



# USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

From a sermon by Rev. Cynthia Reyes Fillmore  
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## Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

In this passage from 1 Corinthians, Paul wants to help believers understand spiritual gifts and how they are to be used for ministry. Unfortunately we have taken the word "gifts" and secularized it to mean "natural abilities." We talk about people as being "gifted." We have special courses for gifted students. This is not the way that the Bible uses this term.

The Greek word for gift is charismata, the root of charismata is charis which means grace. Out of God's rich mercy and grace, He gives gifts to us when we come to faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritual gifts are "grace gifts." The Spirit gives the gifts, the Spirit inspires the use of the gifts, and they are to be used for God's glory.

Paul said, "There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. The word that is translated as activities in the NRSV is a Greek word from which we get the word energy. So, the verse might read, "there are varieties of energies, but it is the same God who energizes all of them in everyone."

In other words, when we use our spiritual gifts, it energizes the church. People with the gift of mercy reach out in compassion and caring, people with the gift of helps identify and meet basic needs, people with the gift of faith inspire us to believe that God can and will do anything, and so on. A church has vitality as it encourages and empowers each member of the Body to use the gifts that have been given.

Gifts are given that we may serve "for the common good." This means that the gifts are not given for self-advancement or for self-gratification, but for the good of the whole Body of Christ. All the gifts work together to accomplish the work that God has given the church to do.

Each of us is uniquely gifted to do a certain ministry or ministries in the Body of Christ. Paul describes some of the gifts in verses 8 – 10, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, working of miracles, etc. There are other gifts listed in other passages such as Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, but they are not listed in any order of importance.

We often have the false belief that certain gifts are more important than others. It is easy to suppose that the gift of leadership or the gift of teaching is more important than the gift of helps for example. We must be careful not to glorify certain gifts over others, and to not disregard some gifts as unimportant. The evidence of Scripture is that each gift has its place in the overall health and functioning of the Body of Christ.

All of us must exercise our spiritual gifts within the context of the church where God has planted us and in his larger kingdom work in the world. The question is for each of us is, "How can I build up the body of Christ by using the spiritual gifts and the energy given to me by the Holy Spirit who dwells within me?"

Sometimes we don't know where to start in identifying our spiritual gifts. Four suggestions may be helpful.

### 1. Spend time praying to the One who gave you the gift.

Talk to God and ask what He has gifted you to do as a part in His body. Think of yourself as an apprentice who must ask the master craftsman which tools to use and how to use them. The Giver of the gift is the best guide to show you how to use it.

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*2500 McCrady Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15235 412-242-4570 [www.beulahpresby.org](http://www.beulahpresby.org)*

**2. Study the Scripture passages on gifts.**

Read and study passages like 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:1-8, and Ephesians 4:11-13. Go to the Bible first, then, read what others have written about the gifts.

**3. Ask those who know you well.**

Since your spiritual gift is intended to be lived out in community, those who know you best can help you discover how God has gifted you for service. Listen to what others in your community of faith say about how you function as a follower of Jesus.

**4. Just jump in and serve!**

The best way to learn how God has gifted you to serve as a member of the body of Christ is to get out there and start serving. Start with what you are asked to do and see what joy or satisfaction or what comes easiest to you. We think God always asks us to do what we can't do or what we don't want to do. Doesn't it make more sense that God would ask you to do what brings you joy?

We may sometimes believe that we don't have much to offer, that if we stopped our ministry no one would notice anyway. Yet God notices, and needs each one of us so that his work in the church and in the world can be accomplished to his glory. There is nothing more joyful, more meaningful or more satisfying than to find our part in the eternal unfolding of God's glory.