

Spiritual Gifts – pt. 2

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Last week, we looked at 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 to begin our conversation about spiritual gifts. This week, we are back in the same passage. Why? Well, because there is more to glean from Paul on spiritual gifts in this section, specifically his teaching that there are a variety of “gifts, services, and activities.” Spiritual gifts can be confusing for us, and they were certainly confusing for them. Paul reframes the Corinthians’ fascination with spiritual gifts by grounding them in the character and work of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasizes both diversity and unity of the gifts. Andrew Wilson notes that Paul deliberately repeats the pattern: “different gifts, same Spirit; different service, same Lord; different workings, same God.” The point is not hierarchy but harmony. Gifts are not badges of superiority or elitism; they are gracious distributions given “for the common good.” Wilson also highlights that Paul places revelatory, powerful, and practical gifts side by side—wisdom, healing, prophecy, tongues—without ranking them. This undercuts the Corinthian tendency to prize dramatic gifts as marks of elite spirituality. Instead, the Spirit sovereignly apportions gifts as he wills, reminding the church that spiritual life is not self-generated but God-given. The truth we cannot miss in this section is that **the Holy Spirit empowers your following and service.** We’re not alone in following Jesus. We have each other, and most importantly, we have the Holy Spirit.

1. What are Spiritual Gifts?

- a. Definition of spiritual gifts.
 - i. Specific gifts (grace abilities) that are given to believers by the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. They are expressly given for the building up and maturity of the church.
 1. Discipleship & Evangelism – Think about Matt. 28:18-20 (The Great Commission).
 2. So often, when we think of the “church,” we think of the institution of the church. That is the building and the programs of the modern church. The Gifts of the Spirit were not given so that the institution of the church could move forward. The Gifts of the Spirit were given for the movement of the church, that is, the forward expansion and maturity of God’s people. When we talk about the church in this context, we must think about people, not buildings. We also must think of movement, not programs.
- b. Spiritual Gift v Natural Talent
 - i. Essentials of spiritual gifts:
 1. Given by the Spirit. – Not earned, achieved, or manifested.
 2. Empowered by the Spirit. – Not done in your own strength.
 3. Grace abilities for Christians. – They are only given to Christians.
 4. Jesus is central. – When you use your gift(s), they are always oriented toward glorifying Jesus.
 - ii. Essentials of natural talents:

1. **Given from God at conception.** – These are for all people.
2. **Can be used without the Spirit.** – You can use them under your own strength.
3. **For all people.** – Has nothing to do with your salvation, and can be used for glorifying self.

- iii. Example – Musical talent as the natural talent (Worship Leader)
 1. Teacher – This person will lead worship in a way that looks more instructive and seeks to teach important truths through the process of musical worship.
 2. Evangelist – This person is going to be oriented evangelistic styles of worship settings and invitations to Jesus. If combined with an apostleship gift, they are going to be taking the music on the road!
- iv. Example – Public Speaking as the natural talent.
 1. Prophet – This person is going to find themselves in settings where they are specifically critiquing culture and drawing a highlighter on God's Word for repentance and obedience.
 2. Teacher – This person is going to find themselves in settings where they are going to give lectures that make complicated concepts very simple.

c. **Gift lists:**

- i. There is no one exhaustive gift list in the NT.
- ii. Paul was not attempting to construct exhaustive lists of gifts when he specified the ones he did. Although there is sometimes an indication of some order (he puts apostles first, prophets second, and teachers third, but tongues last in 1 Cor. 12:28), it seems that in general Paul was almost randomly listing a series of different examples of gifts as they came to mind.
 1. **1 Corinthians 12:28**
 - a. Apostle, Prophet, Teacher, Miracles, kinds of healings, Helps Administration, tongues
 2. **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**
 - a. word of wisdom, word of knowledge, Faith, gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, Interpretation of tongues
 3. **Ephesians 4:11**
 - a. Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor-teacher
 4. **Romans 12:6-8**
 - a. Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Encouraging, Contributing, Leadership, mercy
 5. **1 Corinthians 7:7**
 - a. Marriage, Celibacy
 6. **1 Peter 4:11**
 - a. Whoever speaks (covering several gifts), whoever renders service (covering several gifts)¹

2. APEST – A simple list.

- a. **Remember** – There is no one exhaustive list in the NT of the gifts of the Spirit.
- b. **Eph. 4:11-15 - ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to**

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 1019–1020.

mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- c. The church may appoint people to different work and functions, but unless they have the gifts of the Spirit, and therefore are themselves the gifts of Christ to his church, their appointment is valueless. The expression also ‘serves well to remind ministers that the gifts of the Spirit are not for the enrichment of oneself but for the enrichment of the Church’²
- d. Serving purposefully. → APEST³
 - i. **Apostle** – Pioneer, entrepreneur, visionary – (*Peter, Paul, John, Priscilla & Aquilla*)
 - 1. **Description:** Apostles extend the gospel and plant churches. They ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always pushing into new territory, thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally, and coming up with new and innovative means to do kingdom work.
 - 2. **Pitfalls of immature apostles:** “**Bulldozer.**” **If apostles focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, they can leave people and organizations wounded or uncared for.** Apostles typically welcome change and risk much more than most and can run too fast or too far ahead of the flock, leaving them behind or leaving a mess in their wake.
 - 3. They are unable to discern the constant flood of good and innovative ideas *they* have from the God-ideas that are being *given to* them. They try out something new every week, never really developing any of their ideas, and jumping from thing to thing to thing. After a while, people stop following them because they have a hard time staying focused on the task at hand, and people refuse to give their time and energy to something they know could change at any moment.
 - 4. **What they need from the other gifts:** The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for and developed/discipled rather than used or dragged along behind the boat. The prophet function is needed to ensure we are hearing from God and not acting in our own strength. The evangelist function is needed to apply the macro part of the mission to sharing the gospel with individual people and inviting them to respond.
 - ii. **Prophet** – Preaching, gives clarity to truth, calls to obedience – (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Anna*)
 - 1. **Description:** Prophets know God's will. They prioritize listening to God. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today and are zealous for the holiness of God. They question and question the status quo, bringing correction and challenging the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture, insisting the community obey what God has commanded.
 - 2. **Pitfalls of immature prophets:** “**Jerk.**” **Immature prophets assume they are always right. The problem is that often times they are right, and this builds a false sense of confidence that they get it right 100% of the time.** Because of this, they can become arrogant or unwilling to listen. In contrast, a mature prophet is actually quite humble because they know that any revelation they receive isn't their own and they entrust it to the community. Without the other

² Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 123–124.

³ <https://senttotheworld.org/blog/f/apest-descriptions--5-fold-ministry-eph-411>

types of leaders in place, prophets can be perceived as complainers or belligerent activists and unable to be tactful when delivering a message. They also spend significant time disengaged from others in an attempt to hear the voice of God. This may cause them to be disconnected from everyday realities and can become other-worldly, unable to identify with others.

3. **What they need from the other gifts:** The apostle and evangelist functions are needed to ensure the church does not become inward-focused or unable to move. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure that truth is applied and people are compassionately led toward growth and obedience, rather than feeling scorned or barked at.

iii. **Evangelist** – Sharing the gospel & conversations with non-Christians – (*Philip*)

1. **Description:** These infectious communicators of the gospel message recruit others to the cause. They call for a personal response to God's redemption in Christ and also draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the church. They have insight into how to articulate and relate the gospel to unbelievers, and enjoy spending time with non-Christians, often reminding other Christians that there are non-Christians still out there in the world. They may be people-gatherers, and wherever they go they seem to draw others into discussion about Jesus. They are not timid about their faith and seem to easily share with others regularly.
2. **Pitfalls of immature evangelists:** "Celebrity." **They may present a narrow gospel that is all about getting people out of hell. While important, this doesn't include the broader message of Jesus' invitation to discipleship and the Kingdom that He came to inaugurate which was central to His Gospel.** When they do this, they make faith and Christianity all about the afterlife and little to do with life transformation in the present life time. Oftentimes, once an individual accepts the message and receives Christ, they make the world's fastest baton pass to the local church or a small group and are never heard from again. They move on to the next person. This can be a jarring experience for someone who is just entering a discipling relationship. Evangelists can also be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those inside is neglected.
3. **What they need from the other gifts:** The shepherding and prophet functions are needed to ensure the church does not neglect the growth, maturity, and care for those inside the church. The teaching function is needed to help explain the gospel, helping people to understand, and to disciple new believers toward maturity. The apostle function is needed see the big picture of the mission and help keep the church moving forward.

iv. **Shepherd** – Care, counsel, empathy, and concern – (*Barnabas, James*)

1. **Description:** Shepherds nurture and protect with a tender heart. As caregivers of the community, they focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock. They cultivate a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships while making and developing disciples. They tend to spend most of their time with other Christians and can easily empathize with others, often exhibiting lots of patience with those in need. They see needs, provide comfort, and encourage others. They get burdened by others' problems and have a knack for speaking the truth in love. They are good listeners and are easy to talk to and share deep feelings with.

2. **Pitfalls of an immature shepherd:** Shepherds like to be with people in the midst of their brokenness, pain and suffering. However, they can have a really difficult time in moving people from that stage to one where they are seeking healing, transformation, and redemption. Immature shepherds sometimes don't have the confidence to challenge people to move forward for fear that the person will be angry with them. The mature shepherd can live in this tension while the immature shepherd stays a mile away from it and will let people sit in their brokenness far longer than they should. Immature shepherds may also value stability and the company of believers to the detriment of moving the mission forward.
3. **What they need from the other gifts:** The apostle and evangelist functions are necessary to keep a forward momentum. The prophet function is needed to ensure that truth is being spoken and people are called to repentance, even when it is hard. The teaching function is needed to help explain and apply the truth of Scripture, giving a guide for growth and healing.

v. **Teacher** – Those who explain tough concepts – (*Apollos, Philip*)

1. **Description:** They enjoy spending time studying and reflecting on the Scriptures seeking understanding so they can pass on their insights to others. They get excited about discovering hidden treasures within the text taking others into a deeper understanding. As communicators of God's truth and wisdom, they help others remain biblically grounded to better discern God's will. They encourage the community to remain faithful to Christ's Word and help others transition from having head knowledge to application. They are passionate about taking difficult passages and explaining them in a clear and understandable fashion.
2. **Mature teachers enjoy: Pitfalls of an immature teacher:** "Pharisee." **Scripture can be the end rather than the means to a relationship with God and neighbor.** They can idolize Scripture and put it over intimacy with the living and breathing God. They may value head knowledge over life transformation leaving learners stunted in development. The focus becomes "knowing" rather than "doing." They can fall into only thinking abstractly about difficult concepts without incarnating it into everyday life. Immature teachers can selfishly pursue impressing others for their knowledge rather than crediting the authority that is given from Scripture and the Holy Spirit. They may erroneously be motivated by showing others how much they know.
3. **What they need from the other gifts:** **The shepherding function is needed to be sure that the truth of Scripture is applied to people's hearts and is used as a tool for growth and relationship, not just knowledge.** The prophet function helps the community to hear from the Spirit through Scripture, rather than approaching it like a book of knowledge or history. The apostle and evangelist functions are needed to ensure that the gospel is going forward and people are being challenged to respond to Jesus and move forward on mission.

e. **The goal of the Christian life is to glorify God. We glorify God when we grow into maturity.**

- i. What is done for the saints, and by the saints, is *for building up the body of Christ*. The word *oikodomē* has been used in 2:21, but here it has a broader meaning. The church is increased and built up, and its members edified, as each member uses his or her particular gifts as the Lord of the church ordains, and thus gives spiritual service to fellow members and to the head. Because of its applied meaning the use of *oikodomē* with *the body* does not necessarily involve confusion of metaphors, but because of what

he wishes to say now about the growth and unity of the church, the apostle finds the metaphor of the body more adequate than any other.⁴

3. Consider your SHAPE

- a. **How am I using it? → S.H.A.P.E.**⁵
 - i. **S** = Spiritual Gift (Which gift resonates with you?)
 - ii. **H** – Heart (What stirs your emotions, positively/negatively?)
 - iii. **A** = Abilities (What could you teach a class on? What is your occupation? What special skills do you have? Etc.)
 - iv. **P** = Personality (Are you an introvert/extrovert? Prefer church people or non-believers?)
 - v. **E** = Experiences (What tough things have you been through? What have you seen? Where have you been? What have you done? Etc.)
- b. **What's my gift?**
 - i. Often, I am helped to understand my gift by understanding what isn't my gift. When I (Kyle) look at the gifts I can clearly discern that I do not have the gifts of evangelist, shepherd, or teacher. Partially, because I know myself. And partially, because of what others have affirmed in me.
 - ii. **What is your gift?**
 1. What resonates with you? What do you find yourself naturally doing.
 2. Pastor Brent likes to encourage that instead of thinking of this as a list we should think of it as a framework. We are able to do all of them, but we are given unique abilities by God in a certain direction.
 3. A framework also helps us in understanding how to utilize our gift, because it doesn't just ask what it is, but considers the whole person.
- c. **Two key questions:**
 - i. **Do I intentionally watch for the movement of God around me so I can join him in what he's doing?**
 1. This question is not only about dependency on the Spirit through the day, but the active watching and looking for the opportunities of the Spirit.
 2. Remember, Paul tells us in 12:11 that the Spirit gives the gifts out according to his will. This teaches us that the Spirit of God is not just some cosmic force that we are trying to harness or tune into. He is God, has a will, and divine purposes. Do I ask and look for the Spirit of God to move and guide me throughout my day?
 - ii. **Do I find myself responding more and more quickly to the Spirit's promptings throughout my day?**
 1. This question builds on the previous one. Once I begin looking for God's Spirit to move and direct me through my day, am I increasing in my sensitivity to his leading? That is, how long does it take me to recognize the Spirit's leading and when I do, how long do I respond in obedience?
 - ii. The reason we ask these questions is not to heap spiritual guilt. It is to increasingly follow Jesus in a life-defining way and participate in the joy of our salvation.

⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 127.

⁵ Pastor Brent talks about this in detail in the Discipleship 301 class.