



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
POSITION PAPER

POSITION P-2
Adopted: 11/6/12
Revised: 2/4/14
Revised : 7/2/15
Reviewed: 1/28/22

The primary gift is the Holy Spirit Himself, given to all believers at conversion (Acts 2:33; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2,14), the same Spirit who came on Jesus at His baptism (Luke 3:21-22). Jesus lived and ministered in the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:18, 28; Luke 4:14; 10:21) and we do too. His emphasis is not on the gifts of the Spirit, but on the gift of the Spirit. In modern English usage, "spiritual" means immaterial, esoteric, subjective, mystical, etc. In the Bible it means animated or made alive through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit connects us into the life of the Trinity.

In 1 Corinthians 14:1-6, a pivotal exposition of the work of the Spirit in believers, Paul summarizes an astonishing variety of manifestations of the Spirit. The common teaching is that he is teaching about spiritual gifts, which are supernatural endowments given by the Holy Spirit to believers at or after conversion to fulfill the mission of the church. This does not even come close to the rich diversity of the Spirit's work which may be through life long abilities, newly given abilities, or momentary manifestations.

The common translation of verse 1, "spiritual gifts," is misleading because the word "gifts" is not in the Greek original of this verse. In fact nowhere in the book does Paul use the term "spiritual gift." Paul speaks of "spirituals" which focuses on the things of the Spirit and how the Spirit moves forward the mission of Jesus through the followers of Jesus.

First, the Spirit enables us to say, "Jesus is Lord." This is both the initial confession at conversion when we connect with Jesus and as Jesus followers become more like Him.

Verse 4 speaks of *gifts (charismata)*, any ability you have that the Spirit can pick up, animate, magnify, and repurpose to carry on the work of Jesus, any Spirit spirit-empowered ability that is used in any ministry of the church. We see a list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8. While there are many different kinds of gifts ranging from quite supernatural (working of miracles) to quite natural (administration) all are Spirit empowered abilities and continue the mission of Jesus.

Verse 5 goes on to speak of *services* or ministries (*diakonia*), the place or role or office where believers are called by God to serve inside and/or outside the church. We see a list of services in Ephesians 4:11. There are many other inside the church services such as Elder, deacon, worship leader, children's teacher, as well as community services.

Verse 6 speaks of *workings* or activities (*energema*), things the Spirit does. It is a very general reference to all sorts of things the Spirit does in and through believers. Finally in verse 7 he speaks of *manifestations (phanerosis)* of the Spirit and gives a list of them in verses 8-11.



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The variety of gifts, services, and workings are manifestations of the Spirit in Jesus followers so we can worship God, serve His people and fulfill our mission of making disciples of all nations. They are bestowed by God through the empowerment of His Spirit and must be exercised in love by following biblical principles and guidelines (1 Cor. 13-14). They are all connected to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21-22). Everyone has at least one and most Jesus-Followers have several "spirituals." No person has all of them.

DEFINITIONS OF MANIFESTATIONS LISTED IN 1 COR. 12:8-11:

Word of wisdom: 1) The Spirit empowered ability to take the principles of God's word and practically apply them to everyday life situations in a timely, helpful fashion (Acts 6:3).
2) An "in the moment" manifestation of a God-given insight to the mind or spirit of a believer (Gal. 2:11-21; Eph. 1:17).

Word of knowledge: 1) The Spirit empowered ability to research, remember and make effective use of information especially in a teaching situation. 2) A spontaneous Spirit given impartation of factual information that could not have been known without the Spirit's aid (John 4:17-18).

Faith: The Spirit empowered ability to trust and act on God's revelation or character, especially when it empowers others to do the same. The gift of faith is an expectancy, conviction, certainty and assurance that God will act in an evident way to change circumstances or conditions in response to a need e.g. unusual finances, special provision, divine healing, needed breakthrough, divine protection, deliverance from demonic power, etc. It may be a short term manifestation or an enduring character trait.

Healing: The Spirit empowered ability to reverse the destructive impact of sin through physical, emotional, or spiritual healing to bring both comfort and health to those who are suffering. It is a gift many Christian physicians and counselors exercise in the course of their working.

Miracles: The Spirit empowered ability to call upon God to do supernatural acts that reveal His power.



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However, that working may not be of the LORD, so we must test the gifts. Satan is a great counterfeiter. Matt. 24:24

- a. Does it promote Jesus as God in the flesh? 1 John 4:1-4
- b. Does it follow scriptural principles? Deut. 13:1-5
- c. Does it encourage submission or rebellion? 1 Pet. 4:10-11
- d. Does it edify? 1 Cor. 12:7
- e. Is it exercised lovingly? 1 Cor. 13

Prophecy: The Spirit empowered proclamation of the Word of God that presses deep into the hearts of people, enabling them to see their lives and circumstances in light of God's promises, priorities and purposes. The message may be directly from God or from Scripture. It is usually God's perspective on present events or persons but may also predict the future. In any case, it is God's message proclaimed in the power of the Spirit.

We must test any revelation or prophecy (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1):

- a. Are the speaker and the message loyal to the LORD? Deut. 13:1-11; 18:20
- b. Is it consistent with Scripture? Deut. 13:1-11; 1 Kings 13:15-18
- c. Is what they describe or predict accurate? Deut. 18:22
- d. Is their character Christ-like? Jer. 23:9-40; Micah 3:5-10
- e. Does their word lead to up-building and encouragement? 1 Cor. 14:3
- f. Do the Elders affirm their word? 1 Cor. 14:29

Distinguishing between spirits: The Spirit empowered ability to recognize whether people, events, or beliefs are from Satan or God, to distinguish truth from error.

Speaking in Tongues: The Spirit empowered ability to praise God or pray to God in languages unknown to the user. Tongues are spoken to God and prophecy is spoken to people. (1 Cor. 14:2-3)

Interpreting Tongues: The Spirit empowered ability to interpret languages unknown to the user.

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT SPIRITUALS (A BETTER WORD THAN GIFTS):

When do we get them?

It could be any time, including birth, conversion, as we mature, or for special needs.

How many are there?

The biblical lists contain approximately 20 different words. The scriptural lists are exemplary rather than extensive, so there are many which are not specifically listed in Scripture. The variety in the lists gives indication of the diverse workings which the Spirit does in the people of God to continue the mission of Jesus.

Has the Spirit stopped giving some of them?

They are all still active as the Spirit wills to give them. The Bible is complete and our only inerrant, trustworthy authority. Prophecy and revelation continue and must be tested carefully. It is not love or gifts, but love expressed in gifts.

How do you discover your gift?

Ask yourself “What am I good at?” “What am I passionate about?” “What do others confirm in me?” Remember that most gifts are not listed in Scripture so don’t limit your search to those lists. The spiritual gift inventories are misleading at best since they are built on a specific list of gifts.

When does a natural ability become a spiritual gift?

When ability is Spirit empowered and used for accomplishing the mission of Jesus.

Are any gifts to be sought?

We can ask freely, but it is the Spirit who decides and distributes.

Are any gifts for all people?

Yes. In 1 Cor. 14:1 Paul exhorts all to prophesy, that is to speak God’s Word with transforming power.

What does Paul mean by “greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:5)?”

They are gifts that edify the church more and bring more benefit to others. That some gifts are greater does not mean others are unimportant or that those having greater gifts are better Christians.

What about speaking in tongues?

Tongues are for praising God and for prayer (1 Cor. 14). For instance, in Acts 2:11 the 120 disciples speak in tongues and declare the wonders of God. That is praise. Others hear the praise in their own languages and wonder what’s going on, accusing them of being drunk. Peter explains this in his evangelistic Pentecost sermon. (Acts 2:14-21). Paul specifically says one who speaks in a tongue (language) speaks to God, not other people. (1 Cor. 14:2) Verse 16 says tongues are praising God. Verse 14 and 15 speak of praying in a tongue (language). Paul clearly thinks tongues are good: In verse 18, he says he speaks in tongues more than all of them. The abuse in Corinth was that they were claiming speaking in tongues as a mark of superior spirituality. They were indulging in uncontrolled public tongues thinking that flaunting their gift was a sign of God’s blessing on them.



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Unbelievers who experienced the chaos saw it as a sign that they were out of their mind (1 Cor. 14:23). Paul's basic point about tongues in the gathering of the church is don't forbid it (1 Cor. 14:39) but to exercise the gift using biblical guidelines.

What are biblical guidelines for speaking in tongues in a church assembly?

1 Cor. 14:26-28, 39-40 establishes clear guidelines for speaking in tongues. Paul asserts that only two or three should speak and one at a time (v.27), there must be interpretation or the speaker should refrain from speaking out loud (v.28) and there must be control, not confusion (v.33, 40).