

BIB105 Basic Bible Doctrine

Unit 5 Reading 4

Stewart, “What Are Spiritual Gifts?”

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Don Stewart :: What Are Spiritual Gifts?

Introduction to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit – Question 3

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/introduction-to-the-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/03-what-are-spiritual-gifts.cfm

Before we examine the subject of spiritual gifts, we need to have an understanding of what they are. Though the Bible does not give a definition of spiritual gifts, it does tell us much regarding their nature and function. The nature of the gifts is revealed in the various words used to describe them.

There Are Four Greek Words That Refer to Spiritual Gifts

There are four Greek words that the Apostle Paul uses in First Corinthians chapter twelve that refer to spiritual gifts: *charisma*, *pneumatikos*, *diakonia*, and *energema*. These words help us understand the nature of spiritual gifts.

1. *Charisma*: Gift of Grace

The word normally translated “gift” in the New Testament is the Greek word *charisma*. The plural form of *charisma* is *charismata*. Paul wrote.

Now there are different gifts, [*charismata*] but the same Spirit
([1 Corinthians 12:4 HCSB](#)).

The word *charisma* means “gift of grace” and refers to the gifts, or special abilities, God has given believers through the Holy Spirit.

2. *Pneumatikos*: Things of the Spirit

Pneumatikos is another word that is translated as “gift.” We find it used in this context.

Now about spiritual gifts, [*pneumatikos*] brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant
([1 Corinthians 12:1 NIV](#)).

Although this word is often translated, “gift” the word actually means “spirituals,” “spiritual things,” or “spiritualities.” The English translators often add the word, “gift” in the text. Some commentators feel this is a mistake because the word does not necessarily mean gift.

3. *Diakonia*: Service

Paul uses the Greek word, *diakonia*, which means, “service,” to describe spiritual gifts. Paul used this word as follows.

And there are varieties of ministries, [*diakonia*] and the same Lord
([1 Corinthians 12:5 NASB](#)).

4. *Energemata*: Effect or Operation

A fourth word used in describing spiritual gifts is *energemata*, which means “effect” or “operation.” We also read about this in First Corinthians 12. It says.

And there are diversities of activities, [*energemata*] but it is the same God who works all in all people ([1 Corinthians 12:6 NKJV](#)).

Whenever this word is used in the New Testament, it always refers to a supernatural work, or operation, by God.

A Basic Definition of Spiritual Gifts

When we put these words together we find that spiritual gifts are abilities that God gives to believers for service in the church – the body of Christ. They are “spiritual” gifts or gifts that operate in the realm, or sphere, of the Holy Spirit. While the source of each spiritual gift is God, this does not necessarily mean that a spiritual gift is the ability to do something supernatural.

Some of the gifts are natural abilities that are heightened and directed by the Holy Spirit. The ability is from God to do a work for God. The words of Zechariah the prophet sum it up this truth.

Then he answered and said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” ([Zechariah 4:6 NASB](#)).

It is God’s Spirit by which He gets His work done. Indeed, the work of God is accomplished by the Spirit of God.

God Is the Source of the Spiritual Gifts

In one sense, every blessing that comes from God is a gift. The Bible says that all gifts ultimately have their source in God the Father. James wrote.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change ([James 1:17 NRSV](#)).

Yet spiritual gifts are something that God only gives to believers in Christ.

Spiritual Gifts Are Special Abilities to Do Certain Ministries

We emphasize that spiritual gifts are special, God-given abilities to perform certain ministries. However, a number of spiritual gifts consist of things all Christians should be doing.

For example, while there is the gift of an evangelist, all Christians should be evangelizing. Jesus said to His disciples.

But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8 NLT](#)).

Whether or not we have the gift of an evangelist we should be telling others about Jesus.

While there is a gift of giving, all Christians should be giving of their finances to the ministry. Paul instructed the church of Corinth as follows.

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV](#)).

Again we stress, while there is a distinct spiritual gift of giving, each of us who believe in Christ should be supporting our local church.

While there is a gift of serving, all Christians should serve. Paul wrote the following to the Colossians about serving Christ.

Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ ([Colossians 3:24 NLT](#)).

We can also add 'teaching' to this category. Though all believers do not have the gift of teaching all believers do teach in some sense. Whenever a Christian explains anything about Bible doctrine to someone else, they are, in a sense, teaching.

In the Old Testament all who had children were encouraged to teach them. Moses wrote.

Memorize his laws and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning ([Deuteronomy 6:6-7 CEV](#)).

While all believers are to do these particular things, God has gifted a certain number with special abilities in these areas. Therefore, He has given a special gift of an evangelist, as well as the gift of giving, the gift of serving, and the gift of teaching.

In sum, spiritual gifts are absolutely necessary for the work of the ministry.

Summary – Question 3

What Are Spiritual Gifts?

From a study of Scripture, we find that spiritual gifts are abilities that God uniquely gives to those who believe in Him. They are not given to unbelievers. The purpose of these gifts has to do with Christian service. Christians use these gifts to further the ministry of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

These gifts are called “spiritual” because they operate in the realm of the Holy Spirit. However, spiritual gifts are not necessarily supernatural abilities. Indeed, certain of the gifts of the Spirit are natural abilities that are heightened and directed by the Spirit of God.

There are four Greek words, found in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians that describe spiritual gifts: *charisma*, *pneumatikos*, *diakonia*, and *energemata*. Each one describes certain aspects of spiritual gifts.

There are a number of spiritual gifts that are ministries that all Christians should be doing. This includes evangelizing, giving, and serving. However, there is also the special ability that God has given some to perform these tasks in a unique way. Thus, we have certain people who have the gift of an evangelist, of serving and of giving.

These truths further emphasize the necessity of spiritual gifts in the church. Indeed, the work of Jesus Christ is accomplished today by believers using these God-given abilities.