Our Desires and God’s Will for Us

What do you really want? What are the deepest desires of your heart?
What do you think or feel God wants of you?
How are they the same or different?
In what ways are you fulfilling your desires and God’s will?
In what ways are you blocked from doing so?
The Nature of Spiritual Gifts

Identifying our Spiritual gifts is a wonderful first step. Defining them is great. But what are these gifts of the Spirit? What is their nature? They are not talents, abilities, roles, or functions, but expressions of the power of the Holy Spirit, given by God, and the authority to use that power in building up of the body of Christ--fulfilling our mission--doing God’s will in the way that is best suited to who we are as unique and beloved individuals joined in community.

The power of the Holy Spirit is often characterized as “ruach,” or breath, and as fire. It is the ruach that breathed life into the first earth creature (Genesis 2:7). It is ruach that guided the people of Israel through the wilderness toward the promised land (Exodus 13:21). It is ruach that comforted Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:12). And, at Pentecost, the rush of a mighty wind (pneuma in Greek) filled the house and settled as tongues of fire on the first believers, transforming their lives and the world (Acts 2:2-4).

That power, that breath, that spark of Holy fire, is revealed, or activated, in us as gifts of the Spirit or charismata—gifts of grace. They are within each of us waiting and ready to guide . . . and help . . . and hear . . . and care. We have, in our busyness, largely forgotten how to listen, how to find that spark. Much like the characters in the Wizard of Oz, we have just the gifts we need to fulfill our deepest desires and the world’s need, but we are not aware of them or lack confidence in their power.

We worship and work together in the church. But how well do we really know one another? What do we know of our own or each other’s deep passions in relation to God and the world?

Spiritual gifts discovery is a tool to help us begin hear the still, small voice, to be filled by the ruach, the breath of God, to find the spark of the Holy Spirit that will empower us to:

— know ourselves and one another better
— discern God’s will for our lives—where our deep passion and the world’s deep need intersect and move us to powerful ministry
— prioritize our time and activities
— learn to say no and yes appropriately
— find the joy of living in God’s will

Discovery of our individual gifts is the first step in this process. One hot coal will not keep the fire going, and it will eventually cool and die. Our gifts must be linked in community. We need to journey together, talk about and share our gifts, celebrate together the glorious power of the Holy Spirit moving through us for the sake of the body of Christ and the hurting and hungry world.
Administration

The gift of organizing human and material resources for the work of Christ, including the ability to plan and work with people to delegate responsibilities, track progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of procedures. Administrators attend to details, communicate effectively, and take as much pleasure in working behind the scenes as they do standing in the spotlight.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Apostleship

The gift of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to other cultures and to foreign lands. This is the missionary zeal that moves us from the familiar into uncharted territory to share the good news. Apostles embrace opportunities to learn foreign languages, visit other cultures, and go to places where people have not had the opportunity to hear the Christian message. The United States of America is fast becoming a mission field of many languages and cultures. It is no longer necessary to cross an ocean to enter the mission field. Even across generations, we may find that we need to “speak other languages” just to communicate.

Where do you see evidence of this gift...

- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Compassion

This gift is exceptional empathy with those in need that moves us to action. More than just concern, compassion demands that we share the suffering of others in order to connect the gospel truth with other realities of life. Compassion moves us beyond our comfort zones to offer practical, tangible aid to all God’s children, regardless of the worthiness of the recipients or the response we receive for our service.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .
- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Discernment

The ability to separate truth from erroneous teachings and to rely on spiritual intuition to know what God is calling us to do. Discernment allows us to focus on what is truly important and to ignore that which deflects us from faithful obedience to God. Discernment aids us in knowing whom to listen to and whom to avoid.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Evangelism

The ability to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who have not heard it before or with those who have not yet made a decision for Christ. This gift is manifested in both one-on-one situations and in group settings, both large and small. It is an intimate relationship with another person or persons that requires the sharing of personal faith experience and a call for a response of faith to God.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Exhortation

The gift of *exceptional* encouragement. Exhorters see the silver lining in every cloud, offer deep and inspiring hope to the fellowship, and look for and commend the best in everyone. Exhorters empower others to feel good about themselves and to feel hopeful for the future. Exhorters are not concerned by appearances; they hold fast to what they know to be true and right and good.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Faith

More than just belief, faith is a gift that empowers an individual or a group to hold fast to its identity in Christ in the face of any challenge. The gift of faith enables believers to rise above pressures and problems that might otherwise cripple them. Faith is characterized by an unshakable trust in God to deliver on God’s promises, no matter what. The gift of faith inspires those who might be tempted to give up to hold on.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Giving

Beyond the regular response of gratitude to God that all believers make, giving as a gift is the ability to use the resource of money to support the work of the body of Christ. Giving is the ability to manage money to the honor and glory of God. Givers can discern the best ways to put money to work, can understand the validity and practicality of appeals for funds, and can guide others in the most faithful methods for managing their financial concerns.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .
• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Healing

The gift of channeling God's healing powers into the lives of God's people. Physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological healing are all ways that healers manifest this gift. Healers are prayerful, and they help people understand that healing is in the hands of God, that healing is often more than just erasing negative symptoms. Some of the most powerful healers display some of the most heartbreaking afflictions themselves.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Helping

The gift of making sure that everything is ready for the work of Christ to occur. Helpers assist others to accomplish the work of God. These “unsung heroes” work behind the scenes and attend to details that others would rather not be bothered with. Helpers function faithfully, regardless of the credit or attention they receive. Helpers provide the framework upon which the ministry of the body of Christ is built.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Knowledge

The gift of knowing the truth through faithful study of Scripture and the human situation. Knowledge provides the information necessary for the transformation of the world and formation of the body of Christ. Those possessing this gift challenge the fellowship to improve itself through study, reading of Scripture, discussion, and prayer.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .
• in your life?
• in the lives of others?
• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Leadership

The gift of orchestrating the gifts and resources of others to accomplish the work of God. Leaders move people toward a God-given vision of service, and they enable others to use their gifts to the very best of their abilities. Leaders are capable of creating synergy, whereby a group achieves much more than its individual members could achieve on their own.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .
• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Miracles

This gift enables people to operate at a spiritual level that recognizes the miraculous work of God in the world. Miracle workers invoke God’s power to accomplish that which appears impossible or impractical by worldly standards. Miracle workers remind us of the extraordinary nature of the ordinary world, thereby increasing faithfulness and trust in God. Miracle workers pray for God to work in the lives of others, and they feel no sense of surprise when their prayers are answered.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

- in your life?

- in the lives of others?

- in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Prophecy

The gift of speaking the Word of God clearly and faithfully. Prophets allow God to speak through them to communicate the message that people most need to hear. While often unpopular, prophets are able to say what needs to be said because of the spiritual empowerment they receive. Prophets do not foretell the future, but proclaim God’s future by revealing God’s perspective on our current reality.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .
• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Servanthood

The gift of serving the spiritual and material needs of other people. Servants understand their place in the body of Christ as giving comfort and aid to all who are in need. Servants look to the needs of others rather than focus on their own needs. To serve is to put faith into action; it is to treat others as if they are Jesus Christ. The gift of service extends our Christian love into the world.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Shepherding

The gift of guidance. Shepherds nurture others in the Christian faith and provide a mentoring relationship to those who are new to the faith. Displaying an unusual spiritual maturity, shepherds share from their experience and learning to facilitate the spiritual growth and development of others. Shepherds take individuals under their care and walk with them on their spiritual journeys. Many shepherds provide spiritual direction and guidance to a wide variety of believers.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?
• in the lives of others?
• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Teaching

The gift of bringing scriptural and spiritual truths to others. More than just teaching Christian education classes, teachers witness to the truth of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways, and they help others to understand the complex realities of the Christian faith. Teachers are revealers. They shine the light of understanding into the darkness of doubt and ignorance. They open people to new truths, and they challenge people to be more in the future than they have been in the past.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Tongues

This gift has two popular interpretations: (1) the ability to communicate the gospel to other people in a foreign language without the benefit of having studied said language (see Acts 2:4) or (2) the ability to speak to God in a secret, unknown prayer language that can only be understood by a person possessing the gift of interpretation. The gift of speaking in the language of another culture makes the gift of tongues valuable for spreading the gospel throughout the world; while the gift of speaking a secret prayer language offers the opportunity to build faithfulness within a community of faith.

Interpretation of Tongues

The ability to interpret foreign languages, without the necessity of formal study, to communicate with those who have not heard the Christian message or who seek to understand God at a deep spiritual level.

Where do you see evidence of these gifts . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
Wisdom

The gift of translating life experience into spiritual truth and of seeing the application of scriptural truth to daily living. The wise in our faith communities offer balance and understanding that transcend reason. Wisdom applies a God-given common sense to our understanding of God’s will. Wisdom helps us remain focused on the important work of God, and it enables newer, less mature Christians to benefit from those who have been blessed by God to share deep truths.

Where do you see evidence of this gift . . .

• in your life?

• in the lives of others?

• in the Bible?

Where have others said they see evidence of this gift in your life?

What are some expressions of this gift that help to build up the body of Christ and serve the world?

What other gifts, talents, or skills would help this gift be more effective and fruitful?
The twenty gifts we use are derived from Paul’s listings of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28; and Ephesians 4:11. The following translations from the Greek are by Dan R. Dick, 1996.

**Romans 12:6-8**
“Each of us is gifted in unique ways, to the measure of grace given us by God; the gift of prophecy (speaking God’s word) in proportion to one’s faithfulness, the gift of servanthood, in service; the teacher, in teaching; those who encourage, in encouragement; the giver, in generous stewardship; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in sacrificial kindness.”

Gifts listed:
1. Prophecy  
2. Servanthood  
3. Teaching  
4. Exhortation  
5. Giving  
6. Leadership  
7. Compassion

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**
“There are many different gifts, but they all emerge from one Spirit; and there are many different ways to serve, but one Lord that we all serve; there are many things we can do, but it is God who directs us to do them. Everyone has been given a spiritual gift to use for the common good. To one person the Spirit gives wisdom, and to someone else knowledge by the exact same Spirit. Another receives the gift of faith, while the same Spirit grants gifts of healing to another. To others the Spirit grants the gift of miracle working, or prophecy, or the discernment of spirits, or speaking in other tongues, or interpreting other tongues. All of these gifts are activated by the same Spirit, who grants gifts to each person as the Spirit chooses.”

New gifts listed:
8. Wisdom  
9. Knowledge  
10. Faith  
11. Healing  
12. Miracles  
13. Discernment  
14. Tongues  
15. Interpretation of Tongues

**1 Corinthians 12:27-31**
“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a member in it. God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, then teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, and those who communicate in foreign tongues. Is everyone an apostle? Are all people prophets? Teachers? Miracles workers? Does everyone heal or speak in foreign tongues, or interpret those tongues? While it is right and good to pursue such gifts, I will show you an even more excellent goal.”

New gifts listed:
16. Apostleship  
17. Helping/Assistance

**Ephesians 4:11-12**
“The gifts that the Lord gave are these: apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, and teaching so that everyone might equip the saints for ministry, to build up the body of Christ…”

New gifts listed:
18. Administration
19. Evangelism
20. Shepherding
Spiritual Gifts Clusters

**Nurturing Gifts:** Nurturing congregations tend to be very committed to building fellowship, visitation, small groups, Sunday School, and member care. The focus is primarily turned inward.

- Wisdom
- Shepherding
- Exhortation
- Helping
- Discernment
- Faith
- Compassion

**Outreaching Gifts:** Outreaching congregations tend to be very missional in nature, serving the community in a variety of ways, and reaching out to people in the area. The focus is on the world.

- Apostleship
- Evangelism
- Working Miracles
- Compassion
- Healing
- Servanthood
- Prophecy

**Witnessing Gifts:** Witnessing congregations tend to emphasize worship, Christian Education, and church growth. Faith sharing is central to the life of the fellowship. Focus is local.

- Knowledge
- Faith
- Prophecy
- Teaching
- Evangelism
- Exhortation
- Healing

**Organizing Gifts:** Organizing congregations tend to be highly structured, very organized, and program rich. Committees and work teams involve large numbers. Focus is on the institution.

- Knowledge
- Administration
- Giving
- Leadership
- Helping
- Teaching
- Wisdom
Development & Deployment: *The Fruit That Will Last*

**Development: The Means of Grace**

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” —Acts 2:42

This is how the first church that formed after Pentecost chose to develop their gifts. Their numbers grew and they performed great miracles and wonders in the community. These were also the activities of Jesus and the disciples—study, prayer, fellowship, communion, service. These are the means of grace, the ways in which we can provide a wider avenue for God’s grace to work within and through us. These are the ways we can develop our gifts. See “Continuing the Journey” for suggestions on employing the means of grace in developing our gifts.

**Deployment: Maturing Love**

As our gifts are developed and our understanding of God’s will grows, it is essential to DEPLOY our gifts in community. It is in community that we grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and as stewards of the Gospel. We are part of a body, the body of Christ. Our gifts are given for the upbuilding of that body. They are intended to promote harmony, to strengthen unity, to help us better love and care for one another and for the hurting world. Try them on. Share what you learn with others. Practice. Pray.

Where and how do we use our gifts? Scripture provides an answer, a “more excellent way.” We have already explored the command to love one another in John 15. Let’s take a closer look at love. Read I Corinthians 13:1-13. This passage speaks to us of the maturing of love, growing toward perfection through loving relationship.

What is the relationship between love and the spiritual gifts? The gifts are one way God expresses God’s love for us. As we mature in our ability to respond in love, we will use our gifts in service to one another and the hurting world. This is the more excellent way.

**Our Desires and God’s Will for Us**

When we love in response to God’s love for us, the whole community benefits. But what happens in us? How do we know we are doing it right? ...When duty starts to feel like passion ...When joy and vitality are more present than absent, even in times of trial ...When you are feeling more satisfied with the course of your life and closer to fulfillment of your deepest desires...

Look at Galatians 5:22-23. The fruits of the Spirit, fruits that will last, are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Remember our questions from the first gathering? Are your deepest desires and God’s will for you reflected somewhere in this list?
Continuing the Journey: *Deepening Our Understanding of the Gifts of the Spirit*

While each of us uniquely gifted by God, it is up to us to learn about these gifts, and develop our abilities to use them faithfully. By engaging in a four-fold process of prayer, scriptural reflection, active service, and small group sharing, we can continuously focus on our gifts, deepen our understanding, and work to improve the way we use them.

**Prayer**
God is the author of all our gifts, and is the source of truly understanding how the gifts are best used. In taking time to pray to God, we allow God to direct our service and open us to the endless possibilities for Christian service. It is not the intention of our prayers to ask God to show us how to use our gifts, but to ask that God might reveal to us all the many ways we live out of our gifts each and every day. As we see our gifts revealed, then we seek God’s guidance in ways to develop and improve them. We enter into a partnership with God to be wise stewards of the valuable gifts of the Spirit.

**Scripture**
The Bible is full of stories of gifted people interacting and living in the light of God. Both Old and New Testaments offer fine illustrations of teachers, healers, apostles, servants, evangelists, and all the other gifts used to transform the world, and serve the needs of others. The church itself is built upon the rich and diverse gifts of the people. In reading the Scriptures with an eye toward the spiritual gifts employed by the people, and reflecting upon the meaning of those gifts for our own lives, we begin to see the power and the possibilities that our gifts provide to us.

**Active Service**
Doing, not just knowing, is the essential ingredient to living out of our gifts. To know our gifts is important, but until we actively employ our gifts, we are hiding our light under a bushel. We will not be comfortable using our gifts without regular and intentional practice. We can start small and work our way up, but still we need to start. We can plan ways to use our gifts, as well as identify places where our gifts are already employed. Talking with others can be an excellent way to gain perspective on the gifts that we actively share.

**Small Groups**
Conversation centered upon the gifts of the Spirit helps to keep them in focus, and allows us to share the way we understand our giftedness. When we talk about our gifts - the ways we have used them in the past, the ways in which we live from them day to day, and the hopes we have for developing our gifts in the future - they become a central part of our lives, and they give shape to our journeys of faith. The benefit of sharing in a small group is that we enter into a covenant relationship of accountability; holding us to a path of continual development and faithful stewardship.