory go here: <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Discover-your-spiritual-gifts>. Click "Spiritual gifts survey.")
- Seek godly counsel. Talk with your pastor(s), community group leader(s), mentors, and friends about your spiritual gift. These people observe you and your work and can begin to see your talents and even your spiritual gifts when you don't see them yourself.
- Finally, Pray! This can't be done enough. Pray for guidance, direction, and clarity. If God has gifted you to serve his church (which he has) then he will definitely share with you your gift.¹⁰

¹⁰ Juan Sanchez, "How Do I Discover My Spiritual Gift?" The Gospel Coalition <<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2010/05/06/how-do-i-discover-my-spiritual-gift/>>.

IX. Conclusion

After reading this you probably still have many questions regarding spiritual gifts. This little introduction only scratches the surface of spiritual gifts. As you can tell, spiritual gifts can be a touchy subject. This booklet has laid out what Vintage Church and its leadership believes Scripture to teach on spiritual gifts. Although we have provided arguments against certain positions regarding spiritual gifts, it is important to remember that many devoted Christ followers hold various positions on spiritual gifts. Although we might disagree with them on this subject, we are still brothers and sisters united in Christ Jesus. Do not let spiritual gifts divide the church. Let them unite it. Remember the Spirit of God has gifted you to serve God and his church. Are you going to use your gift to love God and love people? This is what Jesus has called you to. Be faithful.

X. Resources

Books:

Winfield Bevins. A Primer on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. 2010. (This ebook can be found at: <http://vintagenola.org/resources/>).

D.A. Carson. Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987).

Wayne Grudem, ed. Are Miraculous Gifts for Today: 4 Views. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

J.I. Packer. Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: 2005.

Terry Virgo. The Spirit-Filled Church: Finding Your Place in God's Purpose. Oxford: Monarch Books, 2011.

Online Articles:

Winfield Bevins. "The Sovereign Spirit." 7 articles on the Holy Spirit & spiritual gifts at <http://www.theresurgence.com>.

Juan Sanchez. "Questions about Spiritual Gifts: What do we know about spiritual gifts?" Article from <http://straighttotheheart.highpointeustin.org/2010/04/30/questions-about-spiritual-gifts-what-do-we-know-about-spiritual-gifts/>.

Sermons/Discussions:

D.A. Carson, "On Spiritual Gifts," <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2009/12/01/d-a-carson-on-spiritual-gifts/>

Mark Driscoll, "1 Corinthians: Christians Gone Wild." <http://marshill.com/media/1st-corinthians/>. See Parts 26 - 32.

John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Don Williams, John E. Kyle, "Spiritual Gifts and the Sovereignty of God, Panel Discussion," <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/spiritual-gifts-and-the-sovereignty-of-god-panel-discussion>.

