

The Holy Spirit — Nature and Operation of Spiritual Gifts

We have considered spiritual gifts from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- The seven gifts from the Father are foundational for the church. They include prophecy, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy, (Romans 12:4-8).
- The ministry gifts from the Son are given to perfect, edify and bring unity to the body of believers. These include the five-fold ministry gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, (Ephesians 4:11-12). This list is expanded in 1 Corinthians 12:28 to include miracles, healings, helps, administrations, and varieties of tongues.
- The nine gifts of the Spirit are found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. They are in three groups: gifts of knowledge — a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits; gifts of power — faith, miracles, and healing; and three gifts of utterance — different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy.

Spiritual gifts are provided and enabled by God.

Every spiritual gift testifies to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and reveal His guidance and influence on believer's lives. The manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit are given by God to accomplish the edification, growth, and perfection of the body of Christ (the church). It helps to understand the dynamic of spiritual gifts when we recognize the connection believers have to the body of Christ. Several analogies show this connection: the vine and the branches, the foundation and the temple / house, the head and the body. Each of these show a definite relationship with Christ and the reliance of the whole on a vital relationship with the Lord. The gifts vary in nature and operation as God gives them. Each of the various kinds of gifts find their power, anointing, usefulness in the power of God, Who inspires and directs them. Spiritual gifts work in different ways and involve different kinds of functions. Behind all of the variations stands the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. God works in and behind all of the gifts to accomplish what He desires.

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure and return to the Father in heaven, He wanted to tell and show them things that they were not able to understand.

John 16:12-15 NKJV I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

This shows the unity and diversity of the work of the Divine Trinity in the function of the ministry and spiritual gifts.

The Lord's ministry on earth had been short and they still needed much training and guidance.

Jesus said, *“When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, (John 16:13).”* Many things that seemed clear and obvious after Christ's resurrection, ascension, and the advent of the Holy Spirit had been hidden and beyond their ability to

understand. The spiritual gifts that were given to the church after Acts 2 and Pentecost take believers into a deeper relationship and understanding of God's plan, purpose, and their relationship to that plan and purpose. The function and operation of spiritual gifts always takes what belongs to Christ and makes it known to believers. Every time there is an operation of spiritual gifts regardless of their diversity, they reveal Jesus Christ and increase the relationship believers have with Him.

The predominate motivation behind the exercise of spiritual gifts is love.

Without love, even the greater gifts become like a sounding brass or clanging cymbal. The operation of spiritual gifts without love defeats their purpose. All spiritual gifts must bear the nature and character of God and the fruit of the Spirit. When they do, spiritual gifts are profitable and productive.

How do spiritual gifts work in the church and in believer's lives?

First, believers must be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 NKJV "Be filled with the Spirit..."

The language in this verse is in the present tense. It shows that this "filling" should be presently experienced. We should continuously be filled with the Spirit. Not only is this a present experience, it is also a command.

Being filled with the Spirit is not achieved by personal effort, but by submission and yielding to the Holy Spirit.

The infilling of the Spirit is definitely a gift of God and surrender to His presence and work. The baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit is a definite movement and work of God. Along with the baptism in the Spirit, the individual receives an enduement of spiritual power for greater service and witness. Once again, the infilling of the Spirit is a work of God. Throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit moved on and anointed prophets and certain individuals. They prophesied of a time the Holy Spirit would be poured out and His gifts would be exercised in believers and throughout the whole church, (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21).

Isaiah prophesied about the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

When he spoke about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues or languages, they refused to hear and did not believe.

Isaiah 28:11-12 NKJV For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, To whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear.

The Apostle Paul expanded on this prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 NKJV In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but

prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

The other tongues that are given as a sign may be in a language that is known or unknown to human beings. The person who speaks in a tongue does not speak to other people but to God. As on the Day of Pentecost, there have been occurrences of people hearing someone speak in an unknown tongue and some in the congregation knowing the language that was being spoken. This is a unique thing that happens only at the discretion of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:2 says, “No one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”

With His present active manifestation and work, the Holy Spirit functions in all of His personality and power. As a result, the work and ministry retains the influence of the Spirit. His sphere of operation is recognized in the edification, growth, unity, and empowerment of the Church. Usually, the gift of interpretation of tongues is necessary for understanding about what is spoken.

Spiritual gifts require the present active work of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible reveals the Holy Spirit to be the primary agent in all ministry throughout the centuries. In all spiritual gifts, the Divine Trinity operates as one unit — coequally and coeternally. As a result, whenever the church witnesses the function of any spiritual gift, God in all of His fullness is involved.

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit has been active in various ways and upon many individuals.

After Christ’s ascension, the Holy Spirit was given to the church to assure the continued ministry of Christ.

Once the Holy Spirit was poured out on those gathered in a Jerusalem upper room, many changes occurred in the newly formed church. An overwhelming transformation occurred when the Holy Spirit descended on them in power. Their witness and lives were so energized and transformed by the indwelling of the Spirit that they were made living testimonies of Jesus Christ. Spontaneous growth of the church began happening as a result of the transformation that occurred in them.

Speaking in tongues is both a sign and gift of the Holy Spirit.

In all five accounts of people receiving the fullness or infilling of the Spirit, they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave them the “utterance” (the words and impetus to speak), (Acts 2:4; 8:14-25; 9:17-20; 10:44-48; 19:1-7). In every case, the infilling of the Spirit happened as people both desired and earnestly asked in prayer for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The infilling or baptism in the Holy Spirit is a direct gift from the Father as directed by the Lord Jesus. Jesus initially told His disciples to receive the Holy Spirit, (John 20:22). Then just before His ascension He said, “*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...*” (Acts 1:8). In every case, receiving the Holy Spirit is a process of yielding to the Spirit in mind, emotions, and physical being. This is a bold,

prayerful and passionate pursuit and hunger for God.

The gift of tongues is given as both a private and public sign of the Holy Spirit's presence.

It is given for personal edification, intercessory prayer, rejoicing, and worship, (1 Corinthians 14:4; 14:14-15; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18-19). The gift of tongues is for the edification of the church when it is accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues, (1 Corinthians 14:5). The Spirit only works to edify and build up the body of believers. Personally speaking in other tongues brings rest and refreshing, (Isaiah 28:12; 1 Corinthians 14:21).

The function of all of the spiritual gifts operate in a similar manner as the gift of tongues.

The Author and Giver of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit, Who distributes them to each one individually as He wills, (1 Corinthians 1-11). The Spirit-filled believer should desire to be fully equipped for every good work, (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

In all of the spiritual gifts, the Spirit-filled individual can exercise self-control.

1 Corinthians 14:32 NKJV The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

In every exercise of spiritual gifts, everything should be done decently and in order, (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The Spirit-filled life involves more than "speaking in tongues."

The fullness of the gifts and fruit of the Spirit is given to enable and equip the church. The supernatural work of the Spirit in individuals and in the church is necessary for the body of believers to be accomplished. For this to occur, we should earnestly desire the best gifts, (1 Corinthians 12:31). All of the gifts are given by the Holy Spirit as resources for ministry in the body.