



SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Understanding Your Supernatural Part of the Mission

The Holy Spirit has been given to all believers and supernaturally gives gifts to enable them to carry out a wide variety of ministries to accomplish the mission of the Gospel in the church and to the nations. (1 Corinthians 12:7, 14:12, 26). As you seek the Lord for clarity on what gift(s) you have, the goal is to seek to serve others humbly and sacrificially, for the glory of God.

For clarity, a doctrinal distinctive of Harvest is that we teach a “continuationist” position rather than a “cessationist” position (but our church is a great mix of those on either side of these theological positions and we seek to never let this theology be a cause for division). To be a continuationist means that we teach that all spiritual gifts seen in the New Testament—including those of prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues—did not cease with the death of the Apostles.

The foundation for us in regard to all the gifts is that **the Word of God is our standard and guide**. A quote by John Piper is helpful as we think of any of the gifts:

“I want to have my keel deep and stable in the once-for-all biblical revelation of God,
and I want to have my sails unfurled to every movement of God's Spirit upon the deeps”

RESOURCES:

UNDERSTANDING GIFTS:

[Supernatural Gifts](#) (sermon) covering Spiritual Gifts preached at Harvest
[Supernatural Church](#) (sermon) covering the “sign gifts” preached at Harvest
[Spiritual Gifts](#) (sermon) preached by John Piper
[Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Comprehensive Guide](#) (book) by Sam Storms
[The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts](#) (easy to read book) by Sam Storms
[Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14](#)
(deeper book) by D.A. Carson
[God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul](#)
(comprehensive book) by Gordon D. Fee

CESSATIONIST OR CONTINUATIONIST?

[Why I am a Cessationist](#) (article) by Thomas Schreiner
[Why I am a Continuationist](#) (article) by Sam Storms

GIFT OF PROPHECY:

[Video](#) from Desiring God
[Video](#) from the Village Church
[Video](#) from Sam Storms
[The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today](#)
(book) by Wayne Grudem

GIFTS OF HEALINGS:

[Video](#) from the Village Church
[Video](#) from John Piper
[What if I'm Not Healed?](#) (video) - the Village Church

GIFT OF TONGUES:

[What is Speaking in Tongues?](#) (video) John Piper

MERCY

Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| To have compassion | Showing supernatural compassion to the disenfranchised and marginalized. In this gift is a regular joy in feeding the poor, helping the homeless, and in visiting prisoners. There is in Matthew 25:34–40 a great inheritance for those who ask for, exercise, and practice this gift. It aligns often with the gifts of serving or helping. | <p>People with this gift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus upon alleviating the sources of pain or discomfort in suffering people. • Address the needs of the lonely and forgotten. • Express love, grace, and dignity to those facing hardships and crisis. • Serve in difficult or unsightly circumstances and do so cheerfully. • Concern themselves with individual or social issues that oppress people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be aware that rescuing people from their pain may be hindering God’s work in them. • Need to guard against feeling “unappreciated,” since some of the people helped will not show or express any appreciation. • Should guard against becoming defensive and angry about the sources of others’ pain. |

ENCOURAGEMENT

Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| To come along side of | The divine enablement to present truth to strengthen, comfort, or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith. This is much more than mere compliments. Supernatural encouragement gives hope in God. People who have this gift are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fill people with hope. This gift was regular in Paul’s ministry (Acts 14:22; 16:40; 20:1–2; Col. 2:1–2; 1 Thess. 2:11–12), he wanted Timothy and Titus to pastor with this gift (2 Thess. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15), and he required church elders to encourage believers with sound instruction (Titus 1:9). | <p>People with this gift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come to the side of those who are discouraged to strengthen and reassure them. • Challenge, comfort, or confront others to trust and hope in the promises of God. • Urge others to action by applying biblical truth. • Motivate others to grow. • Emphasize God’s promises and to have confidence in His. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can sometimes be overly optimistic, too simplistic, or too flattering. • Should first take time to understand where others are and what they really need. • May want to just say “positive” things to others and avoid being confrontational when it’s needed. |

DISCERNMENT

1 Corinthians 12:10

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| To separate or make distinction | The divine enablement to distinguish between truth and error. It is able to discern the spirits, differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong. When God's Spirit is involved, there is clarity of faith, hope, and love that testifies to Jesus' lordship (John 15:26; 16:13-14). | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, pure motives from impure.• Identify deception in others with accuracy and appropriateness.• Determine whether a word attributed to God is authentic.• Recognize inconsistencies in a teaching, prophetic message, or interpretation.• Are able to sense the presence of evil. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May struggle with how to express their perceptions, feelings, or insights.• Could be harsh when confronting others instead of speaking the truth in love.• Need to confirm their perceptions before speaking. |

FAITH

1 Corinthians 12:9

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| To trust, have confidence, believe | The divine enablement to act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in God's ability to fulfill His purposes. It is a supernatural empowerment to believe God when everything looks bleak and dark and to trust God that He will bring about what He has promised even though it seems unlikely by human standards. The gift of faith is supernatural confidence in God. It looks to the present circumstances and sees God's action. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Believe the promises of God and inspire others to do the same.• Act in complete confidence of God's ability to overcome obstacles.• Demonstrate an attitude of trust in God's will and His promises.• Advance the cause of Christ because they go forward when others will not.• Ask God for what is needed and trust Him for His provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to act on their faith.• Should remember that those who speak with reason and desire to plan do not necessarily lack faith.• Should listen to and consider the counsel of wise and Spirit-filled believers. |

GIVING

Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| To give part of, share | The divine enablement to contribute time, talent and money to the work of the Lord with cheerfulness and liberality. People with this gift do not ask “How much money do I need to give to God?” but rather, “How much money do I need to live? Christians are to give cheerfully and without complaint (2 Cor. 9:7–15), but the gift of giving enables one to supernaturally go beyond normal contribution that loves and cares for people while asking nothing in return. | <p>People with this gift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage their finances and limit their lifestyles in order to give as much of their resources as possible. • Support the work of ministry with sacrificial gifts to advance the Kingdom. • Meet tangible needs that enable spiritual growth to occur. • Provide resources, generously and cheerfully, trusting God for His provision. • May have a special ability to make money so that they may use it to further God’s work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to esteem their gift, remembering that giving money and resources is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ. • Need to remember the church’s agenda is determined by leaders, not by the giver’s gift. • Need to guard against greed. |

ADMINISTRATION

1 Corinthians 12:28

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| To pilot or steer a ship | The gift of Administration is the divine enablement to understand what makes an organization function, and the special ability to bring order by planning and executing procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry. This gift allows those with helping, healing, prophetic, and other gifts to find a way and a place to use them with greater effectiveness. | <p>People with this gift:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies or plans to reach identified goals. • Assist ministries to become more effective and efficient. • Create order out of organizational chaos. • Manage or coordinate a variety of responsibilities to accomplish a task. • Organize people, tasks, or events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to esteem their gift, remembering that administration is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ. • Need to be open to adjusting their plans so that they don’t stifle vision. • Could use people simply to accomplish goals without being concerned for their growth in the process. • Could fail to see God’s purposes being fulfilled in the process of meeting a goal. |

SERVICE/HELPS

1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| To take the place of someone | The divine enablement to accomplish practical and necessary tasks which free up, support, and meet the needs of others that make a way for people to experience, hear and receive gospel ministry. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serve behind the scenes wherever needed to support the gifts and ministries of others.• See the tangible and practical things to be done and enjoy doing them.• Sense God's purpose and pleasure in meeting everyday responsibilities.• Attach spiritual value to practical service.• Enjoy knowing that they are freeing others up to do what God has called them to do. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to esteem their gift, remembering that doing practical deeds is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ.• Find it difficult to say "no."• Need to be responsive to the priorities of leadership instead of setting their own agenda. |

PASTOR/SHEPHERDING

Ephesians 4:11

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|---------------------|--|--|---|
| To shepherd a flock | The divine enablement to nurture, protect, care for, and guide people toward ongoing spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ by exhorting the flock through communicating sound biblical truth in action. The picture of Ezekiel 34:4 shows clearly that faithful pastor/shepherd leaders strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back strays, and search for the lost as healers and counselors in the church. Not all pastor-shepherds have a distinct teaching gift, though some will. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take responsibility to nurture the whole person in their walk with God.• Provide guidance and oversight to a group of God's people.• Model with their life what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus.• Establish trust and confidence through long-term relationships.• Lead and protect those within their care. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should remember that God judges those who neglect or abuse their oversight responsibilities.• Need to be aware that the desire to feed and support others can make it difficult to say "no."• Should realize that some of those being nurtured will grow beyond the shepherd's own ability and need to be freed to do so. |

LEADERSHIP

Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| To stand before | The divine enablement to cast vision, motivate, and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God. The New Testament uses the words elder, shepherd, pastor, overseer, and leader interchangeably and often in relation to the gift of leading (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). All elders are required to lead and shepherd as pastors, but not all leaders and shepherds may hold the office of elder. Those who are not elders may lead various ministries and equip the saints in varied ways within the church. Not all leaders will have a teaching gift, though some will. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direction for God’s people or ministry. • Motivate others to perform to the best of their abilities. • Present the “big picture” for others to see. • Model the values of the ministry. • Take responsibility and establish goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should realize that relational credibility takes time and is critical for leadership effectiveness. • Should remember that servant leadership is the Biblical model; the greatest being the servant of all. • Should remember that one does not need to be in a leadership “position” to use this gift. |

TEACHING

1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 14:26, Romans 12:7, Ephesians 4:11

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-------------|---|---|--|
| To instruct | The divine enablement to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, causing greater Christlikeness in the lives of listeners. This gift carries with it weighty additional judgment according to James 3:1. Teaching is a supernatural empowerment to reveal the nature of God in the Trinity and His work in the world as seen in the Scriptures. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate biblical truth that inspires greater obedience to the Word. • Challenges listeners simply and practically with the truths of Scripture. • Present the whole counsel of God for maximum life change. • Give attention to detail and accuracy. • Prepare through extended times of study and reflection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should avoid pride that may result from their “superior” biblical knowledge and understanding. • Could become too detailed when teaching and fail to make life application. • Should remember that their spirituality is not measured by how much they know. |

PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 12:8, 10, 28–29; 14:26; Romans 12:6, Ephesians 4:11

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| To speak before | The divine enablement to reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or edification. There may be immediate or future implications. This is not an Old Testament prophecy (“thus saith the Lord”) but rather a gift given to build up and encourage the church by imparting a word of courage that the Lord has laid on the heart of a fellow believer. It never stands in contrast to the Scriptures but is a personal touch from the Lord to a person’s heart in a given situation where the Lord reveals that He knows, He sees, and He hears them Service Romans 12:7 While Paul offers no specific examples, there are certainly many different kinds of service that are supernaturally empowered by the Spirit that make a way for people to hear and receive gospel ministry. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direction for God’s people or ministry. • Motivate others to perform to the best of their abilities. • Present the “big picture” for others to see. • Model the values of the ministry. • Take responsibility and establish goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be aware that listeners may reject the message if not spoken with love and compassion. • Need to avoid pride which can create a demanding or discouraging spirit that hinders the gift. • Should remember that Scripture must support and agree with each prophecy. • Remember to allow elders to prayerfully consider anything that might be for the whole church as they put 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 into practice |

EVANGELISM

Ephesians 4:11

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| To bring good news | The divine enablement to effectively communicate the Gospel and lead more people to Christ and toward discipleship than is normal. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the message of Christ with clarity and conviction. • Seek out opportunities to talk to unbelievers about spiritual matters. • Challenge unbelievers to faith and to become fully devoted followers of Christ. • Adapt their presentation of the Gospel to connect with the individual’s needs. • Seek opportunities to build relationships with unbelievers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to remember the Holy Spirit is the motivation in a person’s decision for Christ. • Should avoid becoming critical of others by remembering that we are all “witnesses,” but we are not all “evangelists.” • Need to listen carefully because the same approach is not appropriate for everyone. |

HOSPITALITY

Romans 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-------------------|--|---|--|
| To love strangers | The divine enablement to care for people by providing fellowship, food, and shelter. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an environment where people feel valued and cared for. • Meet new people and help them to feel welcomed. • Create a safe and comfortable setting where relationships can develop. • Seek ways to connect people together into meaningful relationships. • Set people at ease in unfamiliar surroundings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should avoid viewing their gift as just “entertaining.” • Need to remember to ask God whom He wants them to befriend and serve. • Should be careful to understand how this gift impacts their own family when inviting others into their home. |

APOSTLESHIP

Ephesians 4:7-12

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------|---|---|---|
| To be sent | <p>There is much debate about this gift – is it only an <i>office</i> or is it also a <i>gift</i>?</p> <p>For those who claim it as a gift, it must be clearly defined as not the same as the <i>office</i>, which was only held by a limited number of those who were eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22, 1 Cor. 9:1).</p> <p>As a gift it is thought to be a divine enablement to start new ministry where there is none and/or despite opposition.</p> | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are spiritual entrepreneurs. • Can also have the gift of evangelism, teaching, or faith. • Love the challenge of new mission locations and new ministries launched. • Are often missionaries, church planters, and/or those leading multiple ministries or churches. • Demonstrate authority and vision for the mission of the church. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be aware that misusing their authority can quench the Spirit. • Need to be affirmed and sent out by the church. • Need to seek humility and wisdom in any new venture. |

HEALINGS

1 Corinthians 12:9-10, 28

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| To remedy sickness | The divine enablement to restore health. It is a gift always referred to in the plural (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30). It seems that some in the Church are gifted to heal specific physical maladies or emotional traumas. This may be reflected in the consistent plural use by Paul. It may also reflect that some healings vary in strength. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have seen God positively answer a greater proportion of their prayers for healing. • Demonstrate a healthy tension of faith and surrender. • Regardless of the outcome, see sickness as a tool for God's glory. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should distinguish between a humble faith and arrogant certainty. • Must take pains to guard the vulnerable recipients' heart as well. • Remember the close relationship to prayer this gift has. • Be discerning and aware of the bigger purpose that God might have. |

MIRACLES

1 Corinthians 12:9-10, 28

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------------------|---|---|--|
| To do the supernatural | The divine enablement to do what is humanly impossible for the purpose of highlighting God's power and grace. Gifts of miracles are often related to gifts of healings, and miracles too are used in the plural sense and so seem to indicate that God gives grace to do certain miracles to certain believers. It may also be that some believers have faith for specific miracles. There is an important relationship between gifts of healings and miracles and the gift of faith. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a passion to see the glory of God displayed. • Demonstrate a desire to encourage the church and bring unbelievers to salvation. • Possess a radical confidence in God's power especially in light of their circumstance. • Often discern God working whether it be small or big. • Strive to deflect the reaction to their gift to the purposes of God. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be careful in ensuring that the spectacular nature of their gift brings glory to God. • Watch out for pride, selfish gain, and selfish motive. • Take care to honor the less spectacular gifts which might require greater perseverance and diligence. • Should not let fear of man keep them from exercising their gift. • Miracles are a clear display of God's power but must be discerned, like all gifts, by their effectiveness, validity, and the spiritual fruit that they produce. |

TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30; 14:2, 4-6, 13-14, Acts 2:4; 8:17-18; 19:6

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| To speak in a language | The divine enablement to speak in languages never studied by the speaker to declare the gospel (Acts 2:11) or in coded messages that speak to God or reveal mysteries by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2). | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a heightened sense of discernment. • See themselves as a part of the greater whole. • Might also have a passion to reach unbelievers. • Are extra-careful to ground their practice within the bounds of Scripture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should joyfully yield to pastoral authority. • Be aware of the lesser quality of their gift. • Strive to be orderly and constructive in the exercise of this gift. • Should not exercise this gift corporately if there isn't an interpreter present |

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12: 10, 30

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|---|--|--|--|
| To immediately make a message in tongues intelligible | The divine enablement to translate a message in tongues so that those present can understand and be edified. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. • Might know multiple languages. • Are likely biblically knowledgeable and theologically informed. • Have a pattern of "testing the spirits." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should joyfully yield to pastoral authority. • Be aware of the lesser quality of their gift. • Strive to be orderly and constructive in the exercise of this gift. |

WORD OF WISDOM

1 Corinthians 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| To speak with wisdom | The divine enablement to take God's Word and apply it to people's lives so that they make good choices and avoid foolish mistakes. It is a supernatural insight into people and situations that are not obvious to the average person and to speak with godly wisdom regarding a situation or issue that often results in clarity and momentum. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a fear of the Lord.• Have a lifestyle of humble wisdom.• Are not prone to selfish ambition.• Instinctively value God's truth over the world's assumptions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work at discerning worldly wisdom from godly wisdom.• Let the Bible be the ultimate filter.• Realize that godly wisdom doesn't always seem to make sense. |

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 12:8

| MEANING | DESCRIPTION | DISTINCTION | CAUTIONS |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| To speak with knowledge | The divine enablement to speak with godly and biblical knowledge regarding a situation or issue that often leads to godly living and the spread of God's kingdom. | People with this gift: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a fear of the Lord.• Are typically restrained in their speech.• Enjoy reading broadly and love to study and learn.• Ask insightful questions.• Value logic and accuracy.• Have a unique understanding of theology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be wary of making knowledge an end in itself.• Push to see a topic the way others might.• Also pursue love and especially wisdom.• Learn how to communicate knowledge in a winsome and compelling fashion. |