



Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

“And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles, to some, prophets, to some evangelists, to some pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12, 13, Jerusalem).

We can learn much from bees. When they are busy gathering nectar from surrounding flowers, we can do almost any kind of work with them or around them. But if there is no nectar to be gathered, kindness and tolerance are not part of their actions. They became first-class warriors!

Seems as if Christians are pretty much like bees. When they have a constant relationship with Jesus, they keep so busy working for Him that they have little time for criticism, gossip, or selfishness.

Each bee has a special job. When the hot sun shines on the hive, thousands of little wings work together to keep the wax from melting. When it becomes freezing cold, they cluster together in an oval to keep the hive warm.

When the beekeeper cuts into the honeycomb, an alarm spreads, and bees with the gift of repair arrive to fix it up. No bee stands around to accuse or condemn. Together, they fix up the mess. A scar may mar the original pattern, but it's still very serviceable.

Each bee has a specific gift or work. Some gather nectar, others pollen, some make wax foundations, others produce cells, some exist to mate with the queen, others defend the hive. Their purpose is to work together for the best good of the hive.

In God's church you have a task to perform to His glory. It matters not which gift is yours. The important question is, are you using your gifts for God?

Preview

The risen Christ gathered His disciples around Him. Just before He went home to His Father, He gave them their job description. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Two words need to be noted: *all* and *every*. Impossible for such a small group of believers! Jesus well knew their inability to accomplish the task by themselves. So He promised them the solution. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

And when the power came, the results were staggering! On the very day they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they baptized 3,000 believers (Acts 2:41).

A short time before His death, Christ told a beautiful parable of a man traveling to a far country, who gave each of His servants special gifts. Jesus was that Man, leaving for heaven. In the story He assured them that each would receive gifts they needed according to their ability—gifts of power to enable them to witness to the glory of God (see Matthew 25:14-30).

Points to Ponder

1. When Jesus ascended on high, why did He give special gifts to His followers on earth? (See Ephesians 4:7, 8.)

Christ knew that the disciples could not carry out the divine mission of the church without special power and gifts that only the Holy Spirit could give. So the gifts were given “for the perfecting [“equipping,” NKJV] of the _____, for the work of the _____, for the edifying [“building up”] of the _____ of _____” (Ephesians 4:12). Fortunately, men and women do not choose their own spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit, who understands us much better than we do ourselves, distributes different gifts to believers according to their interests, abilities, and willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit. But, like the Corinthian Christians, we bicker like small children about which gifts are the most important. Though the gifts differ, they all come from “the same _____, which worketh _____ in _____” (1 Corinthians 12:6).

Because the gifts are given for the church, not the individual, no one can consider them their private property. Likewise, because the Holy Spirit gives the gifts, believers should not be proud of their many gifts or feel inferior if they have fewer or more humble gifts.

2. How does Paul illustrate the harmony, balance, and unity that are seen in the diversity of gifts?

1 Corinthians 12:12: “The _____ is _____, and hath many _____.” The apostle compares the church to the body. As the body has many members, so does the church. Each member is different, just as is each part of the body. Each member is given a separate gift and function, just as is each part of the body. Just as all parts of the body must function together, so should all believers.

3. As the body suffers when any part is hurt or missing, so, when a member of the church suffers, how should the entire church act?

1 Corinthians 12:25, 26: “The members should have the same _____ one for _____. And whether _____ member suffer, all the _____ suffer with it.” All parts of the body must work together for health and harmony. The same is true with Christ’s children. If Christ abides in the lives of Christians, they will not quarrel with one another. Love will help us to bear with the differences in our midst. If we are having problems with others, we may know that self needs to be crucified. He whom Christ makes free is free indeed. We are not complete in Christ unless we love one another as Christ has loved us.

4. Which spiritual gift is greater than all the other gifts?

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13: _____
 Love is a fruit of the Spirit. List as many aspects of God’s self-sacrificing love as possible (Galatians 5:22, 23): _____

Nuts & Bolts

1. The Holy Spirit gives varying gifts to different individuals.

Romans 12:1-10, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Peter 4:9-11 describe or refer to twenty-seven spiritual gifts. The Bible does not give specific details about a spiritual gift. It illustrates how these gifts function. Please read these Scriptures. Then study the gifts in the following table and mark the ones you think the Holy Spirit has given you. The degree to which you put your spiritual gifts to work for the Lord depends on your commitment to discipleship and your response to the Lord's call. Your spiritual gifts may or may not match your natural, inherited talents.

Romans 12 1 Cor. 12 Ephesians 4 Implied
Prophecy Wisdom Apostle Celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7)
Teaching Knowledge Prophet Martyrdom (1 Cor. 13:3)
Service Faith Evangelist Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9)
Giving Healing Pastor Exorcism (Acts 8:5-8)
Leadership Miracles Teacher Intercessory prayer (Acts 12:12)
Mercy Discerning of spirits Missionary (Romans 11:13)
Exhortation Tongues
Encouragement Interpretation Voluntary poverty (1 Cor. 13:3)
Helps Administration

No doubt you have recognized that you have more than one spiritual gift. The source of your gift is God's grace. Ask Him to keep you humble and use your gifts to His glory.

2. The more gifts God has given you, the greater is your spiritual influence. Therefore, the greater should be your dependence upon God.

1 Peter 4:10: "As every man hath received the _____ even so _____ the same one to _____, as good _____ of the manifold _____ of God."
Ephesians 4:2, 3: "With all _____ and _____, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in _____; endeavoring to keep the _____ of the Spirit in the _____ of peace." (Ephesians 4:2, 3)

3. To enable the church to grow in unity and to nurture the believers, God has given to many the support gifts.

From the list that follows, circle the ones God has given you to use to bless others: Helps, compassion, intercession, mercy, exhortation, giving, hospitality, service.

4. God needs those who can instruct others in the teachings of the Bible to confirm their faith in God.

Circle the teaching gifts God has given you: Teaching, knowledge, wisdom, pastoring (or shepherding).

5. A growing church needs leaders.

Circle the ones that apply to you: Leadership, apostleship, administration, faith.

6. The primary job of the church is to win souls—to witness to the world. God has given this task to every Christian. Circle those you can use to the glory of God: Evangelism, discernment, being a missionary at home or abroad, tongues, interpretation of tongues.
7. The sign or power gifts are not as common as the other gifts. Again, God chooses whom He can entrust with these gifts. Circle those that you may have: Prophecy, miracles, healing, spiritual warfare, martyrdom, voluntary poverty, celibacy.
8. The church that utilizes its spiritual gifts will grow both in number and spirituality. From Ephesians 4:12, 13, complete the following list:
- The _____ of the saints.
 - The work of the _____.
 - The edifying of the _____ of Christ.
 - Till we all come in the _____ of faith.
 - And of the _____ of the Son of _____.
 - Unto a _____ man.
 - Unto the measure of the _____ of the _____ of Christ.
9. Sometimes the Spirit uses a person's natural gifts to do God's bidding. What changes a person's natural gifts to spiritual gifts? (See John 3:7.) _____
10. Name ways whereby you can discover your spiritual gifts.
- Pray for the baptism of the Spirit. (John 3:5.)
 - Study the Scriptures, "rightly _____ the word of _____" (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - Be open to providential guidance, for "it is _____ which worketh in you both to _____ and to _____ of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).
 - Confirmation from other church members. It is "in multitude of _____ there is _____" (Proverbs 24:6).

Words to Remember

Agape: Greek word for self-sacrificing, outgoing, giving, and compassionate love. Similar to the love God shows toward us.

Divisiveness: Division, discord, and dissension.

Maturity: Steady growth in all things.

Stability: Firmness, steadfastness. "Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14, 15).

Atrophy: Wasting away. Unused, spiritual gifts will decrease in their effectiveness.

The Difference Between

Diversity and uniformity: God gives a variety of gifts. If all were alike—uniform—there would be no variation, but a dull sameness. God's plan is to use all gifts to blend together in building the church.

Clergy and laity: Ministers and pastors are the clergy, church members are laity.

I Truly Believe

What is your response to the following statements? Check the appropriate boxes that reflect your decisions.

I want to be a part of God's plan for the church.

I want both my head and heart totally sanctified to God.

By His grace, I am willing to put self aside daily and join with other members to make the body of Christ, His church, complete.

My Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank You for the Holy Spirit, who chooses what gifts I can use best to the glory of God, enabling me to be a faithful steward. Keep me humble, teachable, and appreciative of those who differ from me. Grant me the wisdom to abide in Christ and fully discover my gifts. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.