

## Spiritual Gifts Descriptions

### Apostleship

The gift of apostleship does not mean that you are to become like one of the original twelve apostles. Instead let's look specifically to the example of Paul, who was also named an apostle. He was a missionary to the church. As a missionary apostle he was **called out by God and sent to a specific people**. He was able to **cross cultural boundaries** to reach people for Jesus Christ and **form new Christian communities**.

### Prophecy

This gift does not imply that you should get a nine-hundred number and set up your own psychic hot line or go buy a pack of tarot cards! The word *prophet* means "forth-teller." Think of a prophet as one who can **know past history, see present occurrences, and then understand the bigger picture**. A prophet is **called to instruct, warn, correct, and forecast the end result**.

### Evangelism

Get off your soapbox and put away your bullhorn! Think of people, both introverts and extroverts, shy and outgoing, who can **communicate the gospel message through word and deed**. Are you able to share the good news of Jesus Christ in ways so that people can see, hear, and accept it? Then you may have the gift of evangelism.

### Pastoring

This gift is also referred to as shepherding, but don't go buy a herd of sheep. Instead, pull out your **abilities to be a spiritual guide, to sustain people on their journeys, and to work with those who are at different places on the discipleship road**.

## **Teaching**

You don't need a college degree to have a gift of teaching. And just because you are capable of teaching doesn't mean you automatically have the gift. Spiritual teachers have the **ability to clearly explain and effectively apply the truth of Jesus Christ**. Remember, people watch teachers more than others to see if their lifestyles are consistent with their lessons.

## **Encouragement**

The word used in the Bible is *exhortation*, but a more understandable term for us is the word *encouragement*. **Do you come alongside persons to help? Do you work with the lesser able and undergird people to use and do their very best?** This is not a "fix it" person but one who "travels with" another.

## **Knowledge**

Having the gift of knowledge is not being the champion on the popular TV show *Jeopardy* or a winner at Trivial Pursuit. Instead it is **a supernatural ability to stretch beyond the facts and figures to search, make sense of, and bring together the teachings of God for people's lives**.

## **Wisdom**

Wisdom means putting what you know to work in your daily life and helping others to do the same. It is **being in tune with the heart of God** and then living that way. A person with the gift of wisdom weighs all the circumstances in complex situations to find the deeper truth.

## **Assisting**

This gift should carry a warning: "This is not the business of the things we think we *should* do." But if you are one who **assists and lends a helping hand in times of need**, this may be your gift. Do you feel called to give leadership in the distribution of supplies in a disaster area, do the leg work for a group project, or make needed deliveries? Then you may have this gift of assisting and helping others.

## **Giving**

Don't think that if you don't have this gift it means you can ignore the offering plate the next time it's passed! We all are commanded to give. We all have received so much from God that we can't help wanting to give in return. But those with the giving gift **give freely with a special measure and delight to further God's work in the world.** You also don't have to be rich to have the gift. Remember the Bible story about the widow's mite (Mark 12: 41-44)?

## **Leadership**

If you are controlling, domineering, and need to be a leader, this gift is not for you! Some Bible translations use the word *government* to name this gift. These gifted individuals are able to **share information and power. They enable those around them to realize and accomplish their goals.** They are good managers and administrators. These persons take leadership roles to equip the church, the Christian community, to work in ways that bring about *God's will*.

## **Compassion**

There are many of us who easily show emotion, but the **ability to empathize with others, stand in their shoes, and then act in ways that help them on their journey** is the essence of the gift of mercy and compassion.

## **Faith**

The Spirit-given ability to daily see God's will, coupled with the confidence to do it, is the gift of faith. It is living one day at a time even when life seems out of control. To live fully in faith is to live each day as best you can for who you are in that moment and to trust the rest to God.

## **Discernment**

This is a special **ability to distinguish between truth and error, justice and injustice, what is authentic and genuine and what is phony.** You are able to "see through" people or circumstances to know what is real and what is an illusion, and you have the wisdom and courage to speak or reveal the truth.

## Miracles

Are you ready for a miracle? Those with this Spirit-given power are able to **act contrary to natural law or use natural law in extraordinary ways**. This gift is displayed when God's hand miraculously intervenes in your presence in extraordinary ways.

## Healing

This is the ability to allow God to work through you as an instrument for the healing of illness and the restoration of persons' physical, mental, and spiritual health. (Note of caution: The cure does not depend on the receiving persons' faith or the healer's amount of faith).

## Tongues

The sign should read, "NOT FOR CHARISMATICS ONLY." The book of Acts in the New Testament records that on the Day of Pentecost, the tongues spoken were **different languages that normally would not have been spoken** by the people (Acts 2:6). Other times tongues are understood as **verbal utterances that praise God but are not understood by human ears**. Whichever it is, it is a gift to be prized.

## Interpretation

Linguistics might be your bag! The gift of interpretation is the **ability to translate when a foreign language is uttered. In a time when we must cross all cultural and language boundaries, this is an invaluable gift**. In the case of ecstatic utterances, as when someone is speaking in tongues, the gift of interpretation can mean to **interpret the nonlinguistic sounds so that the message is understood**.

The gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation have sometimes been misunderstood. They are legitimate gifts even though in some places and at some times they may not be as commonly evident as some of the other gifts. Keep an open mind as you continue to study these gifts so that you can remain open to the Spirit's work in your own and others' lives.