

Spiritual gifts are given by God to the church for both **unity** and **diversity** so that the church can function properly. When we become a Christian, the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:1 ***So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*** A new believer is, established by the Lord Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and made up of people from all races who thereby become one new people in the sight of God.

Unity - Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Diversity – Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. Ephesians 4:11-13 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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.

Examples of Unity and Diversity are mixed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. After listing nine of these gifts the Apostle Paul concluded in 1 Corinthians 12:11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The book of Romans has a similar emphasis Romans 12:4-5 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

These verses teach us that a certain kind of unity and a certain kind of diversity are necessary for a healthy church. Without a unity of relationship to Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no church. Without diversity the church cannot be healthy and will certainly not function correctly.

In the New Testament the word for gift(s) is **charisma** or **charismata** (Plural). We get our word charismatic from this. The most important thing about the word **charisma** is that it is based on the Greek noun **charis**, meaning **grace**.

Since **grace** is God's unmerited favour, the emphasis is that, spiritual gifts are given out to Christians by God according to His good pleasure. One Christian will receive one gift, another Christian may well be given a different gift. Some will receive **more than one** gift. 1 Corinthians 12:11 *All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.* The gifts of the Spirit belong to the Holy Spirit, as does the power needed to manifest them properly.

A **Spiritual Gift** is something the person did not possess before they became a Christian. We also have natural talents, which we had before we became a Christian, which are also gifts from God. So a person who fulfils the spiritual gift of **helping others**, found in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, does so using a natural ability. However, the **Spiritual Gifts** are not natural talents as they are given for **spiritual reasons**, and to Christians only. Ephesians 4:12 *to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

An example of the relationship between a spiritual gift and a natural gift is found in the Old Testament in the case of Bezalel, one of the craftsmen who worked on the Tabernacle. Exodus 31:3-5 *and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills – ⁴ to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ⁵ to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts.* Bezalel had been given the natural talent of craftsmanship, but he had also been given the **spiritual gift of knowledge**, which directed him in the way his natural talents were to be used. Because of the **Spiritual gift** he was able to produce objects for Israel's worship

The Apostle Peter also confirmed that every Christian has been at least **one Spiritual Gift**. 1 Peter 4:10 *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* **Spiritual Gifts** are for use in serving others.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: In 1 Corinthians 13 we are shown **the most excellent way**. In all the gifts that the Spirit gives us as He chooses, we must minister these in **Love**. Paul wrote **If I have not Love I am nothing**.. We must use these gifts for the common good of the Body, not for self-glory or position. We must realise that we will make mistakes, but it is important to learn by them. We must not be afraid to use them, but eagerly desire them. With the right attitude to the use of them, by yielding to the Holy Spirit, the Body will be edified.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are still God's main way of building His church both spiritually and numerically

Please always remember: we seek the **Giver** first not the gifts. It is our relationship with the person of the Holy Spirit that matters, not the gifts. If our relationship is correct then the gifts will follow.

Today we are looking at gifts of speaking: Prophecy, tongues and interpretation.

Prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:5 ***I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.***

The gift of prophecy is different from the Old Testament prophet in a number of ways. In the New Testament it is not restricted to a group of prophets but to every believer. Because this gift brings edification to the Church all believers are encouraged to seek it. Acts 2:18 says ***And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*** Because of the edification to the church, through this gift, all are encouraged to seek it.

Also the death penalty for a false prophet in the Old Testament is not applied to the New Testament who speak in error (cfi Deut 13:1-5).

In contrast for to OT prophecy, prophecies recorded in the NT are intended for believers.

Paul anticipates that prophecies may be given by a variety of believers, and so he expected the Holy Spirit to speak in diverse ways, to the community of believers. Prophecies and other verbal utterances are often associated with or preceded by mental pictures, images, word or physical sensations, the person who receives them then describes this to the congregation.

The gift of prophecy is less related to foretelling the future, though this may sometimes occur as in Acts 11:28 ***One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)*** Acts 21:10-11 ***After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"***

Fundamentally the gift of prophecy is where the believer is inspired by God, moved by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21 says ***For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*** They speak with an emphasis on edification (that builds up spiritually and develops and confirms faith) or exhortation (that encourages or challenges people to move forward in faithfulness and love) or both. Paul taught this would be done by a variety of people not the few.

Through Prophecy the Spirit touches the sensitive spots in peoples lives, at times it may reveal what is secret, it may also brings conviction, but should bring encouragement and motivates people into action. Prophecy of a sensitive nature should be given with great care.

Prophecy using words like ***I, the Lord says.*** is not helpful as it implies that there can be no testing of the prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:29-32: ***Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰ And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹ For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³² The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.*** Paul has a preference of

prophecy over tongues. When someone brings something prophetic to the congregation, others with the gift of prophecy are to weigh it up. It us to be assessed by content, alignment to God's Word and the relevancy of the meeting.

The gift of prophecy can also be used with preaching and is used to complement the preaching.

The gift of prophecy can also release in variety of other ways such as: in songs, poems, visions and dreams.

Tongues

The Greek word for tongues is *glōssai*, which literally means **tongue**. When it is used in the New Testament addressing the subject of spiritual gifts it carries the contextual meaning of languages. Speaking in tongues is the utterance **of prayer or of a message glorifying God**, typically spoken to God. Tongues are a supernatural utterance is a language not known to the speaker. These may be some language existent in the world or could be unknown. It is a means of communication inspired by The Holy Spirit.

This is part of a wealth of gifts operating through the body of believers. The New Testament indicates it was common and considered desirable. The Corinthian church used the gift of tongues a lot. The purpose of the gift in 1 Corinthians is manifest in the church and needs interpretation to bring edification to the Body.

By it we speak to God, it involves communication. By it we also speak mysteries (Spiritual truths), 1 Corinthians 14:2. ***For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit.***

When we pray in tongues our spirit is the medium through which the gift operates. It involves yielding our spirit and will to God as well as our tongues and vocal organs for the operation of the gift. The result is a language, as the spirit gives utterance. The speaker is control of his speech and in forming the sounds; the Holy Spirit never manipulates the speaker. We have to yield our tongue and speak out in faith the words he gives you. Whereas only associated

with Pentecostal believers for some time, many other believers from non-Pentecostal denominations speak in tongues. I was in a meeting with an Anglican priest last year for example who spoke in tongues in an Anglican worship service.

The Apostle Paul valued speaking in tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:8 says ***I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.*** The gift of speaking in tongues has a number of purposes.

The book of Acts demonstrates that it was often (but not always, Acts 8:17, Acts 9:17) associated with people who received the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 says ***All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*** Acts 19:6 says ***When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.*** It is a sign that the believer has been filled with the Holy Spirit.

Speaking in tongues is speaking to God. Speaking in tongues in our personal worship and prayer is glorifying God. 1 Corinthians 14:17 says ***you are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.*** We can use tongues for giving thanks and glorifying God. It also build us up personally. When we are tired or discouraged we can pray in tongues until rest and refreshment comes. The Holy Spirit knows how to help us pray in every situation.

Tongues are used in public prayer and worship. 1 Corinthians 14:15 ***says So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.*** The manifestation of the gift of tongues functions as a symbol of the presence of God. This signifies His closeness in the Christian community.

1 Corinthians 14:27 says ***If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.*** In the context of each meeting people should be encouraged to exercise this gift, but no more than two or at the most three in a service. It should be given one person at a time. If no one who is normally used in this gift is present the speaker should remain silent.

Interpretation of Tongues

The spiritual gift of interpretation of tongues is found alongside the gift of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12:10. The Greek word for interpretation is ***hermeneia*** and simply means to interpret, explain, or expound some message that is not able to be understood in a natural way. Thus, this spiritual gift is the supernatural ability to reveal the meaning of tongues.

Interpretation is the giving of the meaning or essential content of the utterance of tongues. This gift of course does not imply any knowledge of the language on the part of the interpreter. It is received directly from the Holy Spirit and comes as the person waits on God. It does not serve as a translation. The interpreter never understands the tongue that they are interpreting but they declare the meaning. It is not like when I go to another country and someone interprets word for word what I say. The interpreter understands my language.

A step of faith is often required as the Holy Spirit may only give a few words of the interpretation at first. Then when these are received in faith, the rest comes as the Spirit gives utterance.

The intention of the spiritual gift of tongues is to glorify God now, but also to prepare ourselves as His church to glorify Him forever in heaven.