

Understanding Spiritual Gifts



Kay Arthur, David and BJ Lawson



WATERBROOK MULTNOMAH PUBLISHING GROUP

A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC.

© Material

Excerpted from *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* by **Kay Arthur, David and BJ Lawson**. Copyright© 2010 by Precept Ministries International. Excerpted by permission of WaterBrook Press, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

ISBN 978-0-307-45870-4
ISBN 978-0-307-45871-1 (electronic)

Copyright © 2010 by Precept Ministries International

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

WaterBrook and its deer colophon are registered trademarks of Random House Inc.

Printed in the United States of America
2010—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Special Sales

Most WaterBrook Multnomah books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special-interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please e-mail SpecialMarkets@WaterBrookMultnomah.com or call 1-800-603-7051.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Many churches these days seem to place a great deal of emphasis on creating seeker-friendly environments, implementing membership growth programs, building a phenomenal multimedia ministry, and bringing on board “big-vision” staff members with charismatic personalities.

Who is really being glorified in all of this: God or man?

In our efforts to package church into something exciting, we may have overlooked one of God’s key provisions for our growth and maturity: spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts are a necessity in the ministry of every body of believers. All of us, as Christ followers should be working together to strengthen the body, to produce unity, to be lights shining in the darkness, and

to bring glory to God. This is done through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, through the gifts that He gives us.

As the preacher A. W. Tozer wrote, “These are not natural talents merely, but gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit to fit the believer for his place in the body of Christ. They are like pipes on a great organ, permitting the musician wide scope and ranged to produce music of the finest quality. But they are, I repeat, more than talents. They are spiritual gifts.”*

Unfortunately, many Christians seem to be unaware of the gifts of the Spirit—what they are, how they are received, or how they are to be used.

In the next six weeks of study you will learn the answers to these questions and more. As you discover a fuller vision for how God intends spiritual gifts to work within the church, your study of this subject will prepare you to tap into God’s agenda and play an active role in His ministry, not only to the body of Christ but possibly even to the rest of the world.

We have yet to see what God would do for His Church if we would all throw ourselves down before Him with an open Bible and cry, “Behold Thy servant, Lord! Be it unto me even as Thou wilt!”†

* A.W. Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 44.

† Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life*, 47

WEEK ONE

Sometimes the subject of spiritual gifts seems so confusing it can be hard to even know where to start the discussion. There are so many questions. Who has a spiritual gift? All of us? Or are they for super-spiritual people only?

To get the answers, we're going to go straight to the gift giver Himself and let Him explain the gifts. As you read for yourself the straightforward truths of the Bible, we believe you'll find the subject is not nearly as complicated a subject as you may have thought.

First, we'll consider these two questions: what kind of gifts are there, and who qualifies to receive one?

OBSERVE

Jesus prepared Peter for the world's tribulation; then Peter was to prepare others. So the apostle wrote a letter to the "chosen," the believers scattered throughout Asia during the intense persecution of their day, to encourage them and instruct them in how to live according to God's will (1 Peter 1:2; 4:2).

Leader: Read 1 Peter 4:10–11 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...

- draw a box around each reference to a **gift**, including the pronoun **it**:
- underline the phrase **each one**, which refers here to **believers**.

1 PETER 4:10–11

¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

¹¹ Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which

God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

INSIGHT

One way to better understand what the text is saying is by asking the “5 Ws and an H” questions—*who, what, when, where, why, and how*—about the passage. By asking these questions, you slow down and actually see what the writer is saying.

DISCUSS

- **Who** receives a gift?
- **What** is this passage about?
- **What** are believers to do with the gift they have been given?

- **How** are they to use what they've received?

- Is the gift to be used for one's personal benefit? Explain your answer.

INSIGHT

A *spiritual gift* is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified. Each believer has at least one spiritual gift, no matter what his or her natural abilities.

- **What** two categories did Peter divide the gifts into?

- **What** are those who speak supposed to speak?

- **How** are those who serve to carry out their role?

Acts 6:1–6

¹ Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

- **Why** are we to use our gifts in the way described? Look carefully at the end of verse 11 if you need a hint.
- Now let's evaluate what you just read and see how it applies to you. Looking at your experience serving in the church and your desire to do so, which category better describes the way God has equipped you: serving or speaking?
- What have others said to you that confirms this?

OBSERVE

The early church experienced growing pains that alerted the disciples to the impossibility of doing all the work themselves.

Leader: Read Acts 6:1–6 aloud. Have the group...

- circle the words *servicing* and *serve*.
- draw a box around each reference to **the word**.

DISCUSS

- What complaint had arisen within the congregation?
 - How did the twelve respond, according to verse 2? What does this tell you about their understanding of their gifts?
 - What type of gifts did the twelve have?
 - What category of gifts was needed to resolve the conflict?
 - Many people today believe the pastoral staff should take care of all the work related to the life of the church. From what you saw in this passage, is this true? Explain your answer.
- 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.
- 3 “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.
- 4 “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
- 5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus,

REVELATION 12:7–10

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the

OBSERVE

Now let’s go to the last book of the Bible, where we’ll learn the identity of the serpent. Revelation 12:7–10 describes a war in heaven. However, our focus today is not on the war but on learning more about the serpent, who plays a role in this war.

Leader: Read Revelation 12:7–10 aloud.

- *Have the group say aloud and mark with a pitchfork each reference to **the dragon**, including pronouns and synonyms. Watch carefully to be sure you mark all the names by which the dragon is called.*

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about the serpent?
- How is the serpent described? What name(s) is he called by?

- How does this compare to what you saw in Genesis 3?
 - What are the serpent's tactics, according to verses 9 and 10?
 - If the two passages you've looked at so far (Genesis 3:14–15 and Revelation 12:7–10) were your only sources of information about the enemy, what could you learn from them that applies to your own life?
- salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.”

MATTHEW 13:37–39

37 And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;

OBSERVE

We’ve already gained vital knowledge about the enemy and his intentions, but the Bible provides much additional information about how the enemy works. To give His disciples insight on this topic, Jesus told a parable about a farmer who planted, or sowed, seed in his field. That night an enemy came and sowed weeds on the same soil. As a result, wheat and tares (weeds) grew up together. The farmer left the weeds alone until the harvest, knowing that in pulling out the tares he risked destroying the wheat. The disciples asked for an explanation and this is what Jesus said.

Leader: Read Matthew 13:37–39 aloud.

- Have the group mark each reference to **the enemy**, including synonyms, with a pitchfork.

DISCUSS

- How is the enemy described?

- What has the enemy done?

³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.”

INSIGHT

The terms *Satan* and *the devil* both refer to a single entity—our enemy. *Satan* is found fifty-four times in the Old and New Testaments, while *devil* is used thirty-five times and occurs only in the New Testament.

Devil means “accuser, slanderer.”
Satan means “adversary, the enemy.”

JOHN 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

OBSERVE

In this next verse we find Jesus speaking to a group of religious leaders who refused to listen to the truth.

***Leader:** Read John 8:44 aloud.*

- *Have the group mark each reference to **the devil**, including pronouns, with a pitchfork.*

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about the devil? What words summarize his nature?

WRAP IT UP

While we will spend the next five weeks studying the topic of spiritual gifts in greater depth, the simple truth from this week's lesson is that you are gifted by God.

As we've clearly seen, "each one has received a *special* gift..." (1 Peter 4:10). This means that, if you are a follower of Christ, then you have been gifted by God to serve the body of Christ, the church.

That knowledge should be a tremendous encouragement to you. What an incredible privilege!

We also saw this week that, broadly speaking, the spiritual gifts given to believers fall into two categories: serving and speaking. Neither category is more important than the other, because all the gifts are intended to equip the saints and build up the body. Every gift is important.

If you don't already know what your spiritual gift is, spend some time this week reflecting on the ways you're already involved in meeting the needs of others or in fulfilling a particular role within the church. Most people are naturally drawn to areas of ministry that fit their gifting, so this may help give you some insight.

If you're *not* actively involved in your church in some way, we encourage you to consider why that is. If you are follower of Christ, He has equipped you and called you to take an active role in His work. Will you prove worthy of His calling?