

Do You Know the Holy Spirit?
Lesson Six: Miraculous Spiritual Gifts
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Introduction: What Are Spiritual Gifts?

A. Spiritual gifts are by far the most misunderstood subject matter in the study of the Holy Spirit.

1. Many have confused spiritual gifts with the gift Christians receive at baptism (**Acts 2:38**) or with Holy Spirit baptism (**Acts 10:43-47**).
2. Many fail to make the distinction between miraculous spiritual gifts (**1 Cor. 12:1-11**) and the spiritual gifts we have today (**Rom. 12:3-8**).
3. Many more mistakenly believe that our feelings or emotional experiences indicate that “we have the Spirit” or possess a spiritual gift.

B. By dedicating ourselves to the study of the Scriptures, we can understand this important Bible topic!

1. Though some things are hard to understand in Scripture (**2 Pet. 3:16**), no passage is impossible to comprehend.
2. Let us be confident that we can know the truth about spiritual gifts! (**1 Tim. 2:3-4; Eph. 3:4**).

I. The Definition of Words and Their Usage: “Spiritual Gifts”

A. PNEUMATIKOS (Spiritual)

1. relating to the human spirit, or rational soul, as the part of man which is akin to God and serves as his instrument or organ, 1 Cor. 15:46 2. belonging to a spirit, or a being higher than man but inferior to God, Eph. 6:12 3. belonging to the Divine Spirit a. in reference to things; emanating from the Divine Spirit, or exhibiting its effects and so its character: charisma, Rom. 1:11; b. in reference to persons; one who is filled with and governed by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:15” - *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*

1. As seen above, the word for spiritual is used in several different ways.
2. There are *only three* instances when the word is used to refer to *miraculous* spiritual gifts (**Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor 12:1; 14:1**).

B. CHARISMA (Gifts)

1. *A free gift bestowed by grace*: Natural gifts, deliverance from danger, miraculous gifts, justification, and eternal salvation (cf. Thayer's Lexicon).
2. Examples of the different usages of the word in Scripture:
 - a. Miraculous spiritual gifts (**Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6**).
 - b. Non-miraculous gifts, talents (**Rom. 12:6ff**; save prophecy; **1 Pet. 4:10-11**), or “natural” gifts (**1 Cor. 7:7; cf. Mat. 19:12b**).

Note: Special roles and responsibilities given to members of the church are also “*gifts*” of Christ (DOMA – **Eph 4:8**). Both miraculous and non-miraculous “offices” (**Eph 4:11**) were not earned.

- c. Privilege (e.g., Israel was chosen by God - **Rom. 11:29**).
- d. Deliverance by God from danger (**2 Cor. 1:10-11**).
- e. Justification or righteousness before God (**Rom 5:15-17**).
- f. Eternal life (**Rom. 6:23**).

Note: All Christians receive the **gift** (DOREA) of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). This gift is not a miraculous spiritual gift, but instead *the Holy Spirit* who indwells the Christian (cf. **Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Thes. 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1 John 3:24; cf. Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13-14**).

II. Examples of Miraculous Spiritual Gifts

* *1 Corinthians 12 provides the most extensive list of gifts given by the Spirit.*

A. “*The word of wisdom*” [SOFIA] (v. 8a): “wisdom, broad and full intelligence... to have understanding” (Thayer Lexicon).

1. Similar to when Bezalel was given wisdom and skill to build the tabernacle (**Ex. 31:1-6**) this gift gave a person the skill to teach.
2. The one who was given “*the word of wisdom*” could teach in an effective manner, imparting **God’s** wisdom to others (cf. **Jas 3:17**).
3. In contrast to knowledge, *perhaps* this teaching has to do more with how to put knowledge into practice (e.g., the book of James).

B. “*The word of knowledge*” [GNOSIS] (v. 8b): “the possession of information what is known, knowledge... as the result of divine enlightenment knowledge, understanding, insight” (Friberg Lexicon)

1. Perhaps this knowledge had to do more with possessing *speculative* or abstract knowledge, a deeper understanding.
2. Knowledge, like wisdom, was revelation given in parts (**1 Cor. 13:9**).

C. “*Faith*” [PISTIS] (v. 9a): “conviction of the truth of anything, belief... persuasion or conviction... trust (or confidence)” (Thayer’s Lexicon).

1. This is not subjective or personal faith, for all Christians have faith (**Gal. 3:26**) as a result of hearing God’s word (**Rom. 10:17**).
2. A special and *absolute* faith in the power of God to perform miracles (“*remove mountains*” **1 Cor. 13:2**) that were according to God’s will.
3. Such faith could, for example, cast out demons as easily as one could wither a fig tree (**Mat. 17:14-21; 21:18-22; Mark 11:22-23; cf. 4:30-32**).

D. “*Gifts of healing*” [IAMA] (v. 9b): “cure, healing, remedy, make whole”

1. Demonstrated in many places in Scripture, this power could restore a sick person’s health or heal an injured or disabled person.
2. *Unlike* modern day claims of miraculous “faith healing” through prayer or the laying on of hands of televangelists, people were healed **completely** (e.g., **Acts 3:6-8; 5:16; 8:7**).

E. “*Working of miracles*” [DUNAMIS] (v. 10a): “ability to perform anything... power to work, to carry something into effect... mighty works” (Vine).

1. Miracles always involved a specific intervention of **divine** power into the realm of the natural, transcending the laws of nature.
2. In contrast to gifts of healing, this power enabled one to perform other types of miracles besides healings: Perhaps such miracles as the casting out demons or raising the dead.

F. “*Prophecy*” [PROPHETEIA] (v. 10b): “utterances under divine inspiration; delivering inspired exhortations, instructions or warnings” (Vincent Word Studies); “predictions” (Strong’s Lexicon).

1. This gift was valuable because the early Christians did not have a complete New Testament as we do today (cf. **1 Cor. 13:8-10**).
2. Prophecy was especially important for “*edification, exhortation, and comfort*” of the church (**1 Cor. 14:3**).

G. “*Discerning of spirits*” [DIAKRISIS] (v. 10c): “judicial estimation” (Strong); “a distinguishing, discerning, judging” (Thayer).

1. In an era when revelation was being given and the teaching of Christ was new it was at times difficult to know a true teacher from a false one.
2. This power gave an individual the ability to accurately judge whether the teaching a person gave was from God or men (cf. **1 Cor. 14:29, 37**).
3. This gift is unnecessary today, for we have the *complete* revelation of God (the perfect Bible) that we can use to hold teachers accountable. (**1 Cor. 13:8-10; James 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 17:11**)
4. False prophets or teachers are *still* a real danger today. Therefore we must test teachers to determine if they speak God’s word (**1 John 4:1**).

H. “*Different kinds of tongues*” [GLOSSA] (v. 10d): “a tongue, i.e. the language used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations: **Acts 2:11**” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon)

1. This gift enabled a person to speak foreign languages he had not learned or studied beforehand (**Acts 2:4-8**).
 - a. Not languages “unknown” to mankind, but languages unknown to the person speaking in tongues (**1 Cor. 14:2**, KJV).
2. The purpose of tongues was to provide a sign to unbelievers (**1 Cor. 14:22**), to confirm the message (e.g., prophecy) to be of God.
 - a. Speaking in tongues would benefit unbelievers *only* when it was spoken in a language that unbelievers could understand (**Ac 2:11**).
3. Tongues also edified Christians, provided there was an interpreter that could tell the church what was being said (**1 Cor. 14:27-28**).

J. “*The interpretation of tongues*” [HERMENEIA] (v. 10e): “to explain, interpret” (Eng., “hermeneutics”), and is used of explaining the meaning of words in a different language” (Vine); “translation” (Strong).

1. This gift was *essential* in order for the church in the hearing of speaking in tongues to understand and receive edification (**1 Cor 14:26-28**)
2. This gift demonstrates that the speaking of tongues was *intelligible*.
 - a. Unlike modern claims that involve ecstatic (highly emotional) indiscernible speech, “tongues” were *verifiable* languages.
3. Apparently, it was possible for a person to have both the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation (**1 Cor. 14:12-13**).

III. The Purpose of Miraculous Spiritual Gifts.

A. What the purpose was **not**.

1. To give glory or recognition to men.
 - a. The Holy Spirit, not men, was the source of the spiritual gifts (**1 Cor. 12:11**); *Therefore, there was no room for boasting or pride.*
 - b. Instead of boasting or bragging (**1 Cor. 13:4**), God or the Holy Spirit was to be given the glory in the church (**Eph. 3:21**).
2. Proof of spiritual superiority
 - a. Regardless of which gift a Christian had, the gift did *not* make them better morally or spiritually than the others.

(1) There was no “hierarchy” in the church, in the sense of moral or spiritual worth and status before God.

(2) All were equal to one another in Christ (**Gal. 3:28**).

b. The truth was, *every* member of the body of Christ was important and needed (**1 Cor. 12:12-30**).

c. No one could say to the other: “*I have no need of you.*” (v. 21)

d. Those who possessed spiritual gifts had not earned them by meritorious good works.

e. Gifts were given according to the will of the Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:11**), according to what pleased God (**1 Cor. 12:18**).

3. To enable one to live righteously.

Examples: The prophet Balaam, despite having the Spirit of God, was a wicked man (**Num. 22-24**). Even the apostle Peter committed the sin of partiality (**Gal. 2:13**).

a. All miraculous spiritual gifts in the first century *ceased* at the completion of God’s word or revelation (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**).

b. All we need to live righteously today is God’s Word (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**) and the strength the Lord supplies (**Phil. 4:13**).

4. Proof of spiritual maturity or salvation

a. Those at Corinth who possessed gifts *still* needed to understand “*the more excellent way*” of love (**1 Cor. 12:31-13:13**).

(1) The mere possession of a gift did not mean that one was right with God or was spiritually mature!

b. True spiritual maturity is demonstrated by love (**1 Cor. 13:1-8**).

c. Faith that saves is demonstrated by obedience (**James 2:14-26**), by faith that *works through love* (**Gal. 5:6**).

B. The **true** purpose of spiritual gifts.

1. **Confirmation of Revelation** (**Heb. 2:3-4**; cf. **Mark 16:16-20**):

Miraculous gifts *proved* that the message preached was from God.

a. The gospel was confirmed to be true by the witness of God.

b. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit – signs, wonders, and various miracles, God gave His testimony.

Example: Stephen performed great signs and wonders (**Acts 6:8-10**) and those who argued with him were unable to stand up against the wisdom he spoke.

Example: Philip performed miraculous signs and the people paid attention to the words that he spoke (**Acts 8:5-13**).

2. **Edification** (i.e., building up saints): Miraculous and non-miraculous gifts were for this purpose (**Rom. 12:6-8**; **1 Cor. 14:12**; **Eph. 4:11-12**).

a. Repeatedly, the apostle Paul stressed the importance of edification in the use of spiritual gifts (**1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26**).

b. Instead of using gifts in a selfish manner, spiritual gifts were to be used for “*the profit of all*” or “*the common good*” (**1 Cor 12:7**)

3. Miraculous spiritual gifts served to build up a local church, to help establish it or make it stronger (**Rom. 1:10-11**).

Conclusion: Miraculous Spiritual Gifts Were of a Great Spiritual Help to the Church of the First Century. Today, Let Us Earnestly Desire the Greater Gifts of Faith, Hope, and Love!