

20160103 DISCOVER series #1 Introduction

A New Beginning

We are today beginning a new sermon series “Discover” on spiritual gifts. We will look together at what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts. We have three major goals in this sermon series:

First, we want you to know what the spiritual gifts are.

Second, we want you to discover which spiritual gifts you have.

Third, we want you to decide to use your spiritual gifts in the service of the Lord.

In order to help you do that, we will soon be making available to you a Smyrna International Spiritual Gifts Survey. You can take it yourself and, if you like, you can ask a friend to take it and apply the answers to you. By comparing the results, you will have a good idea of which gifts you possess and how you can use them right here at SIC.

We want you to listen to these sermons, take the survey, discover your gifts, match your gifts with our ministry opportunities, and having done all that, find a specific place to put your spiritual gifts to work for the Lord.

In studying spiritual gifts, we are not trying to solve a problem; we are instead attempting to grab hold of an opportunity God has placed before us.

Our vision for 2016 is that the full potential of this congregation be released.

There are three things that happen when the truth about spiritual gifts is ignored.

There is wasted effort as people try ministries for which they are not gifted.

There is unused potential because a great many people would like to serve the Lord but don't know where they fit in.

There is uneven quality as some ministries grow because people with the right spiritual gifts are involved, while others eventually die because they lack properly-gifted leadership.

Some Preliminary Questions

I. What Is A Spiritual Gift?

Here is the definition we will use during this sermon series.

A spiritual gift is a God-given ability which enables a believer to effectively serve the body of Christ.

Spiritual gifts are God-given. Paul says in Ephesians 4:7 that you “receive” your spiritual gift.

You don't earn it or apply for it. A spiritual gift is an ability, which means it qualifies you to do something you wouldn't otherwise be able to do. Those who discover and use their spiritual gifts serve effectively in the body of Christ.

1. A spiritual gift is not a natural talent.
2. A spiritual gift is not the fruit of the Spirit.
3. A spiritual gift is not a ministry role.

II. Does Every Believer Have A Spiritual Gift?

The Bible leaves no doubt on this key question.

1. Romans 12:6—"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."
2. I Corinthians 12:7—"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
3. Ephesians 4:7—"To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

Paul is talking about the same thing each time. Spiritual gifts are grace gifts which manifest the Spirit's working in a believer's life. And they are given to each of us. Therefore we can say without the slightest doubt that spiritual gifts are given to every believer.

III. When Are The Gifts Given?

We receive our spiritual gifts as part of our spiritual birth into the family of God. That is, the spiritual gifts are given at the moment of our salvation.

It is very possible to neglect a spiritual gift

(1 Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.; 2 Timothy 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.) Spiritual gifts are like seeds—some come up earlier and some later.

IV. Why Are The Gifts Given?

Our definition suggests that the basic purpose of spiritual gifts is to enable us to effectively serve the body of Christ.

Romans 12 says: "Just as each of us has a body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us." (12:4-6) The church is like a body and we are like body parts. Each part of the body fulfills a particular role. Your spiritual gift is given to enable you to fulfill your God-given role in the body of Christ.

Unless you know the answer, you'll never be 100% effective in your service for Jesus Christ. You may spend your life doing something for which you were not gifted by God and be frustrated and ineffective.

It is our obligation as the leadership of this church to encourage you to discover your spiritual gifts. And once you discover them, help you find a place to use those gifts in the body of Christ. This is the only way in which a church can ever reach maximum effectiveness for Jesus Christ.

V. How Many Gifts Are There?

This is a controversial question. Part of the problem is that the New Testament doesn't contain a unified list of gifts. It actually contains six lists in four passages: One in Romans 12, three in 1 Corinthians, one in Ephesians 4, and one in 1 Peter 4. Furthermore, the lists don't completely overlap. Some gifts are mentioned in one list and not in the others. Some gifts are mentioned several times, some only once.

For the sake of convenience, I list them in four categories:

Service: Mercy, giving, helps, service

Leadership: Leadership, faith, discernment, wisdom, knowledge, evangelism

Teaching: Teaching, pastoring, exhortation

Foundation: Apostleship, prophecy, tongues, interpretation, miracles, healing

But there is one more question which may not have occurred to you. That is, do the various lists—when taken together—give us all the possible spiritual gifts or could there be others not mentioned? A number of people believe that Paul never intended to list every possible gift of the Spirit and therefore the lists are meant to be examples of the ways the Holy Spirit gifts believers. Some teachers believe that no two believers will ever have exactly the same gifts because the Holy Spirit fits us for our particular and unique circumstances and that the list of spiritual gifts might be “extended indefinitely.”

In this sermon series we are only going to consider the gifts actually mentioned in the New Testament, but that does not mean other spiritual gifts do not exist. Our God is infinitely creative in the way he deals with his people. Therefore, I look at the various lists as representative of the kinds of God-given abilities you can find in the body of Christ.

VI. Why Should You Attempt To Discover Your Spiritual Gifts?

I think there are three great benefits that ought to be pointed out.

1. By Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts You Clarify God’s Will For Your Life. They are signposts that point the way toward the will of God. God will never call you to a position (or ministry) without first giving you the gifts you need to be successful in that position. Therefore, knowing your spiritual gifts will help you make wise decisions.

2. By Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts You Benefit The Whole Church. Ephesians 4:16 Paul explains exactly how your spiritual gifts help the church grow. “From him (that is, from Christ) the whole body (that’s the church), joined and held together by every supporting ligament (that’s you and me as we work together in the church), grows and builds itself up in love (that’s the end result) as each part does its work (that’s the key!).” The church is a body, Christ is the head, and we are the joints, the ligaments, the bones and the muscles. As each of us exercises our own spiritual gifts, the church grows. This is God’s plan for church growth—each member using his spiritual gifts to build up the body.

By the way, there is one interesting sidelight in that verse. Paul said that as this happens the church is built up in love. Which means that the doctrine of spiritual gifts—when properly understood and properly taught—tends to promote love and unity in the body of Christ. No more competition, no more complaining, no more paralyzed body parts. As we all use our spiritual gifts, we grow in numbers, we grow in grace, we grow in love for one another.

3. By Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts You Glorify God.

1 Peter 4:10-11. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as

one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

God is glorified when you offer yourself to Him because He is then free to use the spiritual gifts He has given you for the good of the body of Christ.

VII. What Steps Should You Begin To Take Today?

I want to suggest at least three things you can do right now.

1. **You Can Read.** You can take your Bible out and read for yourself what it says about spiritual gifts. The four key chapters are Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4.
2. **You Can Pray.** Ask God to show you what spiritual gifts he has given you.
3. **You Can Ask.** This is the most interesting step of all. Simply go to several friends who know you well and ask them to tell you what spiritual gifts they think you have. You may be surprised at the answer you receive. Your friends may have seen evidence of a spiritual gift at work in your life that you never even considered.