

Theological Equipping Class

Spiritual Gifts

April 24, 2022

Questions to consider:

1. What are spiritual gifts?
2. How many are there?
3. Why does God give them?
4. Are they all still available?
5. How do you discover yours?
6. What are some helpful hints for pursuing and practicing the gifts?

What are Spiritual Gifts?

- The importance of the ascension of Christ
 - *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16–17)*
 - *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)*
 - *But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (John 15:26)*
 - *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)*
 - *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)*
- To your advantage?
 - "The thought is eschatological. The many biblical promises that the Spirit will characterize the age of the kingdom of God . . . breed anticipation. But this saving reign of God cannot be fully inaugurated until Jesus has died, risen from the dead, and been exalted to his Father's right hand, returned to the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the world began." (DA Carson)
- Ascension and gifts
 - *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (Ephesians 4:7–8)*
- Definitions of gifts:

- "Spiritual gifts are capacities or abilities imparted to Christians by the Holy Spirit to enable them to exceed the limitations of their finite humanity in order to serve other believers to the glory of God." (Sam Storms)
- "The gifts of the Spirit are gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit that are designed for the edification of the church, which can be divided up as gifts of *speaking* and gifts of *servicing*." (Tom Schreiner)

How many gifts are there?

- *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4–11)*
- *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6–8)*
- *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:9–11)*
- *And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)*
 1. Wisdom
 2. Knowledge
 3. Faith
 4. Gifts of healing
 5. Working of miracles
 6. Prophecy
 7. Distinguishing spirits
 8. Tongues
 9. Interpretation of tongues
 10. Service
 11. Teaching
 12. Exhortation
 13. Contribution
 14. Leading
 15. Acts of mercy
 16. Hospitality

- 17. Helping
- 18. Administration

- These lists are representative, but not exhaustive.

Why does God give gifts?

- *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)*
- *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)*
- *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it... (1 Corinthians 12:24b)*
- *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:7–16)*
- God gives spiritual gifts in order that He might be glorified as the body is edified, or built up.
- Since God is the one who gives the gifts, He determines how they should function
 1. Use the gifts in submission to Scripture.
 2. Use the gifts in an orderly way.
 3. Use the gifts to build up the body.

Are all the gifts still available?

cessationism-----|-----continuationism

- Diversity within the camps

- An intra-fraternal debate
 - Cessationists: John Calvin, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, John MacArthur & Tom Schreiner
 - Continuationists: John Piper, DA Carson, Sam Storms, and Wayne Grudem
- Avoiding caricatures
- Where our elders agree:
 1. God still empowers His people with gifts of the Spirit.
 2. Spiritual gifts should be exercised in an orderly and biblical manner.
 3. God still works miracles among his people including things like healing and we should pray for such according to His will.
 4. God still influences, guides, and directs His people through promptings, impressions, affections, and other circumstances, but our perceptions of those leadings are subjective and thus fallible.
 5. Scripture alone is our ultimate authority and any gift or potential gift of the Spirit should be judged according to the criteria of Scripture.
- Where we might disagree: whether prophecy, tongues and gifts of healing are still available and should be pursued and practiced.
- Cessationism says that certain gifts were needed at the start of the Christian church but have since ceased. They reach that opinion on the basis of at least 4 arguments:
 - 1. Miracles aren't evenly distributed throughout the Bible, but are clustered around the ministries of a few individuals: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the apostles.
 - 2. A prophetic word from God today would challenge the sufficiency of Scripture.
 - 3. At the time the New Testament is being written the gifts were still needed for the founding of the church but they are no longer necessary since the church has been founded and grown.
 - 4. Church history seems to suggest that the gifts haven't continued or that when they have, they are always abused.
- Continuationism says that all the spiritual gifts remain and should be practiced today. That includes the miraculous sign gifts. Continuationists base that position on the following points:
 - 1. all gifts are needed today for the strengthening of the body
 - 2. the Bible commands the church to pursue and practice the sign gifts and never revokes that command
 - 3. the New Testament doesn't ever explicitly say they have ceased. In fact, it seems to imply that they won't cease until Christ returns.
 - 4. The Bible itself doesn't bifurcate the gifts into miraculous and mundane or sign gifts vs. normal gifts.

- 5. There are ways of understanding prophecy that are consistent with Scripture that wouldn't compromise the authority and sufficiency of Scripture today.
- If you want to know more about the question of sign gifts for today, here are a couple of recommended resources, one from each camp:
 - Continuationism: Sam Storms – Understanding Spiritual Gifts
 - Cessationism: Thomas Schreiner – Spiritual Gifts

How do you know what gifts you have?

- *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:7)*
- *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4–7)*
- Ask not what gifts you have, but what gifts are needed!

Practical Tips for Pursuing and Practicing the Gifts

- *Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. (1 Corinthians 14:1)*

1. Pray

2. Look for opportunities to serve.

3. Consider what you love to do.

4. Ask others who know you quite well where they think you are gifted.

5. Don't look down on or covet the gifts of others.

- *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:3–8)*