

**“THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”**  
**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

One of my favorite TV shows is a show called, “Heroes.” (Like many of these types of shows the more seasons it’s on, the more complicated the story gets. That’s why the first season is usually the best.) The story is about ordinary people who discover they have extraordinary abilities. Among them are a politician who can fly, an artist who can see into the future, a Japanese office worker who can stop time and time travel, a cheerleader who can heal from any injury. The main plot of the first season was for them to discover their own powers, then discover one another and combine their abilities to save the world. The theme for season one was, “Save the cheerleader; save the world!”

According to the Bible, Spiritual gifts are unique, sometimes extraordinary abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to ordinary people who believe in Jesus Christ. When each person’s gift is joined with the spiritual gifts of others, we build up the Church, that we might serve and save the world. A Spiritual Gift is different from what we’ll call a Creation Gift. Let me explain.

A creation gift is a natural, human talent that you were born with or that you have an aptitude or skill for. It is a talent that has been identified and developed, or a skill that has been learned and improved. A Creation gift is something that anyone and everyone can have, whether they have the Spirit or not, but can still be used to the glory of God.

A Spiritual Gift is a spiritual ability that one did not have before they received the Holy Spirit upon belief in Jesus Christ. A Spiritual gift is given by God through the Holy Spirit – not so much for the benefit of the recipient, but for the benefit of others – specifically the church to unite with other gifts to become the Body of Christ to serve and to save the world. Many times the Holy Spirit takes someone’s particular creation gift and super charges it, so that it has a spiritual purpose, often linked with a spiritual gift. For example, someone might have the creation gift of having a good singing voice. But when the Holy Spirit came to live in that person, they started singing for the Lord, and people were drawn closer to Christ, or worshipped God. Some people might say their voice was anointed.

Several years ago I spent a lot of time studying the gifts. My mind likes to organize things so I can understand them better. The categories might still be a little fuzzy, but it’s an attempt to get a handle on them. This outline is what I came up with. We are going to fly through this.

The lists of spiritual gifts from the Bible were not meant to be all defining. The ones that got the most attention created the biggest problems in the early church, like tongues or miracles. The main lists are in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Other gifts were gleaned from other parts of the Bible. The lists I have here are by no means exhaustive, nor do I believe God meant them to be.

In Ephesians 4 Paul explains about some of the Ministry or Enabling gifts: **Apostle** – limited, one who spent time with Jesus and went to spread the Gospel in new places that have never heard the Gospel – literally means: *one who is sent*. **Prophet** is one who speaks forth God’s Word (not necessarily predicting the future); **Evangelist** has a gift for leading people into a relationship with Jesus Christ; **Pastor** – someone who equips the saints for service, as does a **Teacher**. (I have known good teachers who had good creation gifts for teaching, but not the spiritual gift, and some who had no creation gift, but had the spiritual gift to teach about God.)

Next are the Serving Gifts. Some of them are unusual and outside of our experience, others are much more subtle – all of them are gifts. In Serving Gifts there are Inspirational Gifts with *the power to say*. **Tongues** – unknown language to the speaker – maybe a language of another country, some say a language of heaven. There is a tongue that is a personal prayer language, and a tongue that is meant to be interpreted to God’s people. So the next gift is **Interpretation**. An unknown tongue is not to be used in worship unless there is an interpreter to tell what was said. **Prophecy** – forthtelling God’s Word; **Exhortation** – gift of encouraging others.

Then there are the gifts of power or *the power to do*. **Healing** – when these people pray people are healed. **Miracles** – could be many things – God receives the glory. **Faith** – absolute confidence in God, especially in difficult situations. **Helps** – most common gift (as well as serving) – to do things from ushering, to picking up bulletins, to serving food – they love to do it, and it frees up others to do other things. **Administration** is more than just management – church business is very odd and must be done with great faith. The person with this gift is able to administer the Body of Christ. **Giving** – God blesses these people with money (although it does not mean they are always rich) and they love to give it away where needed in ministry. **Compassion** – uncanny capacity to care for others.

The Gifts of Revelation or *the power to know*. These gifts can be rather unusual. **Discerning** – the person can tell if something is from God - or not - by the Spirit. **Word of Knowledge** – where a person knows about a situation or person without having been told before; **Word of Wisdom** – an ability to help others apply the wisdom of God in a situation.

***Miscellaneous gifts*** that could be sorted out to these or new categories: **Celibacy** – to remain celibate for a time or for life in order to serve God; **Voluntary Poverty** – to remain poor in order to identify with and work with the poor; **Martyrdom** – the ability to die for the faith in a way that glorifies God and attracts others to Christ (can use it one time only); **Hospitality** – gift of making someone feel welcome and at home, inviting others in; **Missionary** – have a passion to reach other cultures for Christ, and an ability to adapt, adjust and learn within new cultures; **Intercession** – gift of praying for others, and seeing those prayers answered; **Exorcism** – ability to cast out evil spirits from a person or situation. We can add an etcetera to the list – because we don’t know how many more gifts the Holy Spirit can or will give.

Some of these gifts might sound a little weird and freak you out a bit, but they are good gifts. Matthew 7:9-11 says,

**7"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

Luke words the same thing just a little differently:

**11"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)**

I think the point is we would rather have the Giver, the Spirit, than just the gift. But the Giver brings the gifts – and the gifts are not evil. A person has control over their gift, because the gift is used by faith. And like any gift you receive, the more you use it, the more comfortable you are with it, and the more you understand how it is meant to be used together with the gifts of others to “serve and save the world.”

The early Church had a few problems with the gifts. In our text in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Paul is addressing a very specific problem within the church in Corinth, because they were trying to show one another up saying their gift was better than someone else's. Speaking in Tongues was the big issue. Paul is saying the Spirit is the One Who gives the gifts – and each one is important, contributing to the make up of the Body of Christ, the Church. The Church is meant to be an organism more than an organization – functioning like the parts of a living body – if one part does well, all do well; if one part hurts, the whole body hurts. Your body does not run by committee. Your head runs your body; the Head of the Body of Christ is Jesus, Himself. The Head has every part of the Body helping the other parts. We are to use our gifts to build up the Body so that together God will use us to serve and save the world.

A question many people have is: How do I know what my spiritual gift is? Use your creation gifts until you discover your spiritual gifts. Some take spiritual gift inventories that are available these days. Most spiritual gift inventories simply ask questions about what you like to do, where and how you like to serve, and what you are most passionate about in ministry in the church and mission outside of the church. I believe most Christians have more than one spiritual gift, but usually one will be more dominant.

Pray that God will reveal it to you. The important thing is don't be anxious about it. It's not necessary to “get it right” or even to know what it is. What is necessary is to utilize all you have and all you are to the glory of God – to build up

**others in the church, and to minister to people outside of the church, being the literal Body of Christ – going where Jesus would go and doing what Jesus would do. Your spiritual gift will not be discovered sitting at a desk at home or in a classroom. Your spiritual gift will be discovered as you actively serve Christ in the church and the world.**

**“Serve the Savior; save the world.” We are more than heroes, more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us. Use the gifts the Spirit gives you to serve the Savior and save the world.**