

## Spiritual Gifts - part 4: A New Testament Overview

In **Exodus 31:1–6** the Spirit gives certain individuals abilities to build the tabernacle. In the NT the Lord’s people are given gifts/abilities to build the church (Eph 4:12) and extend the kingdom. As the workers on the tabernacle used their gifts to put on display the glory of God through the beauty of the tabernacle, so as we serve and build up the body through the gifts he gives us, we put on display the glory of God through the beauty of the church - the bride adorned.

### Definition

The NT does not define what a spiritual gift is, or what individual ones are. However from **1 Cor 12:4-7** we can say that a spiritual gift

- is a Holy Spirit given ability
- to help meet the needs of others (12:7) - ‘for the common good’. (1 Cor 14:4 prophecy is for the building up of the church; Eph 4:8 they are given for the building up of his body)
- every believer has one or more.

Key to understanding gifts is - Eph 4:12 - ‘equipping the saints for the work of ministry.’ All the church’s members are to do the work of ministry. The Spirit has given you a gift or gifts to make you particularly fruitful in an area of ministry.

### New Testament Overview

**From** Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor 12:4-11, 27-28; Ephesians 4:7-12; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thess 5:19-21 we see the following gifts listed:

Romans 12:3-8	1 Cor 12:4-11	1 Cor 12:27-28	Eph 4:7-12	Col 3:16	1 Thess 5:19-21
Prophecy	Word of wisdom	Apostles	Apostles	Teaching	Prophecies
Service	Word of knowledge	Prophets	Prophets	[with all wisdom]	[testing]
Teaching	Faith	Teachers	Evangelists		
Exhortation	Gifts of healings	Miracles	Shepherd-teachers		
Generosity	Working of miracles	Gifts of healings			
Leadership	Prophecy	Helping			
Acts of mercy	Distinguishing between spirits	Administrating			
	Various kinds of tongues	Various kinds of tongues			
	Interpretation of tongues				

The repeated image used is of a body. The Spirit gifts us all differently, but we need one another for the whole body to work well and be a healthy.

From **1 Peter 4:10-11** we see gifts of speaking, gifts of serving, and both are to the glory of God - not the ‘gifted’ person.

There is likely no complete gift list and there is overlap.

Additional thoughts:

**2 Cor 12:12:** These are signs of an apostle - not anyone. The apostles were doing things no-one else was.

**Ephesians 2:19-20 and 4:11-12:** The apostles and prophets were foundational. So the Eph 4 list contains foundational gifts (apostle/prophet) - and continuing gifts (evangelists/shepherds/teachers) - but they are all word-based.

So the equipping of the saints is to be based on the proclamation of the good news of the King and his kingdom - on the apostolic teaching. All other gifts flow from this. Things begin to go very wrong when any gifts are exercised divorced from that apostolic teaching.

## Acts

Considering the texts/lists above we see the following gifts exercised in Acts:

- Apostles, prophets (Agabus), evangelists (Philip), pastor-teacher (Apollos)
- Tongues - Acts 2:4; Gentiles (Cornelius - Acts 10:46); Ephesus (Acts 19:6)
- Proclaiming the gospel - repeatedly! - The apostles; Philip; those scattered.
- Signs and wonders/miracle workers :
  - Acts 2:43 by the apostles
  - Acts 5:12: 'Many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles'; Stephen 6:8; Philip 8:7,13.

What were these signs and wonders?

- Miracles of healing:
  - man lame from birth - Peter and John — Acts 3
  - Aeneas - bed ridden and paralysed - Peter - Acts 9
  - crippled man at Lystra - Paul and Barnabas - Acts 14
  - father of Publius on Malta - Paul - Acts 28
  - by Philip - Acts: 8:6-7, 13
- Raising from the dead:
  - Dorcas - Peter - Acts 9
  - Eutychus - Paul - Acts 20

**Note:** We don't see anyone else in Acts outside the apostles, Stephen, Philip ministering in this way.

- Caring and providing for needs of others - generosity - serving
  - Whole church - Acts 2:44
  - deacons - Acts 6
  - Dorcas: 'full of good works and acts of charity' (Acts 9:36) = service/mercy
- Administrating - the deacons - Acts 6
- Leading - Peter, Barnabas, Paul
- Prophecy
  - Agabus - Acts 21:10-11
  - Philip's daughters - 21:9 '4 unmarried daughters who prophesied'
  - Ephesian 'disciples': 19:6
- Wisdom - council of Jerusalem - Acts 15 - James
- Knowledge - possibly: Paul: against Elymas - 13:9-10; trouble ahead- Acts 20:23
- Teaching - Apollos: 18:24ff
- Distinguishing spirits - Paul and the Philippine slave girl 16:16ff
- Exhorting - Barnabas (4:36)

## Conclusion from Acts

The gifts were used in multiple different settings. Miracles of healing were done by the apostles or those close to them. They do not seem to have been given to 'normal' church members. Leaving aside tongues and prophesy for the moment (next week!) the gifts we see being exercised by 'normal' Christians are proclaiming the gospel, service, mercy, administrating, teaching. And these are no less gifts of the Spirit.

## **Paul and Timothy**

The spiritual gifts we see Timothy exercise are teaching, exhortation, leadership, administrating (list of widows etc).

From **1 Timothy 1:18, 4:13-14, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 4:5**, we see that:

- Gift given by the laying on of an apostle's hand/by prophecy/council of elders
- Prophecy is about Timothy - we don't know what exactly
- Gifts = exhortation, teaching, probably leadership
- Sometimes gifts need to be fanned into flame - we can neglect them
- Qualities that can help us exercise our gifts - the Spirit's power, love, self-control/discipline
- Sometimes we may need to do things we don't feel particularly gifted for (evangelism)

## **James**

**James 5:14-16:** The elders are to pray for healing, but also 'one another'. Why elders? Probably to deal with this issue of sin - is this problem caused by sin or not? Is this one of the 'gifts of healings'? Not necessarily - regardless, the emphasis is not on, 'whose got the gift? Call the gifted one!' It's 'pray for one another.'

## **John**

**1 John 2:20, 26-27:** The anointing is the Holy Spirit. He gives us knowledge - the truth of the gospel. You can discern truth and error as the Spirit will be your teacher. You don't need anyone else to re-teach you the basic gospel foundations. He's clearly not saying, 'you don't need teachers', or else he wouldn't be writing this letter!

## **Revelation**

**Revelation 19:10:** The spirit of prophecy - its very essence - is proclaiming and witnessing to Christ. That is the task of the church.