

# An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

BY KEN SLOANE

Spiritual gifts are attributes given to Christian believers for the building up of the whole body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13 (NRSV) says, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Spiritual gifts are not talents or skills. “These fruits and gifts are not of our own achievement. They and others are the outgrowth of the Spirit's work in us, by grace, through our faith in Jesus the Christ. And they are not given for personal gain. Through these fruits and gifts, the Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry in the world” (*United Methodist Member's Handbook*, Revised by George Koehler [Discipleship Resources, 2006], 84-85).

It's important to discover your spiritual gifts and the spiritual gifts of others. Often, others recognize our gifts before we do. By using an assessment tool, you can learn about your gifts and the gifts of others. Here are three important statements about how spiritual gifts affect the whole community of faith:

1. The use of spiritual gifts provides life and vitality to individuals and to the congregation. By using your spiritual gifts, you are contributing to the spiritual health of the church.
2. When someone neglects to use his or her spiritual gifts, the whole community suffers.
3. When an individual is doing ministry in an area he or she is not gifted for, this leads to dissatisfaction and hurts the whole community of faith.

## Where Do Spiritual Gifts Come From?

In Acts 2:38, Peter responds to the people who ask what they must do to be followers of Jesus. He says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

In this statement, we find a fantastic promise: When we give our lives to Jesus Christ, we receive more than forgiveness and eternal life. We also are filled with the Holy Spirit, whose role in our lives is to provide us with guidance and power for living this life. As a result, we are given

spiritual gifts that allow us to find our place in God's community of faith. As we employ these gifts in daily living, we find fulfillment and purpose in our relationship with God and with others.

## Spiritual Gifts Help You Live Out Your Call

The Wesleyan understanding of faith centers on the idea that life is an ongoing process of conversion that is highlighted by responding to these four calls:



When we discover our spiritual gifts, we are given the power to live into God's call as the Holy Spirit shapes our understanding of ourselves. Conversion is a process of letting go of the things that hold us back and of putting on the spirit of God that renews and gives life. The use of our spiritual gifts is life changing.

## How Do I Discover My Spiritual Gifts?

First, you need to know what they are. **“The Spiritual Gifts Assessment Inventory”** available [here](#) covers twenty of the spiritual gifts found in Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:7-11, and Ephesians 4:11-13. Spiritual gifts are not limited to the ones used in this assessment. Gifts like hospitality, music, and others are also found in the Bible. The more you learn about your gifts,

the better you are able to use them. Most important, you will discover those gifts that do not fit you, which means you need others who can work with you and support you.

Second, you need to have your gifts confirmed by the community of faith to see how your gifts benefit the whole congregation.

Third, you have to try out your gifts. That's where our energy for ministry comes from. Growing communities of faith give people multiple opportunities to find where their gifts best fit to build up the whole church (See "Trying Out Your Gifts.")

## What Are Primary Gifts and Supporting Gifts?

Your spiritual gifts are not set in stone. We all have a mixture of gifts that work together and give each of us a unique way to contribute to ministry. Your primary gift is your strongest gift; oftentimes, it is the gift people will most easily confirm. Supporting gifts are attributes we can explore. In many instances, they become the most important ways we contribute to the work of the whole ministry.

## You Are Uniquely Gifted

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” Psalm 139:14 (NIV).

God has created us to be unique and has called us in Christ to be part of one body, each with a purpose. Our hope is that in exploring the spiritual gifts that God has given to you, you will find a place in that body that blesses you and fills you with a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

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