

9 Powerful Gifts of the Spirit From the Bible

by [Jack Wellman](#) on April 25, 2011

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Isaiah 11:2-3 speaks of seven different spirits or gifts: “And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay (called discernment).” These are important gifts and some of them are similar to but different from the gifts of the Spirit that Paul talks about in the New Testament in I Corinthians chapter twelve. There are nine gifts of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians chapter twelve:

- 1) Word of Wisdom
- 2) Word of Knowledge
- 3) Faith
- 4) Gifts of Healing
- 5) Working of Miracles
- 6) Prophecy
- 7) Discerning of Spirits
- 8) Divers (or different) kinds of Tongues
- 9) Interpretation of (different) Tongues

This is not an exhaustive list of the gifts of the spirit, for example some are said to have the [gift of mercy](#) which is a person who is quick to forgive and not judge others who have sinned while others are not so quick to do so. God gives these gifts as He sees best and not what we think they are for (v 11). We can not receive gifts we are not intended to receive but we can desire certain gifts, indicating that we can receive gifts of the Spirit that may fulfill the desires of our hearts while still fulfilling God’s purpose for them (v 31). Let’s examine what these gifts are and what is their intended use is for in the church today.

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Romans chapter twelve has a similar listing of the gifts of the Spirit but I Corinthians chapter twelve is more comprehensive in nature. I Corinthians chapter twelve begins with Paul telling the Corinthian church, and for the most part, all believers in the church today. Paul wants to make these gifts crystal clear to us and so we will depend upon the inspired Word of God to reveal them to us (v 1).

Paul tells us that “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them” (v 4). No two gifts are the same and generally no two believers have exactly the same gifts but always these gifts are given for the common good of the church (v 7).

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The Gift of Wisdom

The first gift Paul mentions is the gift of wisdom (v 8). It is listed first perhaps because it is foundational to the church and this is a gift that the believer can earnestly desire (v 31). Wisdom is clearly taught in the Word of God and “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding” (Psalm 11:10). This is the precious gift that Solomon asked for and received from God to be able to rightly rule God’s nation (I Kings 3:12). With this wisdom, Solomon could understand what to do in difficult decisions. Wisdom is also associated with fearing the Lord. Fear is simply standing in awe of God in reverence and respect. It entails loving His Word and being obedient to what it says. There is no wisdom in disobedience. This means that if some members are revering God’s laws and statutes, including loving God and loving your neighbor, that many members in the church can have this gift. Of course, many can not have it either. This gift is of supreme importance for members in the Body of Christ for if we can love God and our neighbor, we can greatly contribute to the church and those outside of the church. This love is another way of showing unbelievers and attracting them to Christ by it (John 13:35).

The Gift of Knowledge

The next gift of the Spirit is that of knowledge (v 8). Some people have such a gift of remembering scriptures. They have [knowledge](#) of God and His ways. They seem to be able to quickly distinguish which is biblical and which is not. Some translations say it is the “Word” of knowledge while others say that it is the “utterance” of knowledge. The Word is most certainly the Word of God. The “utterance” of knowledge could indicate that those with the gift of knowledge know when to speak particular words, when not to,

and what words to speak with. Both words seem to fulfill what true knowledge is. These with this gift make excellent teachers, deacons, elders, or pastors.

The Gift of Faith

The next gift of the Spirit Paul mentions is the gift of faith (v 9). Those with this gift are truly amazing in how they see things. They tend to exude confidence in all situations. For example, our church deacon has said about our church growth “when” it grows we will need more Sunday school books, while others say “if” we grow we will need additional books. I met an evangelist once that spoke about things as if they already had existed or had come to pass. He spoke about finances that God would provide while simultaneously have nothing to show for it in the church’s bank account. He would always later prove to be right. This is a person more like God. He sees things that aren’t as if they already are!

The Gift of Healing

The gift of healing has been a controversial one (v 9). Some “faith healers” claim to have this gift yet have often been exposed to be frauds by undercover reporters. Many of those “healed” have been interviewed prior to their supposed healing. Some tap the power of positive thinking to convince them that they are healed. Others have even used “scam artists” or actors to portray someone that has been healed from an infirmity that they never actually had. This gift was more prominent in the New Testament church to confirm that Jesus Christ’s name had power and that God was working in the church. I am not saying that people are still not healed today but the days of having someone’s shadow passing over them and they are instantly healed is over. The gift of healing may be in relations to the power of prayer and we know that the effectual prayer of a righteous man or woman can accomplish miracles (James 5:16). In any event, we must attribute any healing that is done is “...by that one Spirit“ and not by humans (v 9).

The Gift of Miracles

The gift of “miraculous powers“ is another gift of the Spirit that appears to be unique to the New Testament church (10). This may also be associated with faith healers who claim that they have the gift of miraculous powers but they must remember that any gift or its results are always credited to the spirit and not to humans. It could also be attributed to those who are prayer warriors. There is an elderly lady that I know I want her praying for me. I have had some pretty interesting results when this lady has prayed for me. I would call some of the things that have happened miraculous in some ways. The greatest miracles that occur today are, for the most part, the miracle of human conversion. I see this as the greatest miracle of all since only the Spirit of God can illuminate the Word of God and reveal to us Who Jesus Christ is (John 6:44, Matt 16:17).

The Gift of Prophecy (Speaking)

The next gift is that of prophecy (v 10). Prophecy has several different interpretations and it is clear that in this context, within the church at Corinth, prophecy is the gift of

teaching and/or speaking. The literal translation here is that it is “publicly speaking” or “speaking forth” the Word of God. This gift is associated with those who are teachers or pastors since God would not gift someone in the church to teach or preach without having an ability to do so. It is not inferring that they know the future or know what is to come since only a sovereign God alone knows the future.

The Gift of Discernment

The gift of “distinguishing between spirits” is having the gift of discernment. It is able to discern scriptures and their application to believers in the church. It is also being able to tell whether someone is earnest and sincere, or they appear to have an agenda. Peter displayed this in Acts chapter five when Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property and kept back part of the money and brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet but lied saying they had given it all to the church (Acts 5:1-10). Those with this gift of discernment or “distinguishing between spirits” may be able to know whether the church should or should not do particular things.

The Gift of Tongues

The next gift is the ability to speak in different tongues (v 10). This has been one of the most controversial and most misunderstood gifts of all. When the original outpouring of the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, there were many [speaking in tongues](#). Paul wrote about tongues extensively in 1 Corinthians, chapters twelve through fourteen, but he was reproofing the Corinthians for misusing the gift. It’s very difficult out of this passage to get any kind of mandate to speak in tongues, to get any kind of affirmation that this is something to be sought, because what you have here are primarily corrective orders given to the Corinthians. They had actually prostituted the gift of tongues into something pagan that wasn’t even representative of the work of the Spirit. All you need to do is to go back to Acts 2 and read verse 4, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages”. The literal translation in Greek is “glossa” and means tongues. This same word “glossa” (language) is used again in Acts 2:11. This means it is a known language not some unknown tongue. Then it says (in Acts 2:5-11) that there were unbelievers present at Pentecost and were hearing God’s message in their own “dialektos” dialects or language: “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues” (dialektos or dialects)! So there were unbelievers present at Pentecost hearing God’s message in their own languages and their own local dialects, not ecstatic gibberish.

The Gift of Interpretation of Tongues

The next gift Paul mentions is the gift of interpretation of tongues (v 10). This gift is someone who is able to interpret another tongue or language. I am bilingual and can speak English and Spanish but I would not say that I have this gift necessarily. Some have a natural gift or ability to learn a foreign language. It was not natural nor did it come easy for me. For those who this is easy, then they may be imbued with such a gift. If anyone was speaking in tongues in the church, there absolutely had to be someone there to interpret or they were to be silent. And no more than one person was to speak in tongues because there is only one interpreter available to translate at a time. If several were speaking in tongues at the same time, there would be confusion and God is not the author of confusion, but He is the God of order (1 Cor 14:33). It would not be edifying the church to have several speaking in tongues at the same time and with no one to interpret. Tongues are a sign for unbelievers and not for the church. Paul writes, "In the Law it is written: 'With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.' Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers" (1 Cor. 14: 21-22). Isaiah 28:11-12 is where Paul quotes Isaiah the prophet, "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, 'This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.'" This clearly indicates that the gift of tongues (Greek for languages) and the interpretation of them is that of a known language as a witness to unbelievers.

Paul wants to make clear that we should not elevate one gift over another but esteem each and necessary for the completeness of the Body of Christ as Paul says in I Corinthians 12:12-23, "Now if the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor."

Other Gifts of the Spirit

Romans 12:7-8 also speaks of additional gifts; "if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." This shows that some are gifted at teaching, some at showing mercy, some in giving to the work of the Lord, and some who show an unusual amount of forgiveness (called mercy).

Ephesians 4:11 reveals yet more gifts as Paul indicates there are, "...apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers." Again teachers are mentioned, evangelists are those who are unusually gifted at sharing the gospel with the lost, pastors

and prophets (again, this is those who proclaim the gospel). Apostles can no longer exist because by definition, they would be those church leaders who have been commissioned by the risen Christ and having been done so in His presence. Those who call themselves apostles have no such authority given by God and they are self-designated only, thusly disqualifying themselves as a true apostle.

Many Gifts, Many Members, One Body

Each and every church member is clearly a part of "... the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles (no longer in this church age), second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts"(I Cor. 12:28-31). I pray you not only seek and discover your gifts but that you utilize them to the strengthening of the Body of Christ, for which you are a part. If you are not, then today is the time to become part of Christ's church because members of this body will live on into eternity.

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