

# Spiritual Gifts

(This is a review of tonight's presentation. Rev. Michael's Jan. 31 sermon on the subject has more details—copies are available in the narthex.)

Gifts are at the heart of the relationship between God and people

- The gift of the created world and of our lives
- God's gift in calling Israel as a chosen people
- The gift of the incarnation of Jesus and his sacrifice on the Cross
- The gift of eternal life

God's gifts are freely given—they're not rewards; we can never earn them

Paul emphasized the importance of spiritual gifts and wrote about them in his letters (especially First Corinthians)

- Sometimes the Greek word in his writing is "pneumatica" (from "pneuma" or spirit), meaning "of the spirit"
- But more often Paul uses "charismata" (from "charis" or grace), which could be translated as "spiritual graces"
- This emphasizes that these qualities are not something we can achieve, but are gifts freely given to us by God

Spiritual gifts have several defining characteristics

1. Spiritual gifts are *unique*
  - Everyone has them, and they're all different
  - "We have gifts which differ according to the grace given us." (*Romans 12:6*)
  - The question is not whether each of us has gifts, but whether we will use them—that's our choice
2. Spiritual gifts are *varied*
  - Paul's writings include several lists, which differ slightly from each other
  - The main categories are gifts of utterance (prophecy, etc.), gifts of practical ministry (caring for others), and gifts of wonder working faith (miracles)
  - Paul's lists are not exhaustive—he probably didn't include every gift in those communities, and responding to today's new circumstances requires different gifts
3. Spiritual gifts are *constructive*
  - They're given in order to meet the needs of the church and the world
  - "To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good." (*1 Cor 12:7*)
  - "Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church" (*1 Cor 14:12*)
  - When the Body of Christ is built up through the exercise of our gifts, we grow in faith as we respond to the needs of the world

## **Discussion Questions**

Theologian Frederick Buechner suggests a kind of matchmaking that's involved in the use of our spiritual gifts:

**“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”**

Tonight we're going to explore the first part of that statement: our experience of deep gladness. In doing so we need to think both about “being” and “doing.” In the session on March 17 we'll talk about how our gifts connect with the needs of the world.

**1. What are my most fulfilling relationships? What qualities do I admire in the people who are involved? What do I contribute to these relationships?**

**2. What are some of the most satisfying or meaningful things I do or have done in my life? What qualities made it possible for me to do these things?**

**3. Where is my untapped potential? What new qualities are growing in me?**

**If you have extra time, review the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9, 13-20). Finish by saying prayer #24 on page 261 of the *Book of Common Prayer*.**