

Introduction

There are a number of places in the Bible where the Gifts of the Spirit are mentioned or are in operation. When Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth he gave a list of some of the gifts that God gives to individuals. ***(1 Corin. 12: 8 – 10) 'To one is given a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues and to another the interpretation of tongues.'***

These nine Gifts mentioned can generally be divided into three groups, although it is not always easy to make definite divisions. Often the Gifts may overlap and sometimes it may not be obvious which Gift is in operation.

1. Inspiration Gifts – Those that are specifically to do with speech. Prophecy, tongues and interpretation. Intended for corporate worship when used in a church service, not personal worship.
2. Revelation Gifts – Where God reveals information that has not been made known by natural means. Word of knowledge, word of wisdom and discerning of spirits.
3. Power Gifts – When God's power is shown. Faith, gifts of healing and working of miracles.

What is the purpose of the Gifts and who benefits?

The main purpose of the Gifts is to build up the Church by spiritually strengthening the believers. They are not given in order to make the church services more interesting, neither are they meant to boost up the ministries of individuals! They are designed for us to serve each other for the common good of the whole Church. Obviously, when God equips us in this way to serve Him, then it also benefits us as individuals and draws us closer to Him.

Who receives the Gifts?

We can read of the Old Testament prophets using some of these God-given gifts, but otherwise they were not generally in operation by other believers. This changed after Pentecost, when they then became available to all believers. In some churches today the use of the Gifts is limited to certain individuals, but this is not a Biblical view. Their use is not reserved for the elite or hierarchy of the Church but is intended for general use by Christians of all ages, nationalities, educational abilities and positions; which means that every one of us qualifies. Some say that the use of the Gifts ended in New Testament times, but there is nothing written in Scripture that supports this view and it would appear that their use will not only continue until Jesus returns, but will actually increase rather than decrease!

Receiving the Gifts

Spiritual Gifts are given by God when a Christian receives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Each one receives at least one of the Gifts, which means that every one is enabled to minister and serve by using the Gift/s. ***(1 Cor. 12: 7) 'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'*** Notice it says, '**EACH**' not '**SOME**'. No Christian has all of the Gifts, but some may have been given more than one. Our expectation helps us to receive. If we are not interested and are quite happy to stay at our current spiritual level, then we will be unlikely to use any Gift that we have been given. If we are expectant, persistent and hungry for God to move in our lives, then He most certainly will!

How does God choose to allocate?

The Gifts of the Spirit are free and cannot be earned – That is why they are called ‘Gifts’! They are not a reward for effort or holiness. God assigns the Gifts to each believer as He pleases; it is a sovereign act. We cannot choose which Gift we will be given. It is God who decides what part He wants us to play in His Church and He gives us the Gift/s that will fulfil that role. We may not actually like (or agree with!) the role that He has chosen for us, but we are not in a position to alter that choice. God does what is best for the Church and that includes deciding on the Gifts that He wants us to receive. He knows exactly what we each are capable of doing and assigns the Gifts accordingly. They are a stewardship from God and He trusts us to use them in the way in which they are intended to be used.

Which Gift have I been given?

If we are serious about using the Spiritual Gifts then through our prayers and natural circumstances the Holy Spirit will show us which Gift/s we have been given. If we try to function in a Gift of our own choice rather than that which God has given to us, then it will only lead to frustration because we are not in the correct role.

Suitability

God gives us the Gift/s that is most suitable for us as individuals. He will not ask us to use a Gift that is beyond our capabilities or that requires more faith than we actually have. We also need to remain in the fellowship of other Christians on a regular basis in order for our Gift to operate. We are not intended to work in isolation, but also need the encouragement and fellowship of other Christians to reach our maximum potential, otherwise the use of the Gift will gradually fizzle out. It is an effective prayer life and deeper relationship with God that will help us to grow stronger spiritually and be ready and in a position where God is free to use us to further His Kingdom.

Questions for you to think about

Do you want to use the Gifts of the Spirit?

Do you spend quality time in prayer to deepen your relationship with God or is it a quick five minutes when you can spare the time?

Do you read God’s Word on a regular basis?

When you read the Scriptures do you notice which of the Spiritual Gifts are in operation?

Are you prepared to step out and do whatever God asks you to do or do you have limits in place?

Growing Strong - 5. Using the Gifts.