

You'll see from the sheet that we're working through the poem about what church could be like. Of course, we've done it before but we need to remind ourselves that we're not there yet. There are always things we could do better.

Today we're thinking about being a Spirit-filled church. Every believer has a spiritual gift, sometimes more than one, and sometimes different ones depending on the circumstances. There is no such thing as a believer who just goes to church and loves God but has no spiritual gift. The Apostle Peter said: 1 Peter 4:10-11 *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Your gifts are unique to you. Your gifts are different from others - Romans 12:6 *"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."*

A gift is an ability to do God's work. In the parable of the property owner, he gave different amounts of money for investment before he went on a trip. The property owner determined the amount of money he would risk on a worker, Matthew 25:15 *"To each according to his ability"*. God gives us gifts according to our ability.

Your gifts come from God. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Natural talent & spiritual gifts

Is natural talent and spiritual giftedness the same thing? No. A spiritual gift is not natural ability, nor is spiritual giftedness augmented talent. A spiritual gift is the work of the Holy Spirit through a person.

Some with great natural talent also are spiritually gifted to use that talent because they have yielded to God.

Some with great natural talent are not used by God, nor are their spiritual gifts manifested through that talent. The Bible calls these people "sounding brass and a clanging symbol." They make a lot of noise, but don't edify anyone.

Some with little or marginal talent are used by God in a far greater way than their natural talent.

But, every rule has its exception because God can do anything He wants to do. The Holy Spirit powerfully uses people in spite of their human limitations.

The Apostle Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. All believers are part of one body, in unity even as a physical body works as one. In this context, the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts (Charismata) for the good of the whole body: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). The body of Christ is the place where the Holy Spirit teaches a new Christian to grow, learn and serve.

The work of the Spirit, “to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit. There are differing gifts but the same Spirit... the same Lord... the same God works all of them in all men” (Romans 12:4). There are various opinions about the number of spiritual gifts and how to categorise them. The Gifts of the Spirit that are bestowed on Christians are described in the New Testament, primarily in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Gifts of the spirit are clearly distinguished from the fruit of the spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 *To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.*

The gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 can be divided into three categories, “gifts of knowledge” (wisdom, knowledge, discernment), “gifts of speech” (tongues, interpretation, prophecy), and “gifts of power” (faith, healing, miracles). Gifts mentioned in the New Testament include:

- Apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11).
- Teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7, Ephesians 4:11)
- Help / helping (1 Corinthians 12:28)
- Administration / guidance (1 Corinthians 12:28)
- Ministry / serving (Romans 12:7)
- Encouragement (Romans 12:8)
- Giving (Romans 12:8)
- Leading (Romans 12:8)
- Mercy (Romans 12:8)
- Evangelists (Ephesians 4:11)
- Pastors (Ephesians 4:11)

When you faithfully use your spiritual gifts, you will grow in the effectiveness of your present gifts. You can get other gifts. “Desire earnestly the best gifts” (1 Corinthians. 12:31). Paul wrote to the Romans that he wanted to come see them and help them get some spiritual gifts they didn’t have. Romans 1:11 *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.*

Paul was not satisfied with Timothy’s use of his gifts, 2 Timothy 1:6 *“I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you”*. This is a picture of stirring up the coals of fire to make it hotter.

When you don't use your gifts, you feel guilty. The man who was given one talent didn't use it. He told his boss, "I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth" (Matt. 25:23). He didn't do what he was supposed to do. He wasted the talent, so it was taken from him.

Fruit and Gifts

What is the relationship between the Fruit of the Spirit and the Gift of the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit is your character. Your character is defined "habitually doing the right thing in the right way." Galatians 5:22, 23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.*

The gift of the Spirit is your ability to serve the Lord in His strength. I like the way the Living Bible explains it: "Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in all through all of us who are His. The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church" 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

God will and does use your character (spiritual fruit) even when you serve God where you are not gifted. God will and does use your spiritual gift, even when you lack character. God's blessing is most fully on those whose gifts and character are a perfect match.

How to find & use spiritual gifts. (What gift might I have?)

Know what the Word of God says about gifts.

Do everything you can and do everything you have the opportunity to do.

Growing your spiritual gift is like learning to play the piano. The more you practice the piano, the better you will play. When God gives you an ability, you must practice it to perfect it. The more you teach Sunday School, the better teacher you will become.

Many people use a Spiritual Gift Inventory that is practical and personal, they take an inventory and grade it to discover their strengths.

Get the BIG picture of what God is doing. Rather than being limited to your thinking, a Spiritual Gift Inventory is objective, you don't have to go by feelings or subjective insight. It is not what others think you can or cannot do. It is based on the Bible and you can find out what the Bible says about your gifts.

The Big Questions.

The biggest question is not "what is my gift?", but "will you use what you have?"

God asked Moses, "What is in your hand?"

The answer, a stick. When given to God, the stick becomes a powerful tool.

The next question is not “how can I find more gifts?”, but will you use what you have?

The question is not your ability, but your willingness, are you willing to be anything, go anywhere, do anything and say anything?

The Spiritual Gifts Inventory consists of 80 statement items. Some items reflect concrete actions; other items are descriptive traits; and still others are statements of belief.

Helpful Hints in taking the Inventory:

- Take your time. There is no need to rush.
- Go with your first response. That is usually your real belief.
- Do not ask for help from others.
- Select the one response that best describes you.
- Allow yourself about 30 minutes to take the inventory.