

MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

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LESSON 7: HOLY SPIRIT (Part 4): THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Memorize: Romans 12:4-6a: *"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace (charis) given us...."*

"God's program for reaching and changing a broken world has always been one involving incarnation...God became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Christ was that incarnation of God – God in human flesh appearing among men...The life of Jesus is still being manifest among men, but now no longer through an individual physical body, limited to one place on earth, but through a complex corporate body called the church...The church is primarily and fundamentally a body designed to express through each individual member the life of an indwelling Lord and is equipped by the Holy Spirit with gifts designed to express that life." (Ray Stedman, Body Life 38,53)

DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A spiritual gift is a specific capacity for service that the Holy Spirit bestows upon every true Christian without exception at the moment of salvation (I Cor. 12:7, 11). This gift enables the Christian to perform that particular function in the body of Christ.

"A spiritual gift is a Spirit-given ability which acts as a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body." (John MacArthur, The Church The Body Of Christ, 136).

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. A spiritual gift is not the same as a natural talent. Non-Christians as well as Christians have natural talents. But only Christians have spiritual gifts.
2. A spiritual gift is not an office or position a person might hold in the local church. Nor is it a geographical place of ministry or a special aptitude for dealing with certain age levels in the church (I Cor. 12:4-11).
3. Spiritual gifts are given to believers only and the basis for giving them is grace. They are never the result of a person's maturity, prayer or education (I Cor. 12:4-7, 11).
4. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. While the gift is given at the moment of salvation, the discovery and outworking of that gift is experienced as we are controlled by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:4-11).

5. Each believer receives the gift or gifts that the Lord wants him to have (I Cor. 12:7), so there is no room for competition in the body of Christ in exercising our gifts.
6. There is no such thing as an unnecessary or unimportant spiritual gift. Every gift contributes to the whole function of the body of Christ. We need each other. We are members one of another (I Cor. 12:14-18).
7. No believer has all the gifts, though some may have several (I Cor. 12:7,11).
8. Spiritual gifts make possible the carrying out of the work of the ministry with harmony and effectiveness (I Cor. 12:14-26).
9. Since God designed every member of the body of Christ to have a spiritual gift, every believer has a necessary ministry as a vital part of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27); and every believer is therefore enrolled by God into the ranks of Spirit-directed service. (Eph. 4:12-13).
10. Every Christian is responsible before God to discover, develop and exercise his gift (s). "The supreme task of every Christian's life is to discover his gift and put it to work. If anyone does not do this the whole body will suffer." Ray Stedman Body Life, 147).

HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY GIFTS?

1. Know what gifts are available
2. Since the purpose of the gifts is to build up the body of Christ, get involved with a local body of believers.
3. Find out what are the current needs to be met in the church. Others in the church may recognize and appreciate your gifts and ask you to function accordingly.
4. There should be some evidence of God's blessing on the exercise of your gift as others recognize and appreciate your contribution to the whole body.
5. Be faithful in doing your part, no matter how lowly it may seem. As you are faithful God will eventually show you other gifts and ways to use them.

HOW DO I EXERCISE MY GIFTS?

1. In LOVE – I Corinthians 13 is the love chapter right in the middle of the passage on gifts.
2. Remembering they are GIFTS – given by God and under His authority. There is no room for pride.
3. As we do this – Christ will be seen to be at work through us as members of His BODY expressing His LIFE (I Cor. 12:27).

LISTS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament includes six lists of spiritual gifts. Some of the gifts were temporary and some are permanent. The temporary gifts served a particular function of substantiating either the message or the messenger before the New Testament canon was completed. The permanent gifts are still present and needed today.

<p>ROMANS 12:6-8</p> <p>Prophesying Ministering Teaching Exhorting Giving Ruling Showing mercy</p>	<p>I CORINTHIANS 12:4-11</p> <p>Word of wisdom Word of knowledge Faith Healing Miracles Prophesying Discerning of spirits Tongues Interpretation of tongues</p>	<p>I CORINTHIANS 12:28</p> <p>Apostleship Prophesying Teaching Miracles Healing Helping Administering Tongues</p>
<p>I CORINTHIANS 12:29-30</p> <p>Apostleship Prophesying Teaching Miracles Healing Tongues Interpretation of tongues</p>	<p>EPHESIANS 4:11</p> <p>Apostle Prophet Evangelist Pastor - Teacher</p>	<p>I PETER 4:11</p> <p>Speaking Serving</p>

THREE CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. Gifted men (given by God to the church) – Ephesians 4:11
2. Permanent edifying gifts (given by God to individual believers in the church for the building up of the body of Christ) – Romans 12:6-8
3. Temporary sign gifts (intended to serve for a limited time – no longer necessary after the church was established and the new Testament Scriptures were completed)

GIFTED MEN (Ephesians 4:11)

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers are all gifted men given to the body of Christ so that Christians might be brought to maturity in Christ. The apostles and prophets are replaced in the body today by evangelists (church planters) and pastor-teachers (teaching shepherds); but the task is the same as the original apostles and prophets – to bring believers to maturity in Christ

1. Apostle. A small group originally appointed by Christ himself. To qualify for this gift the man had to have seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; I Cor. 9:1), called by Christ personally and given the powers of performing miracles to authenticate his apostolic authority (II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4).
2. Prophet. This does not refer to Old Testament prophets but to New Testament ones. A man with the God-given ability to proclaim the truth by direct revelation from God, just like an Old Testament prophet.

Note: The purpose of the Apostles and Prophets was to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:19; 3:5). Now that the church is established and the New Testament revelation is completed, these two have passed off the scene.

3. Evangelist. In the New Testament an evangelist was a man going from place to place where the gospel had not been preached. He would preach Christ, lead people to faith in Him, start a group of believers, appoint elders and move on. He was basically a planter of churches. Timothy and Philip are examples.
4. Pastor-Teacher. A man with the God-given ability to be a shepherd of God's flock – caring for the sheep by feeding, guiding protecting and keeping them fit and healthy. "Pastor" is his job description (ie. Shepherding). "Teacher" describes the means by which he fulfills his assignment (ie. Feeding the flock on the Word of God). He stays in one place teaching sound doctrine and shepherding the sheep. "The Word of God taught by men of God brings growth in the people of God" (John MacArthur, The Church, 119).

PERMANENT EDIFYING GIFTS

These are gifts that edify or build up the body. These gifts do not cease. They began in the early church and still go on today. They are what the New Testament calls "grace gifts" (*charismata*).

The Gift of Prophecy – I Cor. 12:10 The gift of prophecy means preaching, not foretelling the future. The word basically means "to publicly proclaim." This gift has ceased in the sense of giving new revelation, but it continues in the limited sense of publicly proclaiming the truth of God already revealed in the Bible. This gift is not to be confused with the office of prophet (I Cor. 12:28). There are no prophets today.

The Gift of Teaching. Since this gift appears in all six lists (Romans 12:7; I Cor. 12:8, 28, 29; Eph. 4:11; I Peter 4:11), we can be sure that it is of significant importance in the plan of God. The one who possesses this gift has the ability to communicate the Scriptures with clarity, ease, wisdom and effectiveness.

The Gift of Faith – I Cor. 12:9. This is the gift that enables certain believers to trust God without doubt or disturbance regardless of outer pressure and circumstances. Could be called the gift of vision, the ability to see what God wants done and the courage and faith to tackle a seemingly impossible job and accomplish it.

The Gift of Helping (ministering) – Rom. 12:7; I Cor. 12:28; I Peter 4:11. This is the extraordinary ability to serve faithfully behind the scenes in practical ways, so as to assist in the work of the ministry.

The Gift of Administering (ruling) – Romans 12:8; I Cor. 12:28. The one who has this gift has the unique ability to organize and administer with great ease and efficiency. This person is sensitive to the details involved in matters of organization and orderly leadership.

The Gift of Exhorting – Romans 12:8. Those who are gifted exhorters have the ability to appeal for action, “drive home” specific truths from the Scriptures and lead others into an active realization of the will of God for their lives. Exhorters have the ability to encourage, comfort and assure other believers as well as point out areas of need and disobedience. The exhorter is able to encourage the hearer to act upon that which he has heard. The gift of exhortation is the ability to get alongside someone and comfort him with love.

The Gift of Giving – Romans 12:8. All believers are instructed to give, as we are all instructed to exhibit faith and offer help – but the gift of giving is above and beyond the average stewardship response. Those with this gift demonstrate to a high degree the quality of committing their earthly possessions to the Lord and His work. They consistently and sacrificially give. This gift is not limited to the wealthy, though wealthy believers often have this gift and delight in it.

The Gift of Showing Mercy – Romans 12:8. This is the ability to demonstrate sympathy, understanding, compassion, patience and sensitivity toward those who suffer or undergo periods of severe pressure and emotional anxiety. Those who possess this gift are moved over the problems of others and seem to be available at critical times. How needed is this gift today, in this world of sorrow and suffering!

The Gift of Evangelizing – Ephesians 4:11. This is the God-given ability to present with ease and clarity the gospel of Jesus Christ and then witness unusual success in having others respond to the presentation. Along with this gift comes the interest and ability in getting the newborn believer underway in the things of God.

The Gift of Wisdom – I Cor. 12:8. The ability to understand how the truth applies to a specific situation and to put it into practice. A simple definition of wisdom is “the application of spiritual truth.”

The Gift of Knowledge – I Cor. 12:8. If wisdom is the application of truth, knowledge is just the facts and nothing more. Knowledge is understanding the facts – scholarship in a human sense. These are the scholars who dig into the Scripture. They research. They are able, by the Spirit of God, to search out the facts. Knowledge is the academic side of truth; wisdom is application.

The Gift of Discernment – I Cor. 12:10. The ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error – to spot subtle forms of phoniness and deception. Eg. Peter with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

TEMPORARY SIGN GIFTS

The temporary gifts were not designed for the edification of the body, but for confirming the testimony of the apostles and prophets, to show that they were in fact declaring the Word of God.

1. Miracle Working. A supernatural intrusion into the natural law with no other explanation than that God is acting.
2. Healing. The God-given ability to cure organic disease.
3. Tongues. The God-given ability to speak a known language never learned or studied.
4. Interpretation of Tongues. The God-given ability to interpret a known language never learned or studied.

The first two temporary gifts of miracles working and healing were signs of the authority of the Apostles presented to an unbelieving world to prove that their message came from God (Luke 9:1; 10:9; II Cor. 12:12; Acts 14:3; Romans 15:18-19; Hebrews 2:3-4).

The last two temporary gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues were signs to Israel that God was removing the Jews from their privileged place, because of their unbelief, and turning to the Gentiles (I Cor. 14:21-22; Isaiah 28:11).

As such, all of these sign-gifts seem to have served God's purpose and have apparently been set aside in the sovereign will of the Spirit of God. If the Spirit of God should choose to use them again, we would expect them to be in line with their "sign" character.

NOTE: When we say that these sign gifts have passed off the scene today, this does not mean that there are no miracles today or that God does not heal today in answer to prayer. It is simply that the purpose for which God gave these miraculous gifts – as a sign to unbelievers to confirm the message of the Apostles is accomplished and so they are no longer needed today. We have the message of the Apostles in the New Testament, and it today confirms the message of anyone who claims to proclaim God's truth!

Notice that in Philippians 2:25-27 Paul did not heal Epaphroditus. Why? Because Paul did not use the gift of miracles and healing outside of its purpose. The purpose of the gift of healing was not to just run around and keep Christians healthy. It was a sign to unbelievers to confirm the Gospel message (See also I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; II Corinthians 12:7).

Works Cited

John MacArthur, The Church: the Body of Christ (Zondervan 1973).

Ray C. Stedman, Body Life: The Church Comes Alive! (Regal Books 1972).