

What Does it Mean to be Pentecostal

A Biblical Understanding of Spiritual Gifts

What are Spiritual Gifts?---In 1 Corinthians 12, we learn that spiritual gifts are given to God's people by the Holy Spirit for "the common good." Verse 11 says the gifts are given according to God's sovereign will ("as he determines"). Ephesians 4:12 tells us these gifts are given to prepare God's people for service and for building up of the body of Christ. The term "spiritual gifts" comes from the Greek words *charismata* (gifts) and *pneumatika* (spirits). They are the plural forms of *charisma*, meaning "expression of grace," and *pneumatikon* meaning "expression of Spirit." While there are different kinds of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4), generally speaking, spiritual gifts are God-given graces (special abilities, offices, or manifestations) meant for works of service, to benefit and build up the body of Christ as a whole and to evangelize the world, advancing the Kingdom of Christ.

Biblical References to Spiritual Gifts

The spiritual gifts can be found in the following passages of Scripture :

- [Romans 12:6-8](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31](#)
- [Ephesians 4:7-13](#)
- [1 Peter 4:10-11](#)

Identifying Spiritual Gifts

Although there is a great deal of disagreement over spiritual gifts among different denominations, most Bible scholars classify these gifts into three categories: ministry gifts, manifestation gifts, and motivational gifts.

Ministry Leadership Gifts

The ministry gifts serve to reveal the plan of God. They are characteristic of a full-time office or calling, rather than a gift that can function in and through any believer. The ministry gifts can be illustrated through a five finger illustration:

Apostle - An apostle establishes and builds churches; he's a church planter and also corrects the Church when it has strayed into error or needs direction and/or encouragement. An apostle may function in many or all of the ministry gifts. He is the "**thumb**," the strongest of all of the fingers, able to touch every finger.

- **Prophet** - Prophet in the Greek means to "forth tell" in the sense of speaking for another. They are the "seers" or "eyes" of the body. They have foresight, and act as watch dogs in the church. A prophet functions as God's mouth piece, speaking forth God's Word. The prophet is the "**index finger**," or pointer finger. He points to the future and points out sin, often working in conjunction with an Apostle. the "seers" or "eyes" of the body. They have insight and foresight through the Holy Spirit.
- **Evangelist** - An evangelist is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. He works for the local church to bring people into the body of Christ where they can be disciplined. He may evangelize through music, drama, preaching, and other creative ways. He is the "**middle finger**," the tallest one who stands out in the crowd. Evangelists draw a lot of attention, but they are called to serve the local body.
- **Pastor** - The pastor is the shepherd of the people. A true shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The pastor is the "**ring finger**." He is married to the church; called to stay, oversee, nurture and guide.
- **Teacher** - The teacher and the pastor are often a shared office, but not always. The teacher lays the foundation and is concerned with detail and accuracy. He delights in research to validate truth. The teacher is the "**pinky finger**." Though seemingly small and insignificant, he is designed specifically for digging into tight, dark places, shining light and picking apart the Word of truth.

Manifestation Gifts

The manifestation gifts serve to reveal the power of God. These gifts are supernatural or spiritual in nature. They can be further subdivided into three groups: utterance, power, and revelation.

Utterance - These gifts **say** something:

- **Prophecy** - This is the "forth telling" of the inspired Word of God primarily to the church, for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation or consolation, although it can declare God's will in a particular circumstance, and in rare cases, predict future events.
- **Speaking in Tongues** - There are actually 2-Gifts of Tongues. One given to everyone for their Prayer and Praise language. And one that is only given to those Jesus gives them to, to be used within the body in conjunction with Interpretation of Tongues, to edify the Body. Speaking in Tongues is a supernatural utterance in an unlearned language. It may be a human dialect or a Heavenly dialect. Tongues may also be a sign to unbelievers.

- **Interpretation of Tongues** - This is a supernatural interpretation of a message in tongues, translated into the known language so that the hearers (*the entire body*) will be edified.

Power - These gifts **do** something:

- **Faith** - This is not the faith that is measured to every believer, nor is it "saving faith." This is special, supernatural faith given by the Spirit to receive miracles or to believe God for miracles.
- **Healing** - This is supernatural healing, beyond natural means, given by the Holy Spirit. Such as with people like Dr. Randy Clark.
- **Miracles** - This is the supernatural suspension of the natural laws, or an intervention by the Holy Spirit into the laws of nature. The Gift of Miracles is the ability through the Holy Spirit to perform supernatural miracles outside of the "natural" laws. This can include the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, and even intervention in nature. It is a demonstration of the power of God being manifested through a yielded person.

Revelation - These gifts **reveal** something:

- **Word of Wisdom** - This is supernatural knowledge applied in a godly or correct way. One commentary describes it as "insight into doctrinal truth."
- **Word of Knowledge** - This is supernatural knowledge of facts and information that can only be revealed by God for the purpose of applying doctrinal truth.
- **Discerning of Spirits** - This is the supernatural ability to distinguish between spirits such as good and evil, truthful or deceiving, prophetic versus satanic.

Motivational Gifts

The motivational gifts serve to reveal the personality of God. These gifts are practical in nature. They describe the inner motivations of the Christian servant.

- **Ministering/Serving/Helps** - Those with the motivational gift of serving are the "hands" of the body. They are concerned with meeting needs; they are highly motivated, doers. They may tend to over commit, but find joy in serving and meeting short-term goals.
- **Teaching** - Those with the motivational gift of teaching are the "mind" of the body. They realize their gift is foundational; they emphasize accuracy of words and love to study; they delight in research to validate truth.

- **Giving** - Those with the motivational gift of giving are the "arms" of the body. They truly enjoy reaching out in giving. They are excited by the prospect of blessing others; they desire to give quietly, in secret, but will also motivate others to give. They are alert to people's needs; they give cheerfully and always give the best that they can.
- **Exhortation/Encouragement** - Those with the motivational gift of encouragement are the "mouth" of the body. Like cheerleaders, they encourage other believers and are motivated by a desire to see people grow and mature in the Lord. They are practical and positive and they seek positive responses.
- **Administration/Leadership** - Those with the motivational gift of leadership are the "Business Head" of the body. They have the ability to see the overall picture and set long-term goals; they are good organizers and find efficient ways of getting work done. Although they may not seek leadership, they will assume it when no leader is available. They receive fulfillment when others come together to complete a task.
- **Mercy** - Those with the motivational gift of mercy are the "heart" of the body. They easily sense the joy or distress in other people and are sensitive to feelings and needs. They are attracted to and patient with people in need, motivated by a desire to see people healed of hurts. They are truly meek in nature and avoid firmness.
- **Celibacy**--- The gift of celibacy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to voluntarily remain single without regret and with the ability to maintain control over sexual impulses so as to serve the Lord without distraction. Celibacy is considered a spiritual gift in Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul refers to celibacy as a "gift" (χάρισμα) using the same word as in 1 Corinthians 12:4 for spiritual gifts. This confirms the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 19:12 - *"For there are eunuchs who were born that way; others were made that way by men; and still others live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it"* Thus, there are some who are given the spiritual gift of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Martyrdom---Martyrdom is the act of dying for one's faith or beliefs. It is considered the ultimate act of love and devotion to God. In fact, Jesus said that His disciples are to "count the cost" of being a disciple of Jesus, which includes being willing to lay down one's life for Christ's cause. Martyrdom is considered a spiritual gift in Christianity. The Apostle Paul alluded to martyrdom when discussing spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14. However, it is often neglected or passed over when teaching on spiritual gifts because of its unpopularity. God gives to those who need it, the ability (Spiritual Gifting) by the Holy Spirit, the strength and fortitude to lay down ones life for Christ and the Gospel.