

Descriptions of Spiritual Gifts:

ADMINISTRATION

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to guide and organize people and ministries toward a common goal.

- the word comes from the verb that means to steer or guide a ship. This word shows up one time in the New Testament (I Corinthians 12:28) and three times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament - these three refer to acts of guidance (Proverbs 1:5, 11:14, 24:6).
- although similar in some respects, the gift of administration is different than the gift of leadership. It is the difference between the ship owner and the “captain.” The owner gives the captain his orders regarding where to sail. The captain follows the orders, charts a course that will bring the ship into the right harbor. The leader gives the destination (vision). The person with the gift of administration figures out how to get there.
- this gift complements the gifts of leadership and pastor-teacher. *When the gifts (administration with either leadership or pastor-teacher) are not found in the same person they will normally be exercised in close proximity to the other people with those gifts.*
- the gift is a great help to a ministry leader but this gift extends beyond any one person to help the whole.

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:28 (*this is the only NT reference!*)

Contribution: this gift helps move the church in the direction that God is leading, it brings “order out of the chaos,” pulling together the church’s resources (mainly people) to fulfill the vision of the church, through its people and ministries. It is a gift that relies on others and hence draws more people into service and helps the church move closer toward an “every member ministry.” It is a gift which often frees others up “from the details” in order to carry on their God-given roles.

Biblical Examples: Perhaps some of Paul’s associates like John Mark, Luke or Titus

Characteristics: people with this gift

- find great satisfaction in organizing people and things
- tend to bring “systems” which help make the work grow in efficiency and effectiveness
- understand the importance of delegation and for this reason involve others with them
- understand and accept the direction given them

Cautions:

- don’t forget to submit to the vision and direction of the church’s leadership
- don’t put your confidence in a good plan, put your confidence in our great God
- don’t forget to minister to the people that you are guiding, don’t treat them as a means to the end

- don't lose sight of the goal or joy of serving

DISCERNMENT

Definition: The Spirit-given ability to distinguish between truth and error.

- literally means to distinguish between spirits - it carries the idea of evaluating something carefully. Some believe it carries the idea of being able to distinguish between various types of evil spirits; like dumb or deaf spirit, etc. (see Grudem, 1083).
- this gift is closely linked with the gift of prophecy because one of the places it is needed is in the presence of the prophetic word - it primarily focuses on words that are spoken rather than "spirits" that are felt.
- because of its proximity to prophecy the distinguishing that takes place is over what is spoken more than what is not (i.e. motives, etc.). Every case in the New Testament uses this gift to evaluate what has been said. To be sure Annanias and Saphira's motives were off, nonetheless it was their words (their lie) which was held against them.
- this gift evaluates things on the basis of God's truth cf. Hebrews 5:14.
- this gift reminds us that we are engaged in a battle with the forces of evil which are disguised as "angels of light." cf. II Corinthians 11:14.

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:10; I Corinthians 14:29 (verbal form); I Thessalonians 5:20,21; I John 4:1-3; Matthew 16:21-23

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by protecting the church from being led astray by evil, which comes through falsehood.

Biblical Examples: The churches at Corinth and Ephesus (I Corinthians 14:29, Revelation 2:2), Jesus with Peter (Matthew 26:21-23), Paul with Elymas (Acts 13:8-10).

Characteristics: people with this gift

- carefully listen to what is said (or written) even notes what is left unsaid
- judge what is said on the basis of God's Word - these people have a biblical grid which helps them discern truth from falsehood
- think biblically
- are willing to speak out about falsehood for the sake of the body

Cautions:

- be careful of your "hunches" - stick to the Word of God as your objective standard
- be careful not to develop a negative, critical or unloving spirit as you discern truth from error
- exercise this gift with love, instruct with gentleness, pray for repentance, pray that they will "escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive" cf. 2 Tim. 2: 25,26.
- be careful that your gift of discernment doesn't prevent you from receiving the Word taught/preached

Christian Responsibility: Each of us is called to be discerning, to test the spirits to see whether they are from God (I John 4:1-3). We are to be as innocent as doves yet shrewd as snakes (Matthew 10:16).

ENCOURAGEMENT

Definition: The Spirit-given ability to strengthen people's faith through a word of comfort or exhortation.

- this gift literally means to be called alongside. The word (in its noun form) is used to describe the Holy Spirit who is called alongside of the believer (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7).
- this gift is closely linked to the gifts of teaching (Romans 12:7,8) and prophecy (Acts 13:1; I Corinthians 14:3,31).
- this gift is closely connected to the Word of God
- although this gift is closely tied to "words" and the Word, it should be noted that the gift manifests itself in actions as well. This can clearly be seen in the life of Barnabas when he sold his property giving the proceeds to the church, (it was likely used to help those in need cf Acts 2:45) and when he accepted Paul and introduced him to the apostles (Acts 4:37; 9:27).
- this gift reminds us of the truth that God wants to use us to accomplish His work. God often sends His comfort through those with this gift!
- this gift can be exercised privately or publicly.

Biblical References: Romans 12:8; John 14:16,26; Acts 11:22-24, 14:21,22; II Corinthians 7:6

Contribution: this gift helps those in the body who are struggling and need to receive a word that will strengthen their faith, encouraging them to go on for Christ.

Biblical Examples: Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 13:43), the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7), Jesus to Peter (John 21)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- are sensitive, able to tell when people are discouraged
- are good listeners
- accept people where they are at but motivate them to move forward
- know how to use the Bible to strengthen those who are discouraged
- very likely have gone through their own trials - because God uses those experiences to help us understand His comfort so that we can share that comfort with others (II Corinthians 1:4)
- point people to God who is our great comforter and who has given us His Spirit
- desire to see people live obediently before God
- are generally sought out by people, because they refresh their souls
- act promptly

Cautions:

- understand the way God uses the “valleys” of life - don’t be too quick to pull them out of it, rather enter into it with them. We are called alongside, not up above, to pull them out
- don’t let the reality of who God is (His truth & promises) get lost in the ever-changing reality of their feelings
- don’t be overly optimistic or simplistic when addressing their situation
- don’t over-commit

Christian Responsibility: Hebrews 3:3, 10:25 reminds us that all Christians are to be involved in encouraging one another, strengthening the weak and lifting up the discouraged.

EVANGELISM

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to share the Gospel with power and great effect.

- the gift can be shared individually or to a large audience, e.g. Philip with the eunuch from Ethiopia cf. Acts 8:26ff; Peter, preaching at Pentecost to a large group (Acts 2).
- evangelism is the only gift which finds its sole focus outside of the body. There will always be non-Christians in a church so body here speaks of Christ’s body of believers.
- it is obvious, but important, to mention that in order to use this gift we must know what the gospel is.
- this gift is at the center of the Great Commission (make disciples) and making disciples involves evangelism and edification.
- there are some who do not hold this as a spiritual gift. (We both agree that evangelism is a responsibility for every Christian regardless of giftedness.) Although the context of Ephesians 4:11 points to offices, i.e. Apostle, Prophet and Pastor-Teacher (Ephesians 4:11), there is no evidence in the New Testament that there was an office of evangelist -even though Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist cf. II Timothy 4:5.
- the gift is seen both in Paul, who traveled from place to place, and in Timothy, who stayed in one place - Ephesus.

Biblical References: Ephesians 4:11; Acts 21:8; II Timothy 4:5

Contribution: this person builds up the body by adding to its numbers those people who have responded to the Gospel in repentance and faith. New Christians’ enthusiasm and joy bring great refreshment and vitality to the body.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Matt. 4:23, 9:35; John 3,4), Paul (Acts 17:18), Philip (Acts 8, 21:8)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- see people come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior
- have hearts that are broken over the lost

- believe in the reality of hell. C. T. Studd wrote, “Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue ship within a yard of hell” (Flynn, 63).
- understand that the power is in the Word of God - faith comes by hearing cf. Rom 10:17
- are sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading
- enjoy talking about Christ - are bold with the Gospel
- have a knack for turning a conversation to eternal issues
- believe in the sovereignty of God and in “divine appointments”

Cautions:

- don’t manipulate people’s emotions - share with gentleness and respect cf. 1 Peter 3:15
- always remember your job is to share it, the results are in God’s hand
- don’t forget to ensure that they receive follow-up and fellowship from other Christians

Christian Responsibilities: Every Christian has been called to make disciples (Matt.28:19,20). We are to be witnesses for Christ wherever we go whether we have the gift of evangelism or not! Peter tells us to “set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the **reason** for the **hope** that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

FAITH

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to “see” what God wants done and to believe He will accomplish His will, even if it seems impossible.

- the gift of faith is not to be confused with saving faith (Ephesians 2:8,9) or the faith that is a fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22), or the virtue mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13, or the faith which encompasses the doctrine we believe - all these are given to all God’s children and are to be developed by them. The gift of faith is only given to some.
- the foundation of this gift builds upon an understanding that our God is a great God who will accomplish all that He desires. “Faith is like a piece of steel to a compelling magnet, it attaches itself to the Sovereign of the universe” (Gangel 80).
- because it is a gift of God it is not something that we can generate by trying hard or being a “possibility thinker, rather we receive this important gift.”
- this gift is often given to those with the gift of leadership or comes alongside of leaders.

Biblical References: 1 Corinthians 12:9; 13:2; see also Matthew 17:14-21 (*mustard seed*); 21:18-22 (*fig tree*); James 5:15; Hebrews 11:1 (*if it were not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:9 we would not know that faith is a spiritual gift!*)

Contribution: by keeping a vision of our great God before us the body is edified. It refreshes those who lead, inspires others to follow by strengthening their confidence in God.

Biblical Examples: **Paul** Acts 27:21-44, **Stephen** Acts 6:5; 7:55,56. A negative example is found in Acts 12 — the church was praying for Peter's release from prison but wouldn't believe he was at their front door!

Characteristics: people with this gift

- have a big view of God - "Big God"
- have courage to believe God even when others don't
- have a quiet confidence that God is at work and He is going to accomplish His purposes
- have the ability to see beyond the present circumstances to what God is going to do
- believe that all things are possible with God
- are people of prayer, who pray often about these matters. "Faith thinks big -- but thinks the kind of big God wants" (Flynn 142).

Cautions:

- watch out for pride when what you see by faith becomes reality
- be careful not to judge those who find it hard to believe
- make sure what you see is of the Lord and not your own dreams or desires
- be available to God for what you believe He is going to do
- don't presume on God, hold to faith with complete humility

Christian Responsibility: this gift reminds us that we are to live by faith, "for we walk by faith not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7,8).

GIVING

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to share your resources generously with those who are in need.

- the word literally means to share with someone else, and it commonly speaks of sharing with those who are in need (see Luke 3:11, Ephesians 4:28, Acts 2:44,45).
- Paul adds that this gift is to be shared generously - the word can mean simplicity, purity of motives, singleness of purpose or liberality (cf. Romans 12:8).
- the example of the Macedonians teaches us that wealth is not a requirement, because they gave out of their "extreme poverty" (II Corinthians 8:2).
- the gift includes our resources not just our money.
- the gift can be exercised individually, or corporately, as needs become known.

Biblical References: Romans 12:8; II Corinthians 8:1-5; Acts 4:32-37

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by encouraging those whose needs have been met through a generous gift, and as it contributes the resources necessary for God's work to continue.

Biblical Examples: Barnabas (Acts 4:37), Macedonian believers (II Corinthians 8:1-5)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- have resources to share and give them generously
- find great joy in sharing their resources - they are cheerful givers (II Corinthians 9:7)
- often give anonymously (Matthew 6:3)
- respond to needs
- are good stewards - mindful that to whom much is given, much is required
- "R. G. LeTourneau said the key question is not how much money I give to God, but how much of God's money I keep" (Wagner, 89).
- continue to live at the same lifestyle even when their income goes up

Cautions:

- don't be stingy
- don't use money as a means for power
- don't think giving your money wins you any favor with God
- don't think having the gift will make you rich
- guard your heart from the love of money
- stay cheerful as you give to the Lord
- watch your motives as you give - remember you are to have pure motives as you give

Christian Responsibility: as Christ's followers we are to be known as givers not takers. The Old Testament and New make it clear that we are to give of our resources to the Lord as cheerful givers acknowledging that all we have is from Him. (Malachi 3:8-10, Luke 3:11, I Corinthians 16:2).

HEALING

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to restore people to health for the glory of God.

- literally the word is "gifts of healings"- the plural could refer to different types of healing (emotional, spiritual or physical) or different times of healing, hence Fee calls each occurrence of healing "a gift in its own right" (Fee, 594).
- the Bible does not teach that people with this gift will heal everyone they meet - God is sovereign. God's ultimate concern for us is to become more like Him - this may happen through healing or maybe through our illness! The ultimate promise in the Bible is not healing but resurrection!
- the Bible does not teach that healing can only take place if and when the person has faith (e.g. Acts 3:1-7). Peter, John and the lame man.

- not all healings in the Christian community can be explained by the gift, sometimes God heals by answering our prayers for healing, other times He uses medicine, etc.
- not all Christians agree whether this gift still exists today - to be sure when you consider the kinds of miracles we read about in the New Testament many of those are not seen today (e.g. they often healed everyone {Matthew 8:16}, raised the dead {Acts 9:37-40} etc.).
- this gift has many charlatans associated with it. If we say the gift exists it does not mean that everyone who claims to have it is legitimate.
- sometimes God doesn't heal us physically but graciously gives spiritual and emotional healing (i.e. strength and victory e.g. Joni Erickson-Tada)

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:9,28,3 (see also James 5:13-16)

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by demonstrating the power of God, by restoring people to health - enabling them to again serve. It focuses our attention on God's power causing us to glorify Him.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Mark 2:1-12, 3:1-6, 5:1-20), Peter (Acts 3, 5:15,16), Paul (Acts 14:8-10, 19:11,12, 20:9-12).

Characteristics: people with this gift

- have their prayers for healing answered
- believe God has the power and desire for the person to be healed
- understand that this gift, like all others, is exercised under God's sovereign will - sometimes God's will is for someone not to be healed in this life (Paul's "thorn"- II Corinthians 12:7-9)
- use it to the glory of God - they keep the focus on God not themselves cf. Acts 3:16

Cautions:

- keep God's sovereignty always in view
- keep God's glory always as your goal

Christian Responsibility: we are told in I Corinthians 12:26 to suffer with those who suffer. This gift reminds those of us who do not have the gift to show our concern for them. This gift also reminds us of the biblical pattern established in James 5 for people who are sick.

HELPS

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to serve where needed, so that God's work is advanced.

- this gift, like all others has people in view first - meets individual needs just as much as it does ministry needs (I Corinthians 16:15) Examples include works of charity and attending to the sick and the poor.

- carries the idea of taking a burden on oneself (verbal form)
- the gift of helps is sometimes seen as separate from the gift of service or ministry (Romans 12:7), and sometimes synonymous. We take these two to be one and the same because little difference can be seen between the two - both gifts are given to meet the practical needs which exist in every church
- the gift ranges from serving tables, to giving money, to helping in ministry, to helping the weak

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by serving and helping out where needed. In many ways these people are the engine of much of the church's ministry

Biblical Examples: Jesus (John 13) Stephanos (I Corinthians 16:15), Paul and Ephesian elders (Acts 20:35), Dorcas Acts 9:36-39), Phoebe (Romans 16:1,2)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- are motivated to serve as they see needs
- they will serve wherever and whenever
- usually enjoy working behind the scenes more than being "up front"
- are faithful and reliable workers
- have a "can do" attitude toward tasks that need accomplishing

Cautions:

- remember you can't do everything - learn to say no
- be careful that you don't get discouraged (or maybe even bitter) when others don't serve cf. Martha in Luke 10:40
- remember to serve in the strength that God supplies, not your own (I Peter 4:11)

Christian Responsibility: we are told that when we are equipped we will be prepared to do works of service. This gift reminds us that we are all to have the attitude which leads us into joyful service for Christ and His church.

KNOWLEDGE

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to receive and share biblical knowledge in various situations.

- there is only one verse in all of the Scriptures which mentions this gift (I Corinthians 12:8); therefore our conclusions cannot be very exact and must be shared in humility.
- there are two basic views regarding the gift of knowledge.
 - One view is that it is a miraculous gift whereby the person receives a special revelation from the Holy Spirit allowing them to give a "word of knowledge" to someone. This knowledge would not otherwise be known apart from this revelation.

- The other view, the one we will take, is that this gift is a non-miraculous gift whereby the person is given the ability to receive and share knowledge about a situation. This knowledge comes through the Word and hence is available to all. The reason why we will not hold to a miraculous understanding of the gift is that there is another gift (prophecy) which better fits their definition (Grudem, 1080-82).
- the emphasis is not on knowledge but on “word”- this is a spiritual gift because it is knowledge that is shared.
- this gift is closely related to the gifts of teaching and wisdom and possibly prophecy
- the gift gives new insights concerning the Bible, not new revelation
- the gift reminds us of the principle that the gifts can and ought to be developed
- this gift can be shared with a person or a congregation

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:8, 13:2,8-12, 14:6; Colossians 1:10

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by bringing the truth of God’s Word to bear giving instruction which brings maturity, and protection from error.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Luke 24:27) Paul (Acts 19:9,10)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- enjoy studying and learning
- are good students of the Bible
- want to share what they know, remember what they’ve learned and are willing to share it
- have unusual insights which are consistent with what the Bible teaches

Cautions:

- knowledge “puffs up” but love builds up (I Corinthians 8:1); share it in love
- knowledge is power, use it to serve
- don’t trust in your intellect, trust in God
- remember you’re still fallible
- don’t assume you have the gift of teaching

Christian Responsibility: Paul prays that the Philippian Christians would grow in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9). Peter calls us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). We are all called to grow in knowledge!

LEADERSHIP

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to provide God’s people with vision (foresight) and oversight, so that they may accomplish God’s purposes.

- the word lead means to “stand before,” or to direct, or to rule

- this world carries the idea of watching over, caring, giving aid, direction cf. I Thessalonians 5:12
- the gift is compared to the leadership that a father exercises in a home cf. I Thessalonians 2:11
- the gift is to be exercised with diligence - diligence carries the idea of speed, zeal, an evidence of genuine commitment cf. Romans 12:8
- the gift is tied to teaching, administration and pastor-teacher cf. I Thessalonians 5:12
- the gift will manifest in different places within the church, large and small, with men and women

Biblical References: Romans 12:8, see also Luke 22:26

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by providing a vision for God's people to follow. This gift also gives care and protection as it gives oversight to the church or parts of it.

Biblical Examples: Jesus, Paul

Characteristics: people with this gift

- pray for a vision of God which keeps them moving in the right direction
- serve and care for those they lead cf. Luke 22:26
- follow Christ's leadership as they lead
- live more for the future than the past
- know where they are going and why
- motivate others to follow and delegate tasks when they do
- depending on their gift mix, may or may not be good at details
- thrive in a group setting
- are able to make decisions in light of the goal(s)

Cautions:

- don't demand or grow impatient
- don't get lazy, be diligent
- don't depend on your "up front" skills
- keep loving those you lead - exercise gentleness and patience
- don't get too far ahead - you may be mistaken for the enemy
- continue to submit yourself to God and stay accountable to people
- don't forget the "towel"! Christ's leadership was demonstrated through servanthood
- don't push - pull - Eisenhower illustration of string - easier to pull a piece of string than push it!
- Finish well!

Christian Responsibility: we all have, or will have, areas in our life where we will have to exercise leadership. This gift reminds us that we are to lead like Christ - serving those we lead.

MERCY

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to joyfully embrace those in need, showing Christ's compassion and kindness.

- the gift of mercy gives what is needed - God's kindness and compassion. God's mercy keeps us from getting what we deserve (judgment)
- this gift manifests in personal ministry - it is shared one-on-one. It may function in groups but has its greatest impact working with one person at a time, over time
- mercy is extended to those who are in misery- look at those who cried out to Jesus for mercy the blind, lepers, sick, and demonized.
- the gift is to be exercised with cheerfulness. Matthew Henry says, "A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable" (Gangel, 98).
- when we use this gift within the church we are doing it unto the Lord cf. Matthew 25:40.
- this gift is similar to the gift of encouragement and giving - it is different from helps in that the person who needs help is not suffering, they simply need assistance.
- this gift may be used outside of the body and be a great entrée for the Gospel

Biblical References: Romans 12:8

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by ministering to those in the body who are suffering and in need of special care, bringing refreshment and encouragement

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Mark 5), Good Samaritan (Luke 10), Jerusalem Church (Acts 2), Philippian jailer (Acts 16), Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- are not put off or distracted by the externals (sickness, hospitals, etc.). They are focused on the person's misery and need for mercy
- bring God's peace in word and action
- bring people to God for His mercy
- seek out those who are suffering and bring relief, cheer, hope when they visit
- are caring people and good listeners - a lot of mercy is done with the ears
- find practical ways to meet people's need Js 2:15,16

Cautions:

- watch your heart and countenance! Exercise this gift with gladness and cheer.
- like the gift of encouragement, don't forget that your job is to enter into their circumstances, not pull them out of them. God in his perfect timing will do that
- watch "spans of care"- you can't care for everyone, pray for wisdom, involve others
- in your exercise of mercy, don't forget to take them to the God of all mercy.

Christian Responsibility: we are all called to extend the mercy of God. I Corinthians 12:26 remind us that there is to be a mutuality of concern within the church. We are to

contribute to the needs of God's people (Romans 12:13). Showing acts of mercy outside the church may very well bring someone to receive the source of all mercy!

MIRACLES

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to do that which can only be done through supernatural means testifying to God's power and arousing awe and wonder in those who see or hear it.

- “A miracle is God stepping into His universe, setting aside the ordinary laws of nature to do something extraordinary” (Gangel, 162).
- literally means the “workings of powers”
- “this term may refer to any kind of activity where God's mighty power is evident. It may include answers to prayer for deliverance from physical danger (as in the deliverance of the apostles from prison in Acts 5:19,20, 12:6-11), or powerful works of judgment on the enemies of the gospel or those who require discipline within the church (see Acts 5:1-11, 13:9-12), or miraculous deliverance from injury (as with Paul and the viper in Acts 28:3-6). But such acts of spiritual power may also include power to triumph over demonic opposition (as in Acts 16:18 cf. Luke 10:17).” (Grudem 1062)
- on the other hand there are others who see a narrower definition of miracles. “An event of supernatural power, palpable to the senses, accompanying the servant of the Lord to authenticate the divine commission” (Flynn, 161).
- many believe a study of miracles show that they appeared at unique times in the history of God's people (Exodus, the prophets, (Elijah and Elisha) Jesus and the early church) where miracles authenticated the messenger and his message (II Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:4). The same could be true in countries today which have not had a Gospel witness and at the same time could explain why we don't see them (narrow sense) so much in our day, for they are not needed. This point is debated by various Christians.
- this gift is not exercised at the will of the person, rather by the will of God

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:10,28,29

Contribution: this gift builds up the body as we receive a greater sense of awe for God's power. As miracles attest to the validity of a Gospel witness, people respond in faith and believe.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (John 2:1-11), Peter (Acts 12:1-12), Paul (Acts 28:3-6)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- are used by God to perform miracles
- may have a corresponding message (of the Gospel) that needs to be authenticated (i.e. the Gospel and exhortation to repent and believe

Cautions:

- make sure God gets the glory

- as a church we must remember that not all miracles come from God cf. II Thessalonians 2:9
- any miracle worker must be careful to deflect any attention given them to God

PASTOR-TEACHER/SHEPHERDING

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to nurture and care for God's people, using God's Word to guide them into Christian maturity.

- it is hard to say for sure what Paul is describing - a spiritual gift, a church office, or both. We have argued in the past that each office had a requisite gift or function, and that one could have the gift without having the office. We know from the context here that both the gifts in I Corinthians and the individuals here are used to build up the body of Christ. We acknowledge that the office of Elder (the pastor is part of this office) still exists. Since we believe that the role of Elder in the Bible is reserved only for men, the office cannot be fulfilled by a woman. But, if this is a gift, distinct from the office, it would be open to men and women and might be better defined by the word shepherding (the literal meaning of the word pastor).cf. Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34.
- the word pastor only occurs one time in the New Testament cf. Ephesians 4:11
- Ephesians 4:11-16 has edification of the body as its goal, this is consistent with the purpose of gifts cf. I Corinthians 12-14.
- it is the word which Jesus used to describe Himself, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:14).
- most scholars agree that the words pastor-teacher refer to one gift. When nouns are preceded by one definite article and joined by "and" they are viewed by the writer as joined in some way.
- the verb form of the word shepherd shows up several times in the New Testament and is used to describe the ministry or function of an elder (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4). Hence this gift is closely tied to the office of Elder and the gifts of teaching, administration and leadership.
- every pastor should have the gift of teaching, but not everyone with the gift of teaching is a pastor!

Biblical References: Ephesians 4:11; see also Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-4

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by preparing God's people to serve using their gifts to build up the body. Shepherds give care as they watch over their flock (John 10:14). Shepherds lead, teach and apply the Word presenting each one mature in Christ.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (the great shepherd); Paul (I Thessalonians 2:7-12); Timothy

Characteristics: people with this gift

- use God's Word to guide and "feed" their "flock" - the use of the Word is central to shepherding!
- equip others to do ministry
- protect those they are shepherding
- pray with and for these people concerning their needs

- enjoy working with people over an extended time
- develop long term relationships

Cautions:

- keep the focus on Christ
- watch “spans of care” - you can only shepherd so many people at a time - develop a team approach to the ministry
- don’t use your position (authority is implied) for your own gain
- since you are an example to the people - don’t forget that they are watching your life and conduct
- remember the stricter judgment

Christian Responsibility: this gift reminds us that we are “responsible” in certain ways for other Christians. We are to care for each other (I Corinthians 12:25) and we are often put in situations where others look to us for shepherding and teaching (*especially parents*).

PROPHECY

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to proclaim a message to God’s people so that they are strengthened, encouraged, comforted and instructed.

Note: the purpose of prophecy is contained in our definition, but not everything that fulfills these purposes is prophecy. Ex. preaching, teaching and the gift of encouragement could bring about these same results.

There are several different views regarding this gift

1. Some believe that prophecy is spontaneous revelation from God (not on a par with Scripture) for the edification of the body. “Telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind” (Grudem, 1049). Example: I Timothy 4:14 concerning Timothy
 - the difference between prophecy and preaching or teaching lies in the fact that teaching and preaching interpret and apply the Scripture to the congregation, whereas prophecy reports to the congregation something that God has suddenly brought to mind. “None of this means it is necessarily authoritative, infallible, or canon-threatening.” (Grudem 1058)
2. Others believe that prophecy is a revelatory gift that gives the very “words of God” and since the Bible is now complete, the gift is no longer necessary (as in New Testament times). Others believe the same and see it as necessary. *Revelation is the term Paul uses as he speaks about prophecy (I Corinthians 14:30), but the word in the New Testament has a broad semantic range that goes beyond the authoritative revelation which produced the Bible (see Philippians 3:15; Eph 1:17).*
3. Others believe it is preaching or teaching and applying the Bible (Gaffin, Flynn, Gangel)
 - yes, it’s like preaching — a message

- this definition is too narrow and doesn't square with the instructions in I Corinthians 14
- Because Paul instructs the Corinthians to examine each prophetic message we know that they can be false (from another spirit) or fallible (containing something false) and certainly are not on the same level of the inerrant Word of God. Paul in Acts 21:4, 10-11 does not follow what appears to be a prophetic message. Rather all prophecy is subject to the Word of God, our final authority for faith & practice cf. I Corinthians 14:37,38.
- Another important consideration is that the succession of the Apostles is not given over to the prophets which undoubtedly were still active in the churches, rather it is the Scriptures which have authority over the church cf. II Tim. 2:15, 3:16; II Peter 1:19-20, 3:16; Jude 3.
- Because of the Bible's instruction regarding the use of this gift we can know that it can be exercised with self-control cf. I Corinthians 14:29-33.
- I Corinthians 14:3 helps us understand what the gift of prophecy entails - strengthening (edification), encouragement and comfort.
- We know that prophecy has the ability to lead a non-Christian to faith cf. I Corinthians 14:24-26 in Christ, hence it is closely tied to the Word which leads people to faith cf. Romans 10:17.
- Prophecy as in the Old Testament will often be a re-iteration of the truths already revealed in scripture. (New Bible Dictionary, p 984)
- If it is consistent with Old Testament prophecy we could expect this gift to expand on God's Word pointing out sin, calling people back to God in repentance. This prophetic gift could be predictive or proclamation.
- Revelation 19:10-note the connection between the Spirit of prophecy & the testimony of Jesus. Prophecy is christocentric.

Biblical References: Luke 1:67ff; Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:10,28; I Corinthians 14:1-33; Ephesians 3:5, 4:11; Revelation 19:10; I Timothy 1:16, 4:14

Contribution: this gift builds up the body as the messages bring strength, encouragement, comfort, and instruction (I Corinthians 14:3, 31).

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Mark 14: 27-30) Agabus, Acts 11:27,28; Paul, Ephesians 3:1-6; Judas & Silas, Acts 15:32; leaders at Ephesus over Timothy, I Timothy 4:14

Characteristics: people with gift

- receive "revelation" from the Lord and boldly proclaim it
- want to build up the body of Christ

Cautions:

- exercise your gift in proportion to your faith - the faith here is not our act of believing but that which we believe - i.e. the faith given us in the Word of God (Moo, 765).
- use your gift within the guidelines of I Corinthians 14:29-33
- never usurp the authority of the Bible when using this gift/don't treat this message as more important than the Word of God

- the abuses of this gift (which are many) should not cause us to “write off” this gift - “don’t treat prophecies with contempt” (I Thessalonians 5:20)

Christian Responsibility: there is no specific command which instructs the Christian to prophesy, however, we are called to encourage, comfort and strengthen those who are in the body, in this sense we are reminded of our responsibility to build up Christ’s body.

TEACHING

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to teach God’s Word with clarity, applying it with accuracy so that people grow in Christian maturity.

- teaching has transformation of character as its goal, not the transfer of information
- teaching is closely linked with the gifts of shepherding, knowledge and wisdom
- this gift needs to be exercised within the parameters set forth in Scripture. See especially I Timothy 2: 12, where women are prohibited to teach or exercise authority over a man. (The understanding of this text is that God has an order of creation which is to be reflected in the home and in the church. In this order there is complete equality between men and women, but differing roles. All the gifts are available to all Christians. The prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 keeps women from exercising an Elder-like role over men. Women with the gift of teaching will be able to teach in most all forums, with the exception being an on-going role of teaching men).
- Paul instructs Timothy to find faithful men who will be qualified to teach - this qualification deals with one’s character as well as their giftedness cf. II Timothy 2:2
- explaining what the Bible says in order to apply it to others is at the heart of teaching.

Biblical References: Romans 12:7; I Corinthians 12:28,29; Ephesians 4:11

Contribution: this gift brings growth, health and protection to the body; it helps the body grow by teaching and applying the Bible so that people better know how to love God and love each other.

Biblical Examples: Jesus (Matthew 7:29); Paul (Acts 19:8-10, II Timothy 1:11); Timothy (II Timothy 2:1,2)

Characteristics: people with this gift

- are learners - they enjoy studying the Bible
- excite others to learn and motivate God’s people to obey and grow
- have the ability to take the complex and make it understandable

Cautions:

- remember that we will undergo a stricter judgment - practice what we teach! (James 3:1)

- remember the most difficult task is not what to say, but what to leave out!
- when handling the Word of God remember that we must not assert what the Bible does not or fall short of what it does teach. Big T little f = keep the truth (T) of God's Word front and center and keep your own "framework" (f) and opinions subservient to the text.
- make sure that the truth of the text and its application has gone through your heart before the lesson goes through your lips!
- don't compromise the Word of God by trying to please your hearers cf. II Timothy 4:3,4.
- don't forget to teach the whole counsel of God's Word
- stick to the story line of the Bible - God redeeming a people to Himself through Christ for His glory. Christ unlocks the Old and New Testament!

Christian Responsibility: Paul reminds us to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). We all have the responsibility and privilege to teach others.

TONGUES & INTERPRETATION

Definitions:

Tongues: the Spirit-given ability to "worship" (pray or sing) God through a language not known to the speaker.

Interpretation: the Spirit-given ability to bring intelligibility of the tongue message to the church for their mutual edification.

- the word is used to describe the organ in our mouth with which we taste or speak (Mark 7:33). It is also used to describe a language common to a group of people (Revelation 5:9).
- literally it says different kinds of tongues/languages - this may suggest that sometimes tongues describe the speaking of known languages not known to the speaker (Ex. Pentecost - Acts 2), and in other cases not a known language - perhaps a heavenly language. In both cases the language bears a certain content that can be understood, even if it needs to be interpreted. (Some people argue that all tongues have to be a known language unknown to the speaker, but I Corinthians 14:2 says that there are tongues that no one will understand - this leaves the door open to a "heavenly language.")
- speaking in tongues is giving praise to God (see Acts 2:11,26; 10:46)
- sometimes the praise is manifest in a type of singing cf. I Corinthians 14:15
- speaking in tongues sometimes implies prayer - Paul says in I Corinthians 14:15 "if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays. He also mentions earlier on (14:2) that tongues is talking to God.
- speaking in tongues is speaking mysteries cf. I Corinthians 14:2
- the gift of tongues is different from prophecy in that tongues is directing praise to God, whereby prophecy is directing a message from God to His people.
- tongue speaking edifies the individual - interpreted tongues edify the church

- tongues cannot be understood by the speaker unless they have the gift of interpretation. These two gifts must be a possibility since Paul encourages people with the gift of tongues to pray for the gift of interpretation cf. I Corinthians 14:13. Although the person cannot understand the fact remains that it edifies them cf. I Corinthians 14:4.
- tongues are not ecstatic utterance, by that we mean when people speak in tongues they do not lose a sense of where they are or what they are saying. The guidelines for using this gift in I Corinthians 14: 27,28 make it clear that people are able to control the gift. (For example, if you start speaking in tongues you should do it one at a time, and only if there is an interpreter, and if there isn't one you should keep quiet - all these imply that you are able to exercise control over the gift!)
- because tongues is a spiritual gift we know that not everyone has the gift of tongues cf. I Corinthians 12:30
- speaking in tongues (or for that matter any other gift) is not to be mistaken for Christian maturity. Our maturity is not based on what gift we have been given, but on how we use the gift to build up the body and glorify Christ cf. I Corinthians 12 notes, session 3.
- for more on the gift of tongues and College Church's position on it review the notes in Key Questions (page 1, #4 in appendix).

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30; 14:2-13, 26,27

Contribution: uninterpreted tongues make no contribution towards the edification of the church (the individual, but not the church); however tongues when interpreted focus our attention on our great God and warm our hearts to join in praise.

Biblical Examples: Disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2); Cornelius (Acts 10: 44-46) Paul (I Corinthians 14)

Characteristics: people with these gifts

- pray and praise God in a language unknown to them (tongues)
- are able to interpret the above so that everyone can understand it (interpretation)

Cautions:

- when the church gathers together it is for the purpose of building up the body as a whole—don't go to church wanting your own personal experience of the Spirit, go with a desire to build up the body (Fee 667, 676)
- don't use this gift publicly without someone who can interpret
- don't fall into the trap of the Corinthians and think you are more spiritual because you have this gift
- don't major on the minors - tongues is a minor theological issue and should not be a central dogma which brings division - the gifts are to lead to unity.

WISDOM

Definition: the Spirit-given ability to speak a message which will defend the truth of the gospel, or give insight and guidance to the church for a particular need.

- wisdom's focus is on living rightly before God
- I Corinthians 12:7 reminds us that wisdom is connected to the gift of knowledge and teaching and an understanding of God's Word cf. II Timothy 3:15; Colossians 1:28
- this gift is different from the general wisdom given to all Christians in that it is more commonly found and used in the person who has this gift

Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:8, cf. Luke 21:15

Contribution: this gift builds up the body by applying God's truth to situations and decisions, helping people know how to glorify God.

Biblical Examples : Jesus, Matthew 13:54; Stephen, Acts 6:10; Paul, Acts 22-26

Characteristics: people with this gift

- apply spiritual truth to specific situations - providing godly insight
- will show it by their good life, and by deeds done in humility. (James 3:13)
- will be sought out by others
- "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." James 3:17
- since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, people with this gift will live lives in obedience to God's Word which is at the heart of fearing God cf. Psalm 128:1
- understand that God is the source of true wisdom and continue to ask Him for it cf. Js 1:5

Cautions:

- Remember your own insufficiency - "until we discover and are sensible of our own folly, we are fit neither to receive nor to use this spiritual wisdom" (Owen, 457).
- watch out for pride

Christian Responsibility: we are all called to seek wisdom. Paul in Ephesians 1:17 says keep asking God for wisdom. James tells us if we lack it to ask God for it and He will generously give it to us cf. James 1:5.