

“SPIRITUAL GIFTS: SPEAKING GIFTS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Text: I Peter 4:7-11; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10

Introduction.

We are talking about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To all who have claimed Jesus as their Savior from sin and their Lord for life, to them He has given the Holy Spirit. And to all to whom the Spirit has been given, to them the Spirit gives at least one spiritual gift and usually two or more as a manifestation of His presence and power for the common good of the body, for the benefit of the whole church.

Lists of Spiritual Gifts.

There are at least four chapters in the NT that give partial lists of spiritual gifts. No chapter has them all and each has some that others leave out. Our texts are from three of those chapters.

In I Peter 4:10 Peter seems to give us a summary way of thinking about all the Spirit's gifts. Peter divides the gifts into two categories, the speaking gifts and the serving gifts.

That's how we will consider them with the addition of a third category, the sign gifts or those extraordinary gifts of healings, miracles, tongues and interpretation.

This morning we will consider the speaking gifts first. And low and behold, it's another miracle, there's a list on the back of your bulletin. Wonders never cease. Maybe an old dog can learn new tricks. Only time will tell.

The Speaking Gifts, explaining and sharing God's truth.

These are the verbal gifts, gifts that have to do with communicating God's truth to God's people. Before I begin explaining each of them I need to say one thing about all of them together.

Before the NT was written some of these gifts were used by God to communicate divine truth, meaning the revelation of God. God used prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, discernment and teaching gifts in His prophets and apostles to give us the Bible. But now the canon is closed, the Bible is complete, this is the written Word of God. There is no more new revelation from God, no more new truth from God to be communicated to us outside of this book.

So when we talk about these speaking gifts remember that we are not talking about them in the sense of new revelation, not in the sense of “thus saith the Lord.” We need to be careful about saying things like, “The Lord told me today ...”

These three sermons on the gifts will be different from my other sermons. These will be pretty direct teaching. For these sermons I have used several resources for these definitions and explanation of each of the gifts, so it’s not completely original with me (C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*; Erik Rees, *SHAPE*; Paul Ford, *Unleash Your Church*; David Hocking, *Spiritual Gifts*).

After a brief definition, I am going to mention some of the characteristics and some of the liabilities of each gift. Why do I mention liabilities? Because sometimes hearing the liabilities will help you recognize that gift in you. Because you have the liability doesn’t mean you don’t have the gift, it means you have the gift and you recognize it by both its strengths and its weaknesses.

All these definitions, characteristics and liabilities will be on the church web page tomorrow afternoon, or just ask me for a copy and I can e-mail to you or print one out for you.

Keep a running tab as I talk through these, yes, maybe, no, and at the end see if any stand out. And don’t be discouraged if you don’t have any of these gifts, there are nine more next week.

Because all nine of these gifts are speaking gifts and all have to do with communicating God’s truth and love there is some similarity and overlap. I will do my best to distinguish between them.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Romans 15:4 through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

I Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Acts 11:23-24 When [Barnabas – which means son of encouragement] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by helping others live God-centered lives through inspiration, encouragement, comforting, and empowerment. You might have this gift if you ...

Encouragement Characteristics:

- Are driven to inspire others and impact their lives positively for Christ.

- Seek out opportunities to help others reach their full potential in Christ.
- Are a natural encourager, whether in words or through or actions.
- Rejoice at others' successes.

Encouragement Liabilities:

- Always positive and can't bring yourself to speak a hard word in love.

EXHORTATION (comfort, admonish, advise, counsel)

Romans 12:8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation.

Romans 15:4 through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Acts 11:23-24 When [Barnabas – which means son of encouragement] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by ministering words of comfort, counsel, challenge or rebuke in such a way that they respond. You might have this gift if ...

Exhortation Characteristics:

- You motivate others to practical application of specific Biblical truths.
- You tell others the truth about themselves with great encouragement and understanding.
- You challenge people to discover what they can become and point them to opportunities for them to fulfill those possibilities.
- You are more effective in short-term encouragement rather than long-term counseling or support.

Exhortation Liabilities:

- You might struggle with follow-through because you want to move on and exhort someone else.
- You may offer “quick fixes” and appear insensitive to longer term needs.
- You may offer too direct or harsh counsel or be insensitive to the real need.
- You might jump to conclusions before listening to the whole story.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE (scholar, researcher, student)

I Corinthians 12:8 to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

II Corinthians 11:6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by studying, accumulating and communicating God's truth to others in a way that promotes understanding, learning and growth. People with this gift...

Knowledge Characteristics:

- Devote much time to reading Scripture and doing Biblical research and are able to clarify Biblical truth with unusual spiritual insight. You enjoy learning things.
- You understand or just know things that you wouldn't naturally know.
- You enjoy helping others increase their understanding of God's Word and take delight in answering difficult questions about God's Word, perhaps more individually than in groups.

Knowledge Liabilities:

- As Scripture says, knowledge puffs up and those with this gift have to guard against spiritual pride. Knowledge is power and we can use it to exert ourselves or show off.
- Those with this gift have to control the impulsive desire to respond too quickly.
- It is also possible to give a message that confuses some, which then frustrates you that everyone else didn't get it.

WORD OF WISDOM (making wise judgments)

I Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by making wise decisions and counseling others with sound advice, all in accordance with God's will. You may possess this gift if you...

Wisdom Characteristics:

- Enjoy speaking biblical insights into life situations.
- Are sought after by others for advice/wisdom.
- Take pleasure in counseling others.
- Are known for making correct decisions and judgments.
- Recognize God as the primary source of wisdom and direction.

Wisdom Liabilities:

- It's possible for you to offer only human or business wisdom when functioning in your own strength. This can lead you to be ineffective when a wise word from the Lord is needed.
- You may force your personal view on others.

- You can become prideful when you realize that people listen when you speak.

TEACHING

Romans 12:7 the one who teaches, in his teaching.

I Corinthians 12:28-30 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by teaching sound doctrine in relevant ways, empowering people to gain a sound and mature spiritual education. Individuals who have this gift...

Teaching Characteristics:

- Enjoy hours studying Scripture in order to best apply its principles and truth.
- Enjoy making the Bible clear and understandable to others, particularly in groups.
- Seek out opportunities to speak biblical insight into daily situations.
- Are good at helping others learn to study the Bible.
- You make difficult to understand topics easier to understand.

Teaching Liabilities:

- It is possible for you to appear that you have all the answers—no discussion is needed.
- You may cover way too much information way too quickly for the average ‘learner.’
- Because you are so sure of your information—it is possible to communicate your thoughts as truth instead of what the Bible says.
- You can become prideful because of your knowledge.
- You may view the world as a giant ear and it’s your job to fill it.

PROPHECY (preaching)

Romans 12:6 if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.

I Corinthians 12:10 to another prophecy

I Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets.

I Corinthians 14:1, 3 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ... 3 the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by speaking God's truth in ways that challenge, comfort, guide, warn, or reveal sin in a way that leads to repentance and spiritual growth. You may have this gift if you...

Prophecy Characteristics:

- Are known for publicly communicating God's Word, using a variety of means.
- Love to share strong biblical convictions with others.
- View yourself as God's tool, ready to be used by the Holy Spirit in changing lives.
- Find it easy to confront others' motives when they are not up to God's standards.
- Feel a sense of urgency about calling people to the authority of Scripture.
- Often plead the cause of God to His people and/or the world.

Prophecy Liabilities:

- Being negative, discouraging believers rather than strengthening them.
- Being arrogant because of the authoritative nature of the gift.
- Being too blunt at times or with certain people.

DISCERNMENT (discerning of spirits).

I Corinthians 12:10 to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by recognizing truth or error within a message, person, or event. People with this gift...

Discernment Characteristics:

- Find it easy to "read" others, and are most often right.
- Recognize the spiritual source of a message -- whether it is from God, Satan, or man.
- Recognize inconsistencies in others.
- Easily identify people's true motives and agendas and whether or not they are godly.
- Perceive when the truth is twisted or communicated with error.

Liabilities Characteristics:

- You can become overzealous in hunting satanic motivation, see the devil behind every bush.
- You can become overly judgmental of others and their motives.
- You search the motives so hard you miss what the person is trying to communicate.
- You can also become insensitive to the process needed for real change because you quickly explain it away as spiritual warfare.

EVANGELISM

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists.

II Timothy 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by sharing the love of Christ with others in a way that draws them to respond by accepting God's free gift of eternal life. People with this gift...

Evangelism Characteristics:

- Look for ways to build relational bridges with nonbelievers.
- Sense when a person is open to Christ's message.
- Are able to clearly present the message of salvation to non-Christians.
- Share the truth of Jesus in a way that people respond by accepting Christ.
- Have seen many people come to faith in Jesus.
- Are deeply burdened for those who don't know Jesus and desire others to share their faith

Evangelism Liabilities:

- Others may view you as obnoxious if you rely on your own ability to convert people.
- You may become prideful over the number of people you can lead to Christ.
- You may motivate people by guilt when “encouraging” others to share their faith.

INTERCESSION

Ephesians 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, ... always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

The Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by faithfully and effectively praying for the needs of others and the church and the world and see specific answers to those prayers. You might have this gift if you ...

Prayer Characteristics:

- Are able to pray frequently and at length for many people and situations.
- Are often free to pray both publicly and privately, and more frequently than most Christians.
- Find yourself encouraging others to pray.
- Find yourself wanting to pray for others whenever you hear a need.

Prayer Liabilities:

- Dominate prayer gatherings by praying too long or too many times.
- Make others uncomfortable by your directness or boldness.

Conclusion.

Has the Spirit gifted you in any of these ways? Are any of these gifts in you in seed form waiting to be watered and nurtured through small ways of starting to speak up for the sake of members of the body? Are there ways God wants you to be a blessing to others because of the gifts the Spirit has given you? It's alright to take baby steps. What's not alright is to keep your gift buried out of fear or feelings of inadequacy or comparing yourself to others.

Respond in faith to what the Spirit is doing and step out in faith to what He wants you to do. Pray, ask for help, be humble and be bold in the Spirit.

I Peter 4:10-11 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.