

Stewardship of Gifts and Talents

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Newspapers and magazines are filled with reports about sports “heroes,” especially during world championships and the Olympic Games. We admire their skills, strength, and tenacity. The same is true for top musicians, artists, and writers. There are the actors with their incredible ability to play quite different roles, imitating real life. We admire CEOs who lead huge companies and make a lot of money. We think highly of scientists that unlock natural mysteries. All these people have specific talents. Sometimes we wish we would have the same or similar gifts and be more than just “ordinary” people. But we have also received talents and gifts. Although they may not appear to be important, these gifts may sometimes be more crucial than the spectacular ones.

I. Talents and Gifts Are Given by God

All gifts and talents are entrusted to us by God. He has not only given us time, material possessions, and our body, but also talents and gifts—James 1:17. They are not our own but should be used according to the principles of stewardship that we have discussed previously.

1. Natural Gifts

People have received natural gifts. They possess these gifts whether they are believers or unbelievers. The Bible mentions, for instance, craftsmen, musicians (Rev 18:22), and poets (Acts 17:28).

2. Spiritual Gifts

There are spiritual gifts (*charismata*) given to those who have received the gift (*dōrea*) of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), that is to believers in Jesus Christ.

Spiritual gifts come from God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4–6, 11; Eph 4:8, 11). However, it seems that at least in some cases natural gifts can be enhanced and can also become spiritual gifts. See the craftsmen that were responsible for building the tabernacle—Exod 31:1–6.

II. Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament

1. Lists of Spiritual Gifts

The New Testament contains three major lists of spiritual gifts:

1 Cor 12:7–11, 28–30 This is the most comprehensive list, mentioning many gifts and explaining issues related to these gifts.

Rom 12:6–8 About seven gifts are mentioned in this passage such as prophecy and teaching.

Eph 4:11 Here we find apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

Apart from these lists other spiritual gifts occur here and there in Scripture. That means that not even the three lists combined are exhaustive or comprehensive, not even the three lists together.

2. Differences between the Spiritual Gifts

Some of these spiritual gifts are more spectacular (healing, working miracles, tongues, prophecy) than others (speaking wisdom or knowledge, teaching, having discernment, service, exhortation, helping, charity, and performing acts of mercy). Some look similar to natural gifts while others are clearly supernatural. Yet all come directly from God. Some gifts are related to leadership (apostles, teachers, pastors), while others are not. However all gifts are needed—1 Cor 12:14–22.

3. Calling and Gifts

In addition, there is a distinction between gift and commission. For example, all believers are called to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19), however only some have the specific gift of

evangelism. All believers are called to be hospitable (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2), but some have a specific gift of hospitality (1 Pet 4:9–10). The ministry of persons with specific gifts can be especially fruitful in the area in which they have received such a gift.

4. *Permanence of Gifts*

The lists do not indicate that certain spiritual gifts are limited with regard to time. While none of the spiritual gifts had ceased at the end of the first century, but they seem to be needed till Christ's second coming (1Cor 13:9–10; Eph 4:13), the Holy Spirit may determine to use some gifts more abundantly in certain eras.

III. The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts

1 Cor 12:7	Each true Christian has received at least one spiritual gift in addition to natural faculties and talents.
Acts 2:38	Prerequisites for receiving spiritual gifts are repentance, receiving the Holy Spirit and baptism.
Matt 7:21–23	Even miracles may not be evidence that divine power has been in operation. They may be counterfeits. It is important to do the will of God.
1 Cor 12:31	One can desire specific spiritual gifts, but the Holy Spirit decides which gift(s) to grant (1 Cor 12:11).

IV. The Purpose of the Gifts

- The gifts are given for the “common good,” for the benefit of various individuals as well as for the entire church and the completion of its mission—1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10.
- Gifts can be directed toward serving the church in order to maintain a functioning body—1 Cor 12:12–26, furthering love, service, unity, and knowledge as well as admonition and building up the church—Eph 4:12; 1Cor 14:3.
- Gifts can be directed outwardly in the sense of mission outreach. This is true for the gift of tongues (see Acts 2), the gift of evangelism, and others.
- With the gift comes a task and responsibility. We must use our gifts for the benefit of others, and yet we will personally be blessed too—Matt 25:14–30.
- Spiritual gifts are given so that God may be glorified—1 Pet 4:10–11.

V. Personal Questions

- Which gifts have I received from the Lord?
- How can I find out?
- How can I use my natural talents and spiritual gifts for God's cause?

May the Lord abundantly bless us as we personally explore these questions in order to better serve Him.