

An Explanation of Spiritual Gifts – Excerpts from Wiersbe’s Commentary

Romans 12:6-8

Each believer has different gift(s). God has bestowed these gifts so the church can grow in a balanced way, i.e. working together like the parts of the body. But each Christian must exercise his gift by faith. We may not see the result of our ministry, but the Lord sees it and blesses it. Whatever gift we have must be dedicated to God and used for the good of the whole church. And for a Christian to minimize the other gifts while he emphasizes his own gift is to deny the very purpose for which gifts are given: the benefit of the whole body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NKJV) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all*:

Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with. In the church at Corinth, the believers were tearing down the ministry because they were abusing their spiritual gifts. They were using their gifts as ends in themselves and not as a means toward the end of building up the church. They so emphasized their spiritual gifts that they lost their spiritual graces. They had the gifts of the Spirit but were lacking in the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:22-23)

1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30

Gifts are not for individual enjoyment, but for corporate enjoyment. The Corinthians especially needed this reminder, because they were using their spiritual gifts selfishly to promote themselves and not to prosper the church. When we accept our gifts with humility, then we use them to promote harmony, and this helps the whole church. Ephesians 2:20 makes it clear that apostles and prophets worked together to lay the foundation of the church, and we may be assured that they were no longer needed once that foundation was completed. In the early church, miracles were a part of the credentials of God’s servants (Heb 2:1-4). In fact, miracles, healings, and tongues all belong to what theologians call “the sign gifts” and belonged in a special way to the infancy of the church. The Book of Acts, as well as church history, indicates that these miraculous gifts passed off the scene. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts “as He will” (1 Cor 12:11), not as we will. No believer should boast or complain about their gifts. We are many members in one body, ministering to each other.

Ephesians 4:7-11

We must make a distinction between spiritual gifts and natural abilities. When you were born, God gave you certain natural abilities. But in the spiritual realm, each believer has at least one spiritual gift no matter what natural abilities he may or may not possess. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified. How does the believer discover and develop his gifts? By fellowshipping with other Christians in the local assembly. Gifts are tools to build with. And if they are not used in love, they become weapons to fight with, which is what happened in the Corinthian church (1 Cor 12-14). Paul taught that Christ is the giver of these gifts, through the Holy Spirit. (Eph 4:8-10). Paul wrote that some gifts are more important than others, but that all believers are needed if the body is to function normally (1 Cor 14:5, 39). Paul named gifted men (positions) God has placed in the church. There are four: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

Apostles were to give witness of the Resurrection (Acts 1:15-22), and therefore had to have seen the risen Christ personally (1 Cor 9:1-2). God authenticated their ministry with special miracles (Heb 2:1-4), so we should not demand these miracles today. In a broad sense, all Christians have an apostolic ministry (John 20:21). But we must not claim to be apostles.

A New Testament prophet is one who proclaims the Word of God (Acts 11:28; Eph 3:5). We have God's complete Word today, the Bible. The purpose of prophecy is edification, encouragement, and consolation (1 Cor 14:3). Christians today do not get their spiritual knowledge *immediately* from the Holy Spirit, but *conveyed* through the Spirit teaching the Word. With the apostles, the prophets had a foundational ministry in the early church and they are not needed today (Eph 2:20).

Evangelists are the "bearers of the Good News." These men built on the foundation of the church by winning the lost to Christ. Of course, in the early church, every believer was a witness (Acts 2:41-47; 11:19-21) and so should we be witnesses today.

Pastor means "shepherd" (Acts 20:28). This indicates that the church is a flock of sheep and it is his responsibility to feed and lead the flock (1 Pet 5:1-4). He does this by means of the Word of God, the food that nourishes the sheep. The Word is the staff that guides and disciplines the sheep. It is the church's protection and provision.