

**THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**  
**(A Definition and Explanation)**  
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**“A spiritual gift is a special work of the Holy Spirit  
whereby he grants to you grace for effective spiritual service.”**

What follows are the words used by the New Testament in describing some spiritual gifts. The words used are sometimes very general in nature and often overlap in definition. There is no indication that the Scriptures list all of the gifts of the Spirit. Noting the following gifts will, however, be helpful to you in seeing the range of gifts that the Holy Spirit grants and the way that they are used by believers to build each other up in the faith.

**ABILITY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SPIRITS** - The ability to discern the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of demons by immediate insight granted by the Spirit or by insight into the Scriptures.

**ADMINISTRATION** (The word is used primarily of steering a ship) - The ability to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a group (small or large) and to devise means to help people accomplish those goals (probably largely synonymous with “leadership” listed below).

**APOSTLE** - There is serious question as to whether this gift extended past the original 12 disciples and Paul who were selected personally by Jesus. (See Carson, p 90-91)

**EVANGELISM** - The ability to assist unbelievers to become Christ's disciples **and/or** to equip believers in effectively witnessing to their faith.

**EXHORTATION** (Encouragement) - The ability to stir people to action, to so encourage, stimulate, counsel, and comfort people that they are enabled to grow and serve.

**FAITH** - A special work of the Spirit enabling "a believer to trust God to bring about certain things for which he or she cannot claim some divine promise recorded in the Scripture..." (Carson, p 39, especially note "prayers of faith")

**GIFTS OF HEALING** (note the plural) - That special ability to be used as God's intermediary to cure illnesses and restore health apart from the use of natural means. (Wagner, p 261) The plural may suggest that not everyone was getting healed by one person but that certain persons could heal certain diseases and others were needed for other diseases. (See especially "Expectant and Accepting" under "special topics" at SoundLiving.org).

**GIVING** - The ability to use with liberality, cheerfulness, and without ulterior motive, one's temporal possessions for the good of others and the glory of God.

**HELPS AND SERVING** - An ability to meet the needs of others. These are very general words to describe all kinds of assistance. It may include helping, serving, giving, hospitality, etc.

**HOSPITALITY** - The ability with generosity and willingness to provide an open home and warm welcome to those in need.

**INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES** - The ability to make known in the common language the message spoken in tongues (see "tongues" below).

**LEADERSHIP** - The ability to help others work together to accomplish appropriate goals for the glory of God. (See also "administration," probably largely synonymous)

**MERCY** - The ability to feel genuine sympathy and compassion for people who are suffering and with cheerfulness, not compulsion, help them.

**MIRACULOUS POWERS** (Literally "workings of powers - note the plural) - An inclusive phrase indicating a host of miraculous acts. The ability to perform powerful acts that alter the ordinary course of nature (eg. exorcism, nature miracles, others displays of divine power). (Carson, p 40; Wagner, p 261)

**PASTOR (SHEPHERDING)** - The ability to assume a long-term responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of God's people.

**PROPHECY** - The reception and subsequent transmission of spontaneous, divinely originating revelation. (see Carson, p 91-99, and especially p 160-164) (See also "Does God Speak Today" Parts 1&2 from 2 Peter 1:16-21 SoundLiving.org)

**TEACHING** - Instructing others in the meaning and moral implications of the Christian faith as learned in the Scriptures.

**TONGUES** - It is the unintelligible expression of a Spirit-led impression on the heart of the Christian that was unplanned and/or the ability to speak to God in a language never learned. (See "prophecy" and "interpretation of tongues")

**WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE** - In some cases this is the same as prophecy (above) or in some cases a special experience by which a message comes to a person from the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures and is communicated to the congregation to meet a particular need. (in this latter case it is much like teaching).

**REMEMBER:** God may grant other gifts as he chooses.

Carson, D.A. Showing the Spirit  
Sanders, J. Oswald The Holy Spirit and His Gifts  
C. Peter Wagner \_\_\_\_\_