

Purposes for Spiritual Gifts. If they are for today, then they are here on purpose!

Five Biblical Purposes for the Spiritual Gifts:

REMEMBER: The apostle Paul instructed us to desire and seek after spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:31)

QUESTION: To draw attention to ourselves? To make ourselves prominent? To give us a new revelation that would supersede the Bible?

Those are not good motives, and those are not purposes for which the Spirit gave us spiritual gifts.

1. To Glorify God!

1 Corinthians 10:24–31 (ESV) Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour. ... So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

This also holds when using our spiritual gifts. The gifts themselves should never become the central thing, where everyone is always talking about themselves and the gifts they have! No!

That is what the apostle rebuked the Corinthian church for – they were constantly talking about their gifts, comparing them to others', and elevating themselves and those with particular gifts as “super-spiritual” compared to others. E.g. tongues

There is a place for the gifts, to be sure, but not at the heart of every conversation and sermon.

Everything must point to the Lord Jesus Christ, including the gifts.

When Peter and John healed a lame man, the people were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened and came running to them (Acts 3:10-11).

Acts 3:12 (ESV) *And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”*

- He wouldn't allow attention to be focused on himself or his gifts.
- He immediately shifted the attention to the Lord, preaching Jesus to them and giving Him the credit for what had happened to the lame man (Acts 3:12-26)!
- The result was that many believed (Acts 4:4).

John 9:2–3 (ESV) ² And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- Jesus – “that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

John 15:7–8 (ESV) If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. Jesus – “The Father is glorified when you bear MUCH fruit!”

2. To Build Up the Church

A spiritual gift is when the Holy Spirit manifests his presence and imparts his power to and through individual believers, enabling them to transcend the limitations of their finite humanity so that they might faithfully and effectively fulfill certain ministry tasks for the building up of the body of Christ.¹

Paul reveals this purpose in several statements. “Common good” “Build up” “edify (build up).”

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (ESV) ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Corinthians 14:3–4 (ESV) ³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:12 (ESV) ¹² So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

To the church at Ephesus, Paul spelled it out clearly ...

Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ...When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Peter said we’re to use our gifts to serve one another (1 Pet 4:10).

1 Peter 4:10–11 (ESV) ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Peter affirms spiritual gifts for building up the Body of Christ – SERVING each other.
- Peter also affirms **Purpose #1: To Glorify God!**

WARNING: If using the gifts glorifies God, then rejecting the gifts robs God of glory

Romans 12:5–6 (ESV) ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

QUESTION: If the eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection needed spiritual gifts and not Scripture alone to build up the Church, how much more do we need them?

3. To Build Up Ourselves

We are instructed to build ourselves up in the faith. This is not an instruction to be selfish or self-centred.

Jude 20 (ESV) ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

NOTICE: Scripture is NOT saying that a purpose of spiritual gifts is to draw attention to ourselves or to make us more prominent or to raise ourselves before others. NO.

Scripture IS saying: here is ANOTHER purpose for the spiritual gifts is to build ourselves up spiritually – that is to strengthen ourselves in the faith and in Christ!

1 Corinthians 14:4 (ESV) ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

REMEMBER: Paul defined edification: strengthening, encouraging, and comforting (1 Cor 14:3)

Paul says that when we employ the gift of tongues, we are personally being strengthened, encouraged, and comforted – hence, edified!

Not only is that valid, but we are strongly encouraged (exhorted) to build ourselves up in the faith through spiritual gifts.

4. To Reach the Lost: Evangelism

In Acts 3-4, we looked at the story where Peter and John healed the beggar and how that led to many “believing”.

Evangelism is another purpose of spiritual gifts. See what Paul had to say about it.

1 Corinthians 14:22–25 (ESV) ²² Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³ If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴ But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

- Paul says tongues and prophecy can both be used to minister to UNBELIEVERS
- **For example**, I received a word from the Lord for an atheist stuck in drug addiction. It accurately described his current struggles and situation. He gave his life to JESUS!
- **REJECT: claims that “prophetic evangelism” is unbiblical**

John 4 – Jesus used a word of knowledge about the Samaritan woman, which led her entire town to come out to hear the Gospel.

The gifts (*charismata*) cannot save anyone; a primary purpose of the gifts is for all to know the Lord.

Just like intellectual arguments cannot save someone, neither can apologetics. The gifts do not save people. However, both can remove barriers that keep someone from receiving Jesus as their Savior.

What a wonderful God we serve! Providing us Scripture, reason, and supernatural gifts! ALL given by the same Spirit who empowers us to DO HIS WILL.

5. To Authenticate the Message of the Apostles & Jesus

Often, this is used to explain why spiritual gifts were needed in biblical times and why we no longer need them.

Hebrews 2:4 (ESV) ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Acts 2:22 (ESV) Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst,...

Acts 5:12 (ESV) ¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

Were signs used to authenticate Jesus’ and the Apostles’ message? CERTAINLY!

WARNING: Let’s be careful about reductionism! Just because a miracle may have been used to confirm a particular message does not mean that there are NO other purposes. We looked at four other biblical purposes!

B. “Hop off the fence.” Recognize your NEED for Spiritual Gifts

Part 9: Are the gifts for today? YES → the Bible says they are! (*last week’s list*) Do these apply?

Part 10: Purposes for the Spiritual gifts – the Bible gives five!

You can see that an overwhelming amount of Scripture is devoted to the use of the gifts and their necessity within the church! Apparently, they were/are needed for the church to be built up! For the lost to be reached! For ourselves to be built up! For the message of Christianity to be demonstrated! And to glorify God!

Questions to consider:

1. Do you want to glorify God?
2. Do you want to reach the lost?
3. Do you want to minister to others within the Church?
4. Do you need to be built up?

Suppose you answered, “YES” to any of these! You need the Holy Spirit AND the gifts He gives!

C. Invite the SPIRIT: Confess, ask for desire, ask for gifts

- Invite the Spirit into your life
- Confess any unbelief or disdain you have had for Him & His gifts
- Ask for the desire for the Spirit & His gifts

MODIFIED PRAYER: (Acts 4:24–31) “Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David, the Prophets, and the Apostles. Now, Lord, consider the days we live in, the struggles we face, the weakness inherent in us, and grant us Your Spirit to empower us to minister, break free from sin, persevere through hardship, and speak Your word with great boldness. While you stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”