

Gifts of the Spirit

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To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

Birthdays are celebrations to look forward to, not only for me but for everybody, right? Well, maybe not if you're approaching – ahem - middle age. Anyway, there's a sense of joyful expectation during your birthday month, because the time is coming that you will be fêted with a cake and some presents. Maybe dinner out.

My excitement over birthdays has changed over the years. Once, it was the expectation of receiving something; now, I take greater pleasure in being with family and friends. During a birthday celebration, everybody acts lovingly and treats each other with kindness and compassion. *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).*

Birthdays come but once a year and bring a modicum of joy. The worldly gifts that we really desired lose our interest quickly and are relegated to the back of the closet. But, as I hope you have also experienced, the indwelling Holy Spirit is with us EVERY day, bringing a cornucopia of spiritual gifts that never lose their newness or shininess or desirability.

Can you imagine the joy that each day brings, knowing that each day is a precious gift from God?

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6-8).

But, as you see, these priceless gifts are NOT to be relegated to the back of the closet. No, they are given to us as TOOLS to be USED in the Lord's vineyards.

There exist many lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be found in the Bible, none exhaustive, and each gift has a bearing on our RELATIONSHIPS with others. *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34).*

The Spirit doesn't dole out gifts that make me incredibly handsome (sigh) or make me a one percenter. Passably handsome would be nice, but physical appearance is not the beauty that God values most. Nor should we.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight (1 Peter 3:3-4).

The gift of godly beauty that is given to us stems from grace.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-13).

Again, we are not to bury our gift in the ground like the servant to whom was given the one talent. (see **Matthew 25:14-30**). No, these gifts are to be used “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

I hear you saying, “But I really don’t know what special spiritual gifts I have. I don’t feel comfortable talking to strangers about Jesus, I hate public speaking, I’m not a leader or a teacher, in fact I’m pretty much an introvert. I just don’t feel special. So, what am I supposed to do?”

One thing I would tell you is that, no matter WHAT you do, you serve as an example. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (**1 Timothy 4:12**). And I would also tell you that the best way to discover your spiritual gifts is to ask the One who bestowed them on you. Pray about it with humbleness, acceptance and gratitude.

Let our spiritual gifts be as a shining lamp raised high, an encouraging beacon of hope held aloft, reflecting the glory of the Lord for those who continue to stumble in the dark.

“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works” (**Titus 2:7a**).