

Understanding the Spiritual Gifts

The following explanations of each of 20 Spiritual Gifts are offered as guides to help further identify the manifestation of these gifts within ourselves and others, not as complete or limiting explanations. They are a starting point, not a finishing line.

Administration

The spiritual gift of administration is the God-given ability to organize and manage information, people, events and resources to accomplish the objectives of a ministry. People with this gift handle details carefully and thoroughly. They are skilled in determining priorities, and in planning and directing the steps needed to achieve a goal. They feel frustrated when faced with disorder, and are uncomfortable with inefficiency.

Scripture References: 1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 6: 1-7; Titus 1:5

Apostleship

The divine ability to build the foundation of new churches by preaching the Word, teaching others to live by Christ's commandments through the example of their own lives, and preparing the people to serve one another. Persons with this gift are eager to bring the Gospel to those who have never heard it. They enthusiastically approach new ministries, churches, or settings, and realize the need to adapt methods of evangelism and service to widely different environments. People with this gift envision themselves as missionaries, or they may accept and exercise leadership over a number of churches.

Scripture References: Ephesians 4:11-13; Acts 6: 2-4; Peter 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:6



Discernment

The divine ability to recognize what is of God and what is not of God – to distinguish between good and evil, truth and error, and pure motives and impure motives. People with this gift can rely on instincts or first impressions to tell when a person or a message is deceptive or inconsistent with biblical truths. They can sense the presence of evil, and question motives, intentions, doctrine, deeds, and beliefs. These people must take care to use their gift in a way that brings good to the Body of Christ – to judge with mercy and understanding rather to condemn.

Scripture References: 1 John 4:1; Acts 13:8-12; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Acts 17:11

Encouragement

The God-given ability to encourage, help, intercede for, and be an advocate for others in a way that motivates others to grow in their faith and urges them into action. Encouragement takes many forms, and can be done through personal relationships, music, writings, intercessory prayer, and speaking to name a few. People with gift encourage others to remain faithful, even in the midst of struggles. They are sensitive and sympathetic toward another person's emotional state, and encourage selflessly, with affection, not contempt. They can see positive traits or aspects that other persons overlook, or often have more faith in other persons than those persons have in themselves.

Scripture References: Acts 14:22; Acts 20:1-2; Acts 15:31-33; 2 Timothy 4:2



Evangelism

The divine ability to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ so that unknowing persons respond with faith and discipleship. People with this gift speak comfortably about their faith; nonbelievers are drawn into this circle of comfort. These people enjoy many friendships outside of their Christian community. They enjoy helping others to see how Christianity can fulfill their needs. They eagerly study questions that challenge Christianity. They respond clearly in ways that connect with individuals.

Scripture References: Acts 5:42; Luke 9:6; Acts 16:6-10; Acts 8:26-40

Faith

The divine ability to recognize what God wants done and to act when others fall back in doubt. Even in the face of barriers that overwhelm others, people with this gift simply know that God will see it done. Believing deeply in the power of prayer, they also know that God is both present and active in their lives. People with this gift, by their works and by their words, show others that God is faithful to God's promises.

Scripture References: Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 6:11; Acts 14:22; Matthew 9:2, 22

Generosity

The God-given ability to give material wealth or other resources freely and joyfully, knowing that spiritual wealth will abound as God's work is advanced. People with this gift usually manage their finances or time well, may have a special ability to make money, and tend to be frugal in their lifestyle. They use these skills to increase their support for God's work, and trust that God will provide for their needs. They are often comfortable and successful in approaching others for contributions. Instead of asking, "How much of my money do I give to God?" they ask, "How much of God's money do I keep?"

Scripture References: Luke 3:11; Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:8

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Healing

The divine ability to bring wholeness – physical, emotional or spiritual – to others. People with this gift listen skillfully as they seek God’s guidance to learn the needs of the sick and to determine the causes and nature of illness. They believe that God can cure and that prayer can overcome any negative forces at work. (They also know that God can have a different agenda.) Their tools include prayer, touch, and spoken word. This gift shows God’s power; at the same time, it is to His glory. The goal of healing in the New Testament is not the healing itself, but spreading the gospel by pointing to the power of Jesus Christ, and to show the glory of God.

Scripture References: Matthew 4:23; Luke 9:11; Acts 10:38; Acts 4:28-30

Helping

The God-given ability to work alongside others in performing practical and often behind-the-scenes tasks to sustain and enhance the Body of Christ. A person with this gift receives spiritual satisfaction from doing everyday necessary tasks; he or she may prefer to work quietly and without public recognition. When a need is seen, the helper frequently takes care of it without being asked. The helper’s work often frees up others so that they may carry out their own ministries.

Scripture References: Hebrews 6:10; Acts 24:23; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philippians 2:25-30

Knowledge

The God-given ability to understand, organize, and effectively use information to advance God’s purposes. The information may come either from the Holy Spirit or from sources around us. People with this gift enjoy studying the Bible and other sources to gain facts, insights, and truths. They use this information for projects, ministries, or teaching. They organize it in order to pass it to other persons for their use and benefit. The Holy Spirit appears to be at work when these people show unusual insight or understanding.

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Scripture References: Proverbs 1:7; Jeremiah 3:15; Malachi 2:7, 2; Romans 10:2-3; 2 Peter 1:2-11

Leadership

The divine ability to motivate, coordinate, and direct God's people doing God's work. People with this gift are visionaries who inspire others to work together to make the vision a reality. They take responsibility for setting and achieving goals; they step in where there is lack of direction. They build a team of talented persons then empower them. These persons are called to be servant-leaders. Held to a high moral standard, they lead by the example of their own lives.

Scripture References: Philippians 3:17-21; John 13:12-17; Hebrews 13:7, 17

Compassion / Mercy

The God-given ability to see and feel the suffering of others and to minister to them with love and understanding. More simply, this gift is compassion, moved to action. People with this gift are called to reach out to someone who is hurt or rejected, easing the suffering. They feel fulfilled when they can show others that God loves them. They are skilled at gaining the trust of those in need and enjoy finding ways to comfort them.

Scripture References: Matthew 9:36, Luke 10:30-37; Colossians 3:12-15

Shepherding

The divine ability to guide, protect, and care for other Christians as they experience spiritual growth. People with this gift enjoy working with groups of people and nurturing their growth over an extended period of time. Because of these long-term relationships, they establish trust and confidence, and are able to take the time to care for the "whole person." They can assess where a person is spiritually, and then develop or find places where that person can continue a journey of faith. They model compassion.

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Scripture References: 1 Peter 5:1-4; John 10: 1-16; Jeremiah 3:15, 17:16, Ezekiel 34; Ephesians 4:11-16

Prophecy

The God-given ability to proclaim God's truth in a way that makes it relevant to current situations and to envision how God would want things to change. The goal may be to bring about repentance, correction, or enlightenment. People with this gift listen carefully to God for what God wants them to say. They warn people of the immediate and future consequences of not accepting God's truths. They see sin or deception that others overlook. Prophets speak to the people, bringing edification, exhortation (encouragement) and consolation.

Scripture References: Ephesians 4:11-13; Revelation 19:10; 1 Corinthians 13:2, 14:3

Teaching

The divine ability to understand and clearly explain God's truths, and to show how we can apply these in our lives. People with this gift enjoy studying the Bible and inspire others listeners to greater obedience to God's word. They prepare through study and reflection, and pay close attention to detail. In addition to communicating facts, they are careful to show that the Scriptures have practical applications. They can adapt their presentation in order to communicate God's message to a particular audience effectively.

Scripture Reference: Matthew 28:19-20; Colossians 1:28; James 3:1; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 1:7-11

Wisdom

The God-given ability to understand and apply biblical and spiritual knowledge to complex, contradictory, or other difficult situations. People with the gift of Wisdom have an ability to understand and live God's will. They share their wisdom with others through teaching and admonition. People with this gift speak God's truth as found in Scripture, in order to provide clarity and direction to people

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who are struggling with which way they should go. They make practical application of biblical truths. They are, in effect, a “compass” for the Body of Christ.

Scripture References: Colossians 1:9-12, 28; 2:3; 3:16; James 3:13

Intercessory Prayer

The divine ability to pray for others in the right spirit (focusing on trusting in God) and with the conviction that God will answer prayer. For people with this gift, prayer is a natural state, occurring in response to guidance from the Holy Spirit. Through prayer, they exercise authority and power in order to support others. People with this gift realize that God does not necessarily answer prayer in the manner that they, or the person(s) prayed for, think is best. Prayer is seen as one of God’s ways of binding people together and carrying on God’s work in the world.

Scripture References: Romans 8:26-27; John 17: 9-26; 1 timothy 2:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12, 4:12-13

Hospitality

The divine ability to warmly welcome people and to demonstrate God’s love by providing food, shelter, and/or fellowship. People with this gift are comfortable with strangers and can make all kinds of people feel welcome. They believe that how the church welcomes newcomers is vital and feel fulfilled when that can offer their homes for food and fellowship. They often serve as examples of Christian love, and view relationships as opportunities to share God’s love.

Scripture References: 1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2

Craftsmanship

The God-given ability to creatively design or construct items to be used for ministry. People with this gift often use their skills to glorify God in a tangible manner, enhancing others worship experiences. They work with tools to turn wood, metal, cloth, paints and other raw materials into items that increase the

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effectiveness of others ministries. They can design an object that presents a concept or image, or one that is primarily utilitarian.

Scripture References: Exodus 31:3-5; 35: 31-35; Acts 9:36-39; 2 Kings 22:5-6

Creative Communication

The divine ability to express God’s truth through a variety of art forms. People with this gift present Christ’s message using formats such as drama, music, literature, “fine” arts or multi-media presentations. Their creations broaden – or focus – our perspectives and challenge our perceptions of God. These persons spread God’s message and ministry in creative ways. This gift awakens the heart, invigorates the mind, and refreshes the soul.

Scripture References: Psalm 150:3-5; 2 Samuel 6:14-25; Mark 4:2, 33

