

## Spiritual Gifts – How to be a Shepherd

In John 14, Jesus comforts His troubled disciples. First, He tells them that He will be leaving soon (the crucifixion and ascension). Next, He explains that although He is departing, He *"will not leave them as orphans."* Further, He promises, *"I will come to you"* (John 14:18). Believers today know that Jesus' promise was fully realized 50 days after the crucifixion, on the day of Pentecost. That day marked the beginning of the gift of the Holy Spirit being given to all believers in Christ (Acts 2). The gift of the Holy Spirit is truly wondrous – the full ramifications are unfathomable.

This brief document is designed to answer basic questions about the gift of the Spirit, the order of the spiritual gifts, and the fruit of the Spirit.

### • The gift of the Spirit

The promise of the Holy Spirit in John 14:18 is followed by similar declarative statements in John 15:26, Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:8. The promise of the gift of God was given at Pentecost and changed the world. No longer would the Spirit come temporarily *upon* individuals to equip and empower as in Old Testament times. After Pentecost, the Spirit *indwells* believers (Rom. 8:11). The abiding presence of the Spirit, being the very presence of God, makes the scope of THE GIFT beyond imagination.

Acts 2:38-39 notes that all who believe and repent *"shall receive The gift of the Holy Spirit."* This gift, the indwelling presence of God, guides (John 16:13), empowers (Acts 1:8), sanctifies (Rom. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13), bears witness to Christ (Rom. 8:16; Heb. 10:15), helps (John 14:16-26), comforts (Acts 9:31), illuminates the mind (1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 1:16-17), and more. The Spirit of God *"seals believers for the day of redemption"* (Eph. 4:30). Every person who is saved by Christ receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God comes to live in us at the moment of salvation. How blessed humanity is – how rich and abundant is the grace of God!

### • The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 states, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such, there is no law."* The "Gift" of the Spirit IS the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. The "fruit" of the Spirit are attributes and characteristics, or evidence *OF* the Holy Spirit.

Just as God has given every human muscle, God has given every believer the fruit of the Spirit. And just as humans must work to develop muscle for optimum performance, believers must work to develop the fruit or attributes of the Spirit. Doing so serves as a

mark of Spiritual maturity.

Carefully and prayerfully consider each attribute of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Ask God to reveal how you can grow in each of these areas. Set goals. Journal, pray for God's help and blessing, and record and celebrate your progress. Remember, building muscle takes effort and time. The same is true in your spiritual walk. Persevere. Do not give up (Gal. 6:9).

- **The gifts of the Holy Spirit**

The New Testament references gifts of the Spirit in many places, most notably 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:3-8, and Ephesians 4:7-14. These gifts can be considered spirit-anointed skills, abilities, callings, or affinities. From the original text, it is clear that these spiritual gifts fall into three categories. Each category of gifts is identified, defined, and illustrated, using references from the New Testament.

- **The SIGN gifts**

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 presents a partial list of gifts that serve as a sign or testimony to God's grace and work. They are given to edify believers and bring the lost to faith in Christ. These gifts include speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, special insight or discernment, healing, prophecy, and the working of miracles. These visible or high-profile gifts are evidence of God's favor.

At certain times in Church history, these 'sign' gifts were rare, but Acts 2:17 tells us they will become prominent again. *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams."*

These gifts are not given to every believer and are not evidence of salvation or spiritual maturity. God gives these gifts as evidence of His grace. Believers receive this expression of unmerited favor to be well-equipped and positioned to accomplish God's will in a particular place and at specific times.

Regarding speaking in tongues: it is the considered opinion of this writer that Speaking in Tongues is not a dead gift, as some suggest. It is clear that the power of God knows no bounds – He can give any gift to anyone at any time. However, those who speak in tongues should do so humbly, knowing that it is not a superior gift or proof of spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 14:1-5). Speaking in tongues should be done following the guidelines established in Scripture (1 Cor. 12-14), always orderly and with an interpreter when in public (1 Cor. 14:6-9).

- **The Office or Organizational gifts**

Ephesians 4:11-14 presents a list of the offices or roles the Spirit anoints and calls people to. This is done so that the Church will be equipped for *"every good work."* These offices include apostles, pastors, teachers, prophets, and evangelists.

These office or organizational gifts represent a second category of gifts and are distinct from the 'sign' gifts noted above. Note: The word in the original Greek text to describe this category of gifts differs from the Greek work in 1 Cor. 12. Like the sign gifts, the office gifts noted in Ephesians 4 are selective. They are not given to or bestowed on every believer. They are given to bring efficiency and productivity to the Church and to *"make known the manifold wisdom of God"* (Ephesians 3:10).

- **The Service gifts**

Romans 12:3-8 presents a third category of spiritual gifts –service gifts. The gifts in this category include prophecy (proclaiming the word), serving, teaching, exhorting, or encouraging, giving, leading, and mercy.

God gives the service gifts to strengthen the ministry, witness, and fellowship of believers in the Church. This category of gifts is unique in that every believer receives at least one of the service gifts (1 Peter 4:10). Like the fruit of the Spirit, we must develop service gifts. These gifts are refined and developed through use, time, practice, prayer, and study.

- **The Hierarchy of Spiritual Gifts**

Scripture notes there are *"varieties of gifts"* (1 Cor. 12:4). All are given as an act of God's grace (Romans 12:3-4) and are equally noble (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:12-26). Yes, there are different offices, callings, and gifts, but all gifts and callings come by the grace of God. Believers receive them as an expression of unmerited divine favor. All gifts and callings are equally important, valuable, and essential for the health and witness of the Lord's church.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit equip, anoint, and empower believers. These gifts help believers remember we do not operate or trust in our own strength or resources and that we are well provisioned by the spirit to effectively lead and serve in ministry for God's glory.