

Identifying Spiritual Gifts

Most Bible scholars classify these gifts into three categories: ministry gifts, manifestation gifts, and motivational gifts.

Ministry Gifts

The ministry gifts serve to reveal the plan of God. They are characteristic of a full-time office or calling, rather than a gift that can function in and through any believer. The ministry gifts were once presented to me through a five finger illustration that I've never forgotten:

- **Apostle** - An apostle establishes and builds churches; he's a church planter. An apostle may function in many or all of the ministry gifts. He is the "**thumb**," the strongest of all of the fingers, able to touch every finger.
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- **Prophet** - Prophet in the Greek means to "forth tell" in the sense of speaking for another. A prophet functions as God's mouth piece, speaking forth God's Word. The prophet is the "**index finger**," or pointer finger. He points to the future and points out sin.
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- **Evangelist** - An evangelist is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. He works for the local church to bring people into the body of Christ where they can be discipled. He may evangelize through music, drama, preaching, and other creative ways. He is the "**middle finger**," the tallest one who stands out in the crowd. Evangelists draw a lot of attention, but they are called to serve the local body.
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- **Pastor** - The pastor is the shepherd of the people. A true shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The pastor is the "**ring finger**." He is married to the church; called to stay, oversee, nurture and guide.
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- **Teacher** - The teacher and the pastor are often a shared office, but not always. The teacher lays the foundation and is concerned with detail and accuracy. He delights in research to validate truth. The teacher is the "**pinky finger**." Though seemingly small and insignificant, he is designed specifically for digging into tight, dark places, shining light and picking apart the Word of truth.

Manifestation Gifts

The manifestation gifts serve to reveal the power of God. These gifts are supernatural or spiritual in nature. They can be further subdivided into three groups: utterance, power, and revelation.

Utterance - These gifts **say** something:

- **Prophecy** - This is the "forth telling" of the inspired Word of God primarily to the church, for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation or consolation, although it can declare God's will in a particular circumstance, and in rare cases, predict future events.
- **Speaking in Tongues** - This is a supernatural utterance in an unlearned language which is interpreted so that the entire body will be edified. Tongues may also be a sign to unbelievers. Learn more about speaking in tongues.
- **Interpretation of Tongues** - This is a supernatural interpretation of a message in tongues, translated into the known language so that the hearers (the entire body) will be edified.

Power - These gifts **do** something:

- **Faith** - This is not the faith that is measured to every believer, nor is it "saving faith." This is special, supernatural faith given by the Spirit to receive miracles or to believe God for miracles.
- **Healing** - This is supernatural healing, beyond natural means, given by the Spirit.
- **Miracles** - This is the supernatural suspension of the natural laws, or an intervention by the Holy Spirit into the laws of nature.

Revelation - These gifts **reveal** something:

- **Word of Wisdom** - This is supernatural knowledge applied in a godly or correct way. One commentary describes it as "insight into doctrinal truth."
- **Word of Knowledge** - This is supernatural knowledge of facts and information that can only be revealed by God for the purpose of applying doctrinal truth.
- **Discerning of Spirits** - This is the supernatural ability to distinguish between spirits such as good and evil, truthful or deceiving, prophetic versus satanic.

Motivational Gifts

The motivational gifts serve to reveal the personality of God. These gifts are practical in nature. They describe the inner motivations of the Christian servant.

- **Prophecy** - Those with the motivational gift of prophecy are the "seers" or "eyes" of the body. They have insight, foresight, and act like watch dogs in the church. They warn of sin or reveal sin. They are usually very verbal and may come across as judgmental and impersonal; they are loyal to truth over friendship, serious, dedicated.
- **Ministering/Serving/Helps** - Those with the motivational gift of serving are the "hands" of the body. They are concerned with meeting needs; they are highly motivated, doers. They may tend to over commit, but find joy in serving and meeting short-term goals.
- **Teaching** - Those with the motivational gift of teaching are the "mind" of the body. They realize their gift is foundational; they emphasize accuracy of words and love to study; they delight in research to validate truth.
- **Giving** - Those with the motivational gift of giving are the "arms" of the body. They truly enjoy reaching out in giving. They are excited by the prospect of blessing others; they desire to give quietly, in secret, but will also motivate others to give. They are alert to people's needs; they give cheerfully and always give the best that they can.
- **Exhortation/Encouragement** - Those with the motivational gift of encouragement are the "mouth" of the body. Like cheerleaders, they encourage other believers and are motivated by a desire to see people grow and mature in the Lord. They are practical and positive and they seek positive responses.
- **Administration/Leadership** - Those with the motivational gift of leadership are the "head" of the body. They have the ability to see the overall picture and set long-term goals; they are good organizers and find efficient ways of getting work done. Although they may not seek leadership, they will assume it when no leader is available. They receive fulfillment when others come together to complete a task.
- **Mercy** - Those with the motivational gift of mercy are the "heart" of the body. They easily sense the joy or distress in other people and are sensitive to feelings and needs. They are attracted to and patient with people in need, motivated by a desire to see people healed of hurts. They are truly meek in nature and avoid firmness.

