

Spiritual Gifts Times Two

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Have you ever taken on a job at church because you knew *somebody had to do it*, but within a short time you were exhausted by it — it just wasn't you — you burned out fast? Do you know why this happened? Why do some jobs match you and some don't? Why do some ministries you try to get involved in fit like a glove and some are just plain hard work and you end up feeling like a failure? The Bible has the answers to these questions. That's right — what we're talking about here is "spiritual gifts"! And since God tells us He doesn't want us to be ignorant about them (1 Corinthians 12:1), let's take a closer look at them and lower our "ignorance quotient."

You may already know about spiritual gifts. Or perhaps this is a new concept to you. Gifts that are "spiritual"? What does this mean?

The term "spiritual gifts" means the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Did you know the Holy Spirit gives gifts? He does! There are four passages in the New Testament which explain spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; and 1 Peter 4:7-11. We'll be looking at 1 Corinthians 12 primarily, though we'll use all the passages to compile the *Gift List*.

First of all, let's look at some basic principles about these gifts.

(1) The most important aspect we must grasp about spiritual gifts is that they are **a manifestation of the Spirit Himself** (1 Corinthians 12:7). He reveals Himself through each gift He gives. We can understand what the Holy Spirit is like by looking at His gifts being properly exercised by believers.

(2) And that leads us to the second principle: **He gives these gifts only to the Body of Christ** (the church). If you have a love relationship with Jesus Christ, then you are a part of His Body, and you have at least one gift from the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 declares plainly that the Spirit *...gives them to each one, just as he determines*.

(3) The latter part of verse 11 states another principle: the **Holy Spirit**

Himself determines who should receive each gift. The triune God knows us better than we know ourselves, He gave us our personalities and created us as unique individuals, and He knows what gift (or gifts) He wants us to have. Spiritual gifts are not displayed on a dessert cart, waiting for us to choose which one looks good.

Spiritual Gifts are not given to us because we deserve them.

(4) The fourth principle is that each gift is given, not because we deserve them, but **by God's grace** (Romans 12:6). If the Holy Spirit doled out His gifts as rewards for our spirituality, we might start feeling pretty proud of ourselves. "Ha, ha...my gift is better than yours, so I must be more spiritual than you!" We don't need a push in the pride department, do we? Even knowing the gifts are given only by God's grace, we tend to be proud of the more noticeable ones, with no right to be proud at all.

(5) Another aspect about spiritual gifts is that **no one gift is given to every believer**. The way the Apostle Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 is hilarious! He likens the Body of Christ to our own bodies, with different parts making up the whole body. Most parts of our bodies are necessary for life itself, and **every part is necessary for normalcy**. If every part of your body decided the eye was the most important part, so each part stopped being what it was in order to become an eye, you would look like something out of a horror movie — the giant eyeball that ate Chicago! And more seriously, you would die without vital organs. Paul says this is just like the church — Christ's Body. Each part of His Body is necessary for normalcy. The Holy Spirit spreads His gifts in the very best way so that Christ's Body will be a whole, healthy, functioning organism. That is why, in a sense, when a Christian leaves a local church without God expressly moving him out, it is like an amputation and the entire Body feels the pain, for

every member of Christ's Body is an integral part of the whole Body.

(6) The last principle of spiritual gifts we should point out is that these gifts are **not the same as natural talents or abilities**. They are God-given for the *common good* of the church (verse 7). *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets...* and so on (verses 27-28). God the Spirit does not give His gifts because of what we have, but rather because of what He has. Say you have a talent for teaching. You may even be a teacher in the public school system. But that does not necessarily mean you have the spiritual gift of teaching. The very thought of teaching a Sunday School class may frazzle your brain. Then again, being a teacher by profession does not negate the possibility that you do indeed have the gift of teaching from the Holy Spirit. God often complements spiritual gifts with your talents, but not necessarily. A believer might be shy and reserved by nature, yet wonderfully exercise the Spirit's gift of exhortation, which requires boldness.

Now that we have laid some Biblical "ground rules" for spiritual gifts, we need to list the various gifts for you. This *Gift List* is compiled from the four Scripture passages we mentioned earlier. (1) Word of wisdom, (2) Word of knowledge, (3) Faith, (4) Healing, (5) Miracles, (6) Apostleship, (7) Prophecy, (8) Distinguishing of spirits, (9) Teaching [speaking], (10) Evangelism, (11) Pastor [pastor/teacher], (12) Helping [serving], (13) Administration, (14) Leadership, (15) Exhortation, (16) Showing mercy, (17) Giving, (18) Tongues, and (19) Interpretation of tongues. Whew! That's quite a list, isn't it? Slowly look through the list again, saying each gift out loud. Remember, as a believer, you have at least one of these gifts.

In a minute, we'll give you some practical steps to discovering your spiritual gifts, but first we need to discuss the purpose of these gifts. **Why does the Holy Spirit give them?** We don't have to guess why, God's Word tells us that

spiritual gifts are given **(1) to equip and prepare believers** to do what God wants them to do. *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up* (Ephesians 4:11-12). The end of verse 12 gives another reason: **(2) to edify and build up the whole church**. Verse 16 of the same chapter further states, *From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*. And **(3) to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ**. *If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 4:11).

You are unique. And God has uniquely gifted you to fulfill your purpose and role in His church. Not only are you uniquely gifted as an individual, you are also **uniquely fitted together with your mate** with his or her unique gifts. It is no accident the God Who gives spiritual gifts is the same God Who joined you and your mate together as a team. He knew what He was doing when He joined you together; He took everything about you into consideration — including your spiritual gifts. He has a significant place for you in the local church. He wants you to exercise your spiritual gifts as a couple, as well as an individual, in the local church to help strengthen and build it up. When you do this, you bring glory to God!

How then can we discover our spiritual gifts, so that we can be about building up the church and bringing

glory to God? Here are some simple, practical steps you can take to **discover and exercise** your gifts.

1. Make sure you have received God's immeasurable gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). When you ask God to make you His child, He gives you spiritual life. When you have received spiritual life, then you can receive spiritual gifts.

Make a list of the needs currently facing your church.

2. Present yourself to God, volunteering for any assignment He wishes to give you (Romans 12:1-2).

3. Study what the Bible says about spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 2:15). The Scriptures we listed earlier is the best place to start.

4. Carefully analyze the areas of need in your church, as well as the church around the world. Make a list of the needs currently facing your church.

5. Ask the Lord to show you your spiritual gifts and where He wants you to use them. He doesn't want to play cosmic hide and seek with you. He has made it very plain He wants you to know and exercise your gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

6. Consider how you can begin to meet some of the needs you listed in #4. Are there specific things you can do? Ask God to confirm to you which of these needs He wants you to help meet. In other words, don't sit back and think God wants you to do nothing while you are in the process of discovering your gifts. He may want to show you your gifts through a specific service.

7. Keep a journal of definite confirmations you receive about your spiritual gifts. These could include Scripture verses, affirmations by others, feelings of fulfillment in doing a particular service, etc. Look for these confirmations, and make the connection when they come.

8. Having followed steps 1 through 8, set aside some time to pray and meditate. Ask God to help you make the right connections between confirmations and your actual gifts. Then make a list of the gifts you honestly believe the Holy Spirit has given you.

9. Open yourself to God for His leading in your life. Thank Him for what He has shown you about spiritual gifts, and reaffirm your commitment to be faithful in fulfilling your place in His Body.

Above all else, exercise your Spiritual Gifts with humility and love.

Above all, exercise your spiritual gifts with **humility and love**. The famous "Love chapter" — 1 Corinthians 13 — follows the "Spiritual Gifts chapter" — 1 Corinthians 12. 'Even if you have a whole truckload of gifts and can do wondrous things, if you don't exercise them in love, you gain nothing' (very loose paraphrase). God doesn't leave us any room for pride in spiritual gifts. We didn't do anything to earn them; they are a gift. We have no right whatsoever to exercise them with pride, because we had nothing to do with getting them. Chapter 14, verse one, sums it up like this: *Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts*.

Growing Toward Oneness Marriage Ministries provides books, CD's and other marriage resources and services to enrich your marriage.

Please visit their website at www.marriages.net

If you would like to order the above resources or receive more information contact:

GTO Marriage Ministries, 2436 Haskell Drive, Antioch, TN 37013

TOLL-FREE order line: **1-800-546-5486** or order online at www.marriages.net

Email: gtocentral@marriages.net

This is a publication of **GTO Marriages Ministries** and may be copied and distributed without permission.

GTO Marriage Ministries is a non-profit ministry supported by charitable donations from individuals and churches.

If you would like to contribute to this marriage ministry, go to www.marriages.net and click the "**Donate Now**" button.