

Introductory on Spiritual Gifts: *Follow-up series this winter.*

I know this topic has created a lot of controversy in God's church over the last 2000 years (especially in the last 100). But know this, I am not trying to be controversial here. What I want to do is be as biblically minded as possible.

That said, let me start by addressing some of the issues that I have seen in the exercise of spiritual gifts today. They are issues Paul saw and dealt with in his day and time too, so they aren't new issues.

Why am I starting here. I am stating the obvious, there is controversy over this subject, and I want you to know that my intention, *the spirit in which I am approaching this*, is not with a desire to start a fight or to cause a divide between brothers and sisters who love Jesus but disagree.

I just really want us to look at the scriptures and unpack what they say, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. **We must eagerly desire this.**

Acts 17:11 NIV, *“Now the Berean Jews were of more **noble** character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great **eagerness** and **examined the Scriptures every day** to see if what Paul said **was true.**”*

1 John 4:1, *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, *“Do not quench the Spirit. Do **not treat prophecies with contempt** but **test them all**; hold on to what is **good**, reject every kind of **evil.**”*

We must be cautious listeners and keen observers of the word as the Bereans were. We need **to test all** things and hold on to the truth and discard the rest.

What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

*“A spiritual gift is a particular ability given by God, energized by the Holy Spirit, used to carry out God's purposes; to **build up** the congregation of believers and to expand His Kingdom by drawing unbelievers closer to faith in Him.*

Where do we first see some of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit listed?

Isaiah 11:1-3 NIV, *“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And **the Spirit of the Lord shall***

*rest upon him, the Spirit of **wisdom and understanding**, the Spirit of **counsel and might**, the Spirit of **knowledge and the fear** of the Lord - and he will delight in the **fear of the Lord.**"*

According to Catholic Tradition there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit listed here. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, and fear of God. Wait a minute? 6 vs 7. **To see how they arrive at this look at this...**

Isaiah 11:1-3 Douay-Rheims 1899, *"And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of **wisdom**, and of **understanding**, the spirit of **counsel**, and of **fortitude**, the spirit of **knowledge**, and of **godliness** (piety). And he shall be filled with the spirit of the **fear of the Lord.**"*

Now, from this perspective, St. Thomas Aquinas who lived in the 13th century, recognized that these were "*habits,*" "*instincts,*" or "*dispositions*" provided by God as supernatural helps to man in the process of his "*perfection.*"

They enable man to transcend the limitations of human reason and human nature and participate in the very life God intended and that Christ promised.

The seven gifts are designed to be used in the world for the purpose of transforming that world and connecting the creation with the Creator.

Now, you can see in verse 1, this is a **prophetic passage about– Christ.** **Isaiah 11:1 NIV**, *"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."*

Now, even though this prophecy is looking off in the distance to the Messiah, it reflects an awareness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. **It isn't an exhaustive list**, but these gifts listed do set a foundation from which all other Spiritual gifts emerge.

And while this prophecy reveals that Messiah would possess the **full array** of all the Gifts, we do see gifts in use long before this list is presented in Isaiah.

Some of the other gifts we see in used in the Old Testament include:

Gift of knowledge, understanding, discernment, wisdom, teaching, creative abilities, musical skills, strength, leadership, prophesy, strategic planning, boldness to speak, visions, and dreams.

Now, what do these gifts look like when they are in use?

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION!

Because if we can see what they look like in real life situations, then we can recognize these Spiritual gifts in ourselves and in others and then better define them. With that said, let's go back to the definition of Spiritual gifts I gave you earlier.

What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

*“A spiritual gift is a particular ability **given by God, energized by the Holy Spirit**, used to **carry out God's purposes**; to **build up** the congregation of believers and to expand His Kingdom by **drawing unbelievers** closer to faith in Him.”*

Look, lots of people in their own power can be knowledgeable, understanding, discerning, wise, strong, creative, able people with great abilities, to teach, play a musical instrument, to strategically plan and lead people well. They may be visionaries with big dreams who are incredible communicators.

*But when God gives the gift and energizes it with the power of the Holy Spirit, it is **supernatural** and it always works, it always succeeds and achieves the purposes God reveals.*

Just looking back at the Isaiah 11 we can see how that Gifting plays out in accomplishing God's purposes.

Isaiah 11:3-5 continues, *“He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but **with righteousness he will judge** the needy, **with justice** he will give **decisions** for the poor of the earth. He will **strike the earth** with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will **slay the wicked**. **Righteousness** will be his belt and **faithfulness** the sash around his waist.”*

We stand mesmerized by His wisdom, knowledge and discernment. He could close his eyes and not hear one justification and judge correctly. The needy and the poor who can't fend for themselves are vindicated and elevated. His strength to do right and his commitment to follow through with what He promises instills trust in His rightful place to lead us.

When God gifts one of His servants with just one gift, others will respond in a similar manner. These gifts go beyond natural human ability and others see it, whether they are believers or not.

Joseph was gifted by the Holy Spirit with knowledge, discernment and wisdom. Look how that was manifested and recognized by those around him.

Genesis 39:2-4, *“The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant.”*

Genesis 39:20-23, *“But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”*

All of this eventually leads to Joseph’s release from prison and it was his gifts of the Holy Spirit that caught the attention of Pharaoh which accomplished God’s purpose in saving Israel during a great famine.

Genesis 41:38-39, *“So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.”*

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, DISCERNMENT, DREAMS INTERPRETTED, STRATEGIC PLANNING, etc, etc.

Then in Exodus, 2nd book of the Bible, we read this of **Bezalel and Oholiab**.

Exodus 35:30-35, *“Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the Lord has chosen **Bezalel** son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts. And he has given both him and **Oholiab** son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers— all of them skilled workers and designers.”*

Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, teaching, skills. Wow! God’s purposes.

Note: gifts weren't given for the receiver's benefit, they were given for the benefit of others. Not in a stadium, not a circus event. **Real Life situations.**

Numbers 11:24-29, *70 elders & Eldad, Medad, the Spirit used to **prophecy!***

Numbers 24:2-4, The Spirit came upon Balaam to **prophecy.**

Numbers 27:18-20, Joshua was filled with the **spirit of leadership.**

Deuteronomy 34:9, Joshua was **filled with the spirit of wisdom.**

Judges 3:9-11, Othniel was filled with **judgment to lead & strength**

Judges 6:34-35, The Spirit came upon Gideon with **leadership & strength.**

Judges 14:5-6, The Spirit came upon Samson with superhuman **strength.**

Judges 14:19, The Spirit came upon him again with superhuman **strength.**

Judges 15:14-15, Again superhuman **strength**, 1000 enemies' w/jawbone

1 Samuel 10:9-10, The Spirit came upon Saul to **prophecy.**

1 Samuel 16:13-18, David was filled w/**musical ability, bravery, speech**

1 Samuel 19:18-24, Spirit filled 3 sets of Saul's thugs, him too – to **prophecy**

2 Samuel 23:1-2, The Spirit spoke through David; to **prophecy**

1 Chronicles 28:11-12, The Spirit filled David w/ vision, ability to plan, design

2 Chronicles 15:1, The Spirit of God came on Azariah to **prophecy.**

2 Chronicles 24:19-20, The Spirit filled Zechariah the priest to **prophecy.**

Ezekiel 2:1-7, "The Spirit filled him with **strength and courage to prophecy.**

Ezekiel 8:3, The Spirit filled him and gave him **visions.**

Ezekiel 11:24-25, The Spirit filled him and gave him **more visions.**

Daniel 4:8-9, The Spirit gave Daniel **dreams & the ability to interpret them.**

Daniel 5:11-12, The Spirit gave Daniel insight, intelligence, wisdom, a keen mind, knowledge, understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems.

Micah 3:8, The Spirit filled Micah **just judgment and boldness to speak.**

What is my purpose in showing you all this?

It is obvious that The Holy Spirit, from the beginning of Creation and all through the Old Testament has been in the business of coming upon His people and filling them with gifts to accomplish His great purposes!

This isn't just a New Testament Phenomena!

God has always used His people in supernatural ways to make His will known and to accomplish it! Occasionally, He used people who were not following Him or committed to Him (Like Balaam, Saul, and his thugs)

LAST WEEK: 1) regeneration (giver of life), 2)* indwelling (different), 3) filling, and 4) gifting and empowerment for service. *selective/temporary – all/forever

So, in a time like now, when the Holy Spirit indwells His people permanently, it should not be a surprise that He is in the business of filling His people to do extraordinary things as they go about their lives honoring Him.

I have a problem with the **disuse, misuse and abuse** of gifts I see today in the church. They're being used in a way that they elevate the one Gifted rather than the one who is Gifting. They are almost exclusively used on Sundays in a 2-hour span by everyone at the same time in a building filled with the already convinced who feel good doing crazy! All they're looking for is the spectacular.

Or they're never done, restricted and rejected, not tested or expected in the real-life situations when it matters. Instead, they latch on to the power of knowledge at the expense of experience.

What if we saw the gifts a little different. **Yes, there is the supernatural, the miraculous and wondrous things God does through His people.** *Yet the vast amount of time,* it is about when natural God given abilities are empowered by the Holy Spirit in supernatural ways.

That is when people who aren't believers stand up and notice an anointing, that the Lord is with someone, and that they have been given a special ability to understand things, a super ability to discern, a knowledge that surpasses understanding, an ability to plan and solve problems, to strategize and lead people, an ability to speak boldly for God, human strength like no other. These are all gifts poured out by the Spirit too!

And in real life situations, they solve real problems, they provide real answers and draw people who do not know God toward Him.

They react by showing Favor to these people who obviously have God present in their lives.

Also, even though most people have one or two gifts given to them at a time, there is the rare occasion where they get a number of gifts. The Messiah got the full array like no one else. Why? To distinguish Him from everyone else.

He wasn't just a prophet, or a person given keen understanding or one with great discernment, or a visionary, or a planner, or a great leader – HE WAS

THE WHOLE PACKAGE. We will see that same idea carried on into the New Testament when it came to passing on His authority and power and giving it to 13 people in the New Testament who were responsible to establish the church and its teaching and doctrine.

We will look at all that in the next lesson. These are the ones I will be covering once a month over the next few months of the New year.

#2: Spiritual Gifts and Offices in the New Testament

#3: Definitions and Practical Use - Part 1

#4: Definitions and Practical Use - Part 2

#5: The Fruit of the Spirit

What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

*"A spiritual gift is a particular ability given by God, energized by the Holy Spirit, used to carry out God's purposes; to **build up** the congregation of believers and to expand His Kingdom by drawing unbelievers closer to faith in Him.*

The gifts, like the people who are given them, are wonderfully diverse. The way a particular gift reveals itself in a particular person will be related to many factors: a person's physical strength, temperament, family environment, birth order, artistic ability, intellect, language capacity, emotional sensitivity, spiritual maturity, affluence, culture, etc. And, of course, a person's talents.

*Are spiritual gifts identical to "natural talents"? Well, **yes and no. All "natural talents" come from God.** That's why we talk about a "**gifted violinist.**" With any talent, the more you practice, the better you get. Even a child prodigy will amount to nothing if he/she neglects practice. In these ways natural talents are similar to spiritual gifts. **The more you yield to the Spirit to exercise your spiritual gift, the more skilled you become in this specialized ministry.** If you neglect to exercise a spiritual gift, you get "**rusty.**"*

Some talents may not be spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are specifically given to advance the Kingdom of God, and are specifically operated "in the Spirit."

Spiritual gifts range from what we might call "natural" -- *teaching comes to mind* -- to "supernatural," such as prophetic words and words of knowledge.

If you're a gifted baseball pitcher or soccer player, your talent might not be a spiritual gift. But you could bring glory to God as you excel and give God credit for your performance as you testify to others.

However, some talents may be very closely tied to spiritual gifts. My chief spiritual gift, I believe, is teaching. I have a number of God-given talents -- speaking, planning, building and artistic or creative ability.

I've used these abilities to generate income to support us in missions and for the next part of my life, the "tent-making" phase of my ministry. I don't think it's helpful to draw **sharp distinctions** between spiritual gifts and talents – I don't feel comfortable taking credit for the success God has given me.

However God has gifted you, acknowledge your gifts and abilities with thanks to God, and then commit yourself to using them, so his gifts can bless his people and the world around you while you live here on planet Earth.

1 Peter 4:7-11, *“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **As each has received a gift**, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Invitation