

# SESSION 4

## THE GIFTS (PART II)

### This Session's Focus

In session 3, you used four significant New Testament passages to build a list of spiritual gifts. Perhaps you can see why members of the Early New Testament Church felt so gifted. God's gifts were many and varied.

Though complete agreement is lacking, many students of the Bible group spiritual gifts this way:

**Special people gifts**—apostolicity; prophecy; evangelism; shepherding; teaching

**Speaking gifts**—exhortation; wisdom; knowledge

**Serving gifts**—serving; helping; leadership; administration; giving; showing mercy; discernment; faith; hospitality

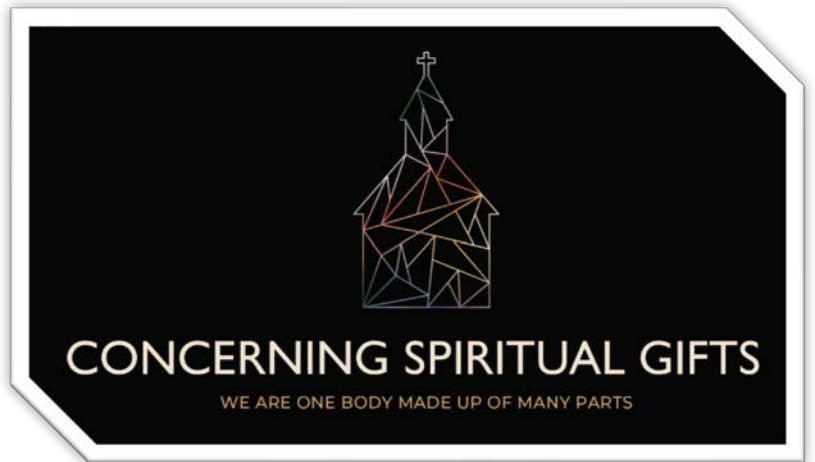
**Sign gifts**—tongues; interpretation; healing; miracles

It's not always easy to designate a gift or grouping. For instance, in Ephesians 4, it's possible to designate one gift as pastor-teacher. The grammar in the passage (v. 11) allows for it. Yet in two other lists, the gift of teacher appears on its own. Students of Scripture must decide among several alternative listings: pastor, pastor-teacher, teacher, two of these, or all three.

In this session, we'll look more closely at each spiritual gift, find its occurrence in the Scriptures, and define it more sharply. All of this will move you closer to the point where you can more readily discover and use your own spiritual gift(s).

### Meditation

Today, Lord, Jim came and asked me to teach Sunday School again. He's been after me for a year now. What am I supposed to tell him? Is it fair to say no again? Or to put him off another year? I heard once, Lord, of a Sunday School teacher who received an award for teaching fifty years. Imagine it—fifty years! Do You know what she said, Lord? She said that fifty years ago, she had offered to teach as a substitute for one term! Is Sunday School teaching a life sentence, Lord? Is it? What does it take to be a good teacher? Liking kids? Being patient? Preparation? Or is Mr. Miller right when he says, "Good teachers carry big sticks from the start"? Shall I try it, Lord? Have you given me the gift of teaching? Lord, before I talk to Jim, help me sort out my gifts. But don't let me keep sorting and sorting and sorting. Instead, fill me with conviction. Then give me a sense of urgency. Give me the courage to act. Now. Amen.



## Session Primer

Meet three members of Grace Church. They could belong to any church.



- † Tom is the pastor of Grace Church. His people support and love him, but he lacks the confidence he once had. He questions his effectiveness, especially in his teaching and preaching. He still likes to call on members, visit the sick, and make evangelism visits. However, the preaching and the teaching have become a burden. Tom wonders if he should be in the ministry.
- † Carol faces a potentially dangerous situation at work. For several months, she has known about a shady deal her boss made with one of the women on the staff. In return for sexual favors, he rewards the woman with extra benefits and assignments. It's getting harder for Carol to stay quiet. Her faith, she says, will not allow her to let the situation continue. She must confront both the boss and the co-worker. She knows her job will be on the line. Still, she has decided to speak up.
- † Frank has always appreciated Dale's insight and wise counsel. They're good friends. Over coffee, Frank explains that he's leaving Grace Church. He tells Dale he thinks he'd be happier at a church that is more spiritually alive. But he wonders. Is this God's will or just his own need for change? Is God causing him to feel uncomfortable about leaving Grace, or is this a temptation on the part of the devil? Frank hopes Dale can help him understand.

1. Look again at the list of spiritual gifts. In each of these cases, what specific spiritual gifts are being used or being sought?
2. In your opinion, is it possible to be a pastor without having some of the gifts? If so, which ones are crucial? If not, why?
3. Why do you think some Christians are more willing to boldly confront difficult situations?
4. What would you tell Frank if he came to you for advice? He wants to be spiritually fulfilled. Is this an adequate reason for leaving his congregation?

## Biblical Search and Study

1. Take a closer look at spiritual gifts. As you do, carefully examine the following definitions and passages; explain how this gift works and what it accomplishes in the Church; suggest activities or ministries in the Church that would fully employ this gift.
  - a. **Apostolicity**—A particular Christian appointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered with special gifts for leading, inspiring, and developing the churches of God by the proclamation of the Gospel and the teaching of true doctrine (Acts 13–14). Note: Although qualities of the office of apostle and prophet exist today, most theologians

teach that these offices do not exist today since none of us is an eyewitness to the resurrection (Acts 1:21–22). The once-for-all-times nature of these offices is stressed when St. Paul says the Church has been built (aorist passive tense of verb) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20).

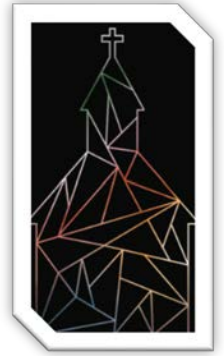


- b. **Prophecy**—A particular Christian appointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered with special gifts for communicating the Word of God to people (Acts 2:14–21; 11:27–30; 1 Corinthians 14:1–5, 30–33, 37–40).
- c. **Evangelism**—A particular Christian appointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered with special gifts for presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ to non-Christians so that unbelievers become disciples of our Lord (Acts 21:8; 8:1–8, 26–40).
- d. **Shepherding**—A particular Christian appointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered with special gifts for taking on the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the community of God’s people. (Pastor means “shepherd.” “Pastor” and “elder” are used synonymously in the New Testament. See John 21:16; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; and Titus 1:5–9.)
- e. **Teaching**—A particular Christian appointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered with special gifts for communicating the truths of God’s Word so that others learn (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:42; 13:1; James 3:1–5).
- f. **Exhortation**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to stand alongside fellow Christians in need and bring them counsel and encouragement. (Exhortation, which means literally “to call to the side of,” is sometimes translated “encouragement.” (See 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:15; and Hebrews 3:12–15.)
- g. **Wisdom**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to bring to the Church an understanding of God’s will for Christian living (1 Corinthians 1:18–25; 2 Timothy 3:15).
- h. **Knowledge**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to understand the great truths of God’s Word and to make them relevant to specific situations in the Church (Romans 11:33–36; 1 Corinthians 13:8–12).
- i. **Serving**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to identify the needs of people (inside and outside the Church) and implement plans to meet those needs (John 13:1–17; Acts 6:1–3; 2 Corinthians 8:1–15).
- j. **Helping**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to willingly bear the burdens of other Christians and so help others in the Church, thus enabling them to do their tasks more efficiently (Acts 20:34–35; Galatians 6:2; 2 Timothy 4:11).

- k. **Leadership**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to motivate God’s people, delegate responsibilities, and direct and inspire so that the Church’s work goes on effectively (Exodus 18:13–26; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; 1 Timothy 5:17–22).
- l. **Administration**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians effectively to direct a segment of the Church’s ministry, keeping the Church on course (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5).
- m. **Giving**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to offer their material blessings for the work of the Church with exceptional willingness, cheerfulness, and liberality (2 Corinthians 8:1–5; 9:6–15; Philippians 4:15–20).
- n. **Showing mercy**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit provides particular Christians with an exceptional measure of love and compassion and moves them to devote large amounts of time and energy to care for the suffering. (See Romans 12:8 and Colossians 3:12. Note: The word in the original denotes strong emotional responses that come from the viscera, the “bowels” in Greek.)
- o. **Discernment**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to distinguish with clarity between that which is of God and that which is of this world and of Satan (Acts 5:3–6; 8:18–23; 16:16–18; 1 John 4:1–6).
- p. **Faith**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit provides particular Christians with unusual trust in God’s promises, thus enabling them to take heroic stands for their Christian principles and to face danger, persecution, and pressure with confidence in God’s power and presence (Hebrews 11; Acts 6:8–15).
- q. **Hospitality**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit provides particular Christians with willing hearts, thus enabling them cheerfully to open their homes to others, offering them lodging, food, and fellowship (Luke 10:1–12; Acts 16:13–15; 1 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:1–2; 1 Peter 4:9).
- r. **Tongues**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to speak to God or to fellow Christians in a language they have never learned (1 Corinthians 14).
- s. **Interpretation**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit enables particular Christians to translate that which is spoken in tongues for the Church (1 Corinthians 14:6–19, 26–33).
- t. **Healing**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit uses particular Christians to restore health to the sick (Luke 9:1–2; Acts 3:1–16; 28:7–10; James 5:14–16).
- u. **Miracles**—The special gift whereby the Holy Spirit uses particular Christians to perform mighty acts revealing God’s power (John 14:12–14; Acts 6:8; 8:6–8).



2. Discuss the following questions,
  - a. Do any of the gifts appear to be similar? For example, what is the difference between the gift of leadership and the gift of administration? between wisdom and knowledge? between prophecy and exhortation?
  - b. Which gifts of the Spirit do you believe are present in your group right now?
  - c. Knowing what you do about the apostle Paul, which spiritual gifts would you say the Holy Spirit gave to him?



### **What this Means for Us**

1. “Charismatic” churches usually place great emphasis on the sign gifts: tongues, interpretation, miracles, and healing. Are any of these gifts present in your congregation?
2. Paul emphasizes that people with spiritual gifts are gifts to the Church. How does this emphasis affect your attitude about all your spiritual gifts? How would you respond, for example, to someone in your congregation who announces that he has received the gift of healing?
3. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? “Not every Christian has the spiritual gift of an evangelist, but every Christian has the role of witnessing, or evangelism.” (See 2 Timothy 4:5.) Give reasons for your answer.
4. Look at the list of spiritual gifts as you consider each of the following situations. What gift(s) is called for in each case?
  - a. An accident victim trying to decide why this has happened
  - b. A person making a financial pledge to the church
  - c. A church council planning meeting
  - d. A student disagreeing with a teacher on the basis of Scripture
  - e. A new congregation just getting started
  - f. An opportunity to begin a nursing home visitation ministry
  - g. A door-to-door canvass for Christ
  - h. A lunch for the surviving family after a funeral service
  - i. A terminally ill patient unwilling to accept death
5. In the next session, we’ll work toward discovering our own spiritual gifts. Begin thinking about it now. What gift(s) do you seem to have? How are you using it (them) in the Church?

### **Gleanings**

How many of the spiritual gifts can you list from memory? Put a check mark next to any that you feel you may have. Put an X next to those you wish to study in more detail.