

**Holy Spirit –
Gifts
1 Corinthians 12:1 – 11**

“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to 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. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

So over the last few weeks we’ve been spending time talking about the Holy Spirit.

Two weeks ago we talked about who the Holy Spirit is – He is God the Spirit, and what He does – that His life enters into our lives and He takes all the amazing, awesome things that Jesus has done for us and makes it real in our own hearts and lives.

Most importantly He makes Jesus real to each one of us.

The Holy Spirit makes the Christian life – the life of following after Jesus – possible.

Then last week we looked at the fruit of the Spirit – these virtues, these characteristics, these ethical values the Holy Spirit grows in our lives.

The character and conduct of Christ reflected in our lives.

And how do we know if the fruit are growing in us?

Do remember the test?

What comes to the surface in relationship and community with others.

So we've covered a lot of ground.

When it comes to the Holy Spirit you have to, at some point, you have to talk about the gifts of the Spirit.

As controversial as that may be in some churches we find clearly spoken about in Scripture.

Paul introduces the subject and states quite clearly his intent: "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant."

Paul wrote these words to the church in Corinth roughly 2000 years ago, yet they're relevant today.

One survey has concluded that $\frac{3}{4}$ of Christians do not know what their spiritual gifts are.

Paul says there is a knowledge gap. He wants the knowledge gap to be addressed.

So this is what we do know: it is in God's nature to bless us with gifts. And when you become a follower of Jesus this becomes really evident.

- I mean we the gift of salvation – the forgiveness of sins that creates in us the peace of God.
- We get life change – we can be different people.
I don't about you but I'm so glad that over the course of my life I have become a more Me-er me.
- We are given the gift of the local church who become for us family and friends.
And I know for me I have friendships that go back some 30 or so years.

Best of all we receive a new relationship where we come to know God as Father who will never abandon us and Jesus as our Brother and Friend and Saviour and King.

And with this from the Father and the Son is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And alongside all of this, God the Spirit gives you gifts.
You are gifted.

Everyone has gifts – *You* have gifts.

- Creation gifts or natural abilities which are given to all people believers or not.

They are natural in the sense of being innate talents that we have acquired and learnt and honed, like musical talent or sporting ability or academic success or mechanical aptitude.

A few years ago a Kiwi guy won the World Scrabble Championship. When he was interviewed they asked, "How did you do it?" He replied that ever since he was young, he just has this knack; it just clicked for him.

That's natural aptitude.

These are good and what the Spirit does with these creation gifts is He enhances or channels them for his use and glory and the good of others. So everybody is gifted this way.

But what we need to hear is this: these are different from spiritual gifts.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have spiritual gifts.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit is a *new* enabling given to believers by the Holy Spirit.

To have a spiritual gift is to receive a divine, Spirit-enabled ability, to do that which you may not be able to do ordinarily.

All believers have received spiritual gifts.

To a local church in Corinth, to ordinary believers like you and me, Paul is saying, the Spirit has given you gifts.

It's *not* age dependent: "It's for those younger people." Or "It's for those who are older."

It's not dependent on your *spiritual maturity*.

You may have been walking with the Lord for 5 decades or 5 minutes yet at the moment when you received new life you also received gifts from the Holy Spirit.

They are given, not earned.

They are free expressions of God's favour and love, given to each one personally.

They are specific, personalised expressions of God's grace.

I'm thankful that part of my early discipleship as a sixteen year old that there was teaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So I assumed that according to Scripture, these gifts would be normative.

That is, when believers gathered the gifts of the Spirit would be operative.

Paul is clear on this "Now to each one [*to each one of us*] the manifestation of the Spirit is given..."

These are gifts that God in His generosity has given to every follower of Jesus Christ.

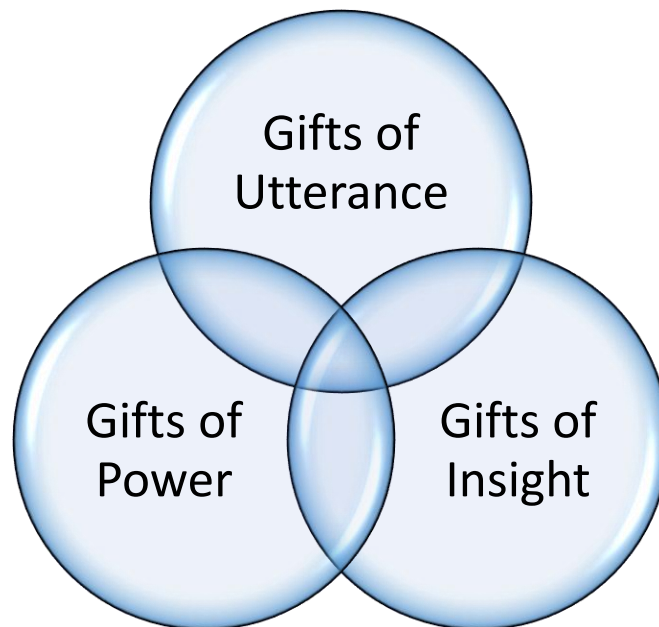
He has distributed them to each one, just as he determines and God has graciously and generously placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

He then proceeds to list them.

They are gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes to every follower of Jesus and He does so as He sovereignly determines.

So every believer has gift given to them by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

What I've found helpful is to think of the gifts like this:



Gifts of Utterance

Tongues – the ability to speak and pray in a language unknown to the one speaking.

Interpretation of tongues – is the ability to hear, in a corporate setting, someone speaking in tongues and bring that translation for others.

Prophecy – Inspired speech where someone brings a message from God to the wider body.

We often think of prophecy as ‘fore-telling’ as prediction, but more often it is ‘forth-telling’: speaking a message from God to the gathered believers.

(Preaching is a sub-set of prophecy in that the preacher seeks the Lord and prepares a message in advance).

Gifts of Power

Faith – Faith is exceptional trust in God in exceptional circumstances.

There is saving faith which all Christians have, and there is exceptional faith for exceptional times.

New Zealand businessman Robert Laidlaw comes to mind. Laidlaw started the Farmers stores and was one of the founders of the BCNZ (renamed Laidlaw College). At age 18 he gave a tenth of his income to the church. By age 25 he gave a full 50% of his income to the church and various other charities and did so until he died.

Healings – the spontaneous recovery or cure that cannot be explained by any other means except for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Miraculous powers – whereas healing is seems miraculous enough, this is something separate. It literally means ‘deeds of power’. Outside of healing two activities come to mind – raising the dead and delivering people from demonic bondage which often call deliverance ministry or exorcism.

Gifts of Insight

Word or message of knowledge – is the divine disclosure of information that the recipient did not know through normal or natural means.

Word or message of wisdom – is a message from God that reveals a practical way forward in the face of a pressing need.

Discernment of Spirits – is the ability to distinguish whether human, demonic or divine power is at work.

Some people under the grouping are seers who are given pictures or visions from God that are beneficial.

There are also ‘dreamers’ – those who have significant dreams from God on a frequent basis.

What do you notice about this?

There is overlap in the gifts.

One of the problems that Corinthians had was a competitiveness where they saw some gifts as being greater than others, especially tongues.

Yet they all come from the one Spirit, one Lord, one God and therefore none of the gifts is in competition with the other.

Instead the gifts often work together.

- A word of knowledge might lead to a prayer for healing.
- Discerning of spirits might lead to deliverance.
- A prophecy might inspire faith and so on.

“Have you experienced any of these gifts before?”

And you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you what gifts the Lord in His generosity has given to you.

Charles Spurgeon was so well known for his powerful Biblical preaching he was nicknamed the “Prince of Preachers” and in the late 1800’s oversaw a congregation in its thousands long before megachurches existed.¹ He was a defender of the truth of the Gospel especially at a time when Liberal theology was invading and killing many churches.

What is less known is that moved in the area of prophecy, words of knowledge and healing.

¹ He pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, which seated 5,600 and had two services a day every Sunday.

One time, "A city missionary, when going his rounds, met with this man, and seeing that he was reading one of Spurgeon's sermons, he asked the question, 'Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?' 'Yes,' replied the man, 'I have every reason to know him, I have been to hear him; and, under his preaching, by God's grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened?

I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place; Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me, and in his sermon he pointed to me, and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I kept my shop open on Sundays; and I did, sir.

I should not have minded that; but he also said that I took nine pence the Sunday before, and that there was four pence profit out of it. I did take nine pence that day, and four pence *was* the profit; but how he should know that, I could not tell.

Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul!"

So that's the what.
There's also the why – why are gifts given?

To the Corinthian Christians Paul in verse 7 of our reading says,
"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for [what reason?] *the common good.*"

For the good of other followers of Jesus who gather and glorify God.
For the good of the people we do life and worship with.

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 14 Verse 12:
"Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church."

Peter states, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others..." (1 Peter 4:10)

There is other-centred dimension to the gifts of the Spirit, especially in a world that can be so discouraging and even hostile to the Christian faith.

The thing is, God has established in His Church a way of doing and that's through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I mean, it's so encouraging for example, when someone has a word of knowledge or wisdom and it's like someone has been reading your e-mail.

I've had that happen.

Or someone has a hurt that no amount of counselling or will power can heal but someone prayers for them and the Spirit is like cure to their soul.

I've had that happen too.

You see Jesus cares for His Body of people called the church.

God cares for His people.

When the gifts are in action Jesus is glorified and the church is so encouraged.

“So what are we called to do in response to all of this?”

Tell the person next to you.

t in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1:

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”

The first thing I would say is, find out what your gifts are.

And I say ‘gifts’ because I am yet to meet a Christian who only has one gift of the Holy Spirit. God is a generous God.

Eagerly desire *healings*.

Eagerly desire prophecy, words of knowledge and wisdom.

Pursue faith; seek discernment of spirits.

Pursue them; ask for them.

Ask for the gift of tongues.

These are not simply a historical record of what is now out of reach.

And with that, take your place in the Body – to glorify God, and build up, encourage and comfort God's people.

So the final question is this:

“How do you know what your gifts are?”

For one, there’s what others see in you.

To Timothy Paul wrote:

“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you”.²

Often others will see in you latent gifts waiting to be uncovered.

That was true for me. Other encouraged to preach.

So on cool autumn evening many years ago I stood behind a pulpit speaking at a youth service shaking and terrified...

Along with that I would also say desire.

God can and does seed new desires in us.

Practically there are spiritual gift questionnaires.

If you want to know your gifts, get to know the Giver.

² 1 Timothy 4:14