

Rooted in the Spirit

Understanding Spiritual Gifts • Message 9

JC Thompson

June 8, 2025

Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Ask God to reveal your Spiritual Gifts.
- Pray for a heart that longs to serve.
- Pray for Brookwood to be a church that loves each other and serves with joy.

Scripture Reading:

In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)

A. Introduction (Romans 12:6-8)

We are nearing the end of our series entitled *Rooted in the Spirit*. We have been teaching the importance of our private devotion to God. Throughout this series, you have heard things like:

- Your public power comes from your private life.
- When you grow roots, you will bear fruit. Hearing from God is the ballgame.
- Prayer is our most important work. A church is only as strong as our prayer life.

In this series, you have to know that our private practices grow us closer to the Father's heart, and when we are close to the Father's heart, we are primed for service.

Today, I want to talk about significance. When I was young, I remember being in church and reading stories of miracles. A stick turning into a snake that ate the other snakes of the false prophets in Egypt.

The plagues that God sent on people as His people were enslaved.

Elijah battling the prophets and God lighting up the wettest wood in the entire world in spite of the prophets of Baal.

Jesus feeding the 5000, walking on the water, healing and casting out demons. I read about entire groups of people coming to know Christ.

But then, when I was in church, it seemed that the things happening in my church weren't the same as the things happening in the pages of Scripture.

And as a boy who loved sports and loved to read and had big God dreams, I started to wonder, *Is this all there is? I mean, is this what God had planned for His people today?*

You might be in here asking the question, *Does God want us involved in the same things He has been doing throughout the millennia?*

Yes, and even more than that, He has empowered you for it.

If you are wondering about your impact in the kingdom of God, today is the day to find it, name it, and start using it. You have been gifted by the Spirit for something bigger than your own kingdom.

This isn't a theory; this is about your calling.

Some of you in this room may not be stuck because you don't know what your step is, but because you are running from God. You have kept His gift in the box.

Today, let's unpack spiritual gifts.

B. Understanding Spiritual Gifts

1. **USE** what the Spirit has **GIVEN** you. (1 Corinthians 14; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:10)

So, how do we go from wondering if there is more to actually living like there is? It starts by understanding why God gave us spiritual gifts in the first place.

a. **Given by God**

All of the gifts of the Spirit come from the Holy Spirit. God, in His infinite wisdom, determines what gift we receive.

b. **Given for the church**

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

Every gift is given to build up the church. Your God given gift is for a specific group of people.

c. **Given to every believer**

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

Every believer is given a gift for the work of God when they are born again.

You may have more than one gift, but you definitely have at least one. Which means you can't complain about not being gifted enough to serve.

So, let me ask you a question: If God gave you a gift to use for the church and if everyone has one, including you, what are you doing with yours?

Some of you are waiting to “feel” ready. But the gifts are not effective because you are ready; they are effective because they are utilized.

“I think some people have an expectation problem, and some people have an agenda problem.”

- Some of us don’t actually *expect* God to move.
- Others expect Him to move only in the *way* we’ve predetermined.
- Both postures create distance from the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. RECOGNIZE how the Spirit works through you.

(1 Corinthians 14: 1-5, 26. C/R: 1 Corinthians 13:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)

Once we understand that spiritual gifts are given by God to build others up, we can begin to identify what those gifts really are.

These gifts are an overflow and find clarity in our relationship with the Lord. Confusion happens when we live untethered or unrooted.

God gives us these gifts for the benefit of the church. One of the words that the Bible uses for this benefit is “edification.”

It literally means to build up. If you think of building a house, this is the image that Scripture is painting. Paul isn’t imagining a classroom; he is imagining a job site. People utilizing their unique gifts in partnership with others working on the same project.

This idea of building up others is a dominant theme in Paul’s letters. The church is God’s body being built up, and every believer is part of the build.

Well, my brothers and sisters, let’s summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

1 Corinthians 14:26 (NLT)

I want to give you a quick overview of the categories of Spiritual Gifts. As we walk through these, I want you to ask the question: *Which of these might be my gift?*

Category	Gift	Description
Revelatory Gifts	Prophecy	Spirit-inspired message to build up, encourage, or comfort; must be tested
	Word of Knowledge	God-given insight into facts or truth not learned naturally
	Word of Wisdom	Supernatural wisdom for applying truth or guidance in situations
	Discerning of Spirits	Ability to distinguish between divine, human, or demonic influence
Power Gifts	Faith	Special confidence in God’s promises or power for bold action
	Gifts of Healings	Spirit-empowered restoration of physical, emotional, or spiritual health
	Working of Miracles	God’s power working through someone to perform supernatural acts
Speaking Gifts	Tongues	Spirit-enabled speech, often unknown to the speaker, for prayer or proclamation

Category	Gift	Description
Serving Gifts	Interpretation of Tongues	Translation or explanation of tongues so others may understand
	Teaching	Clear explanation and application of Scripture
	Exhortation	Urging and encouraging others toward faithfulness and growth
	Evangelism	Clear and effective communication of the gospel
	Shepherding/Pastoring	Caring for and leading others spiritually
	Helps / Service	Assisting and supporting others in practical ways
	Giving	Generous and Spirit-led sharing of financial or material resources
	Mercy	Compassion and care for those who are suffering or in need
	Hospitality	Welcoming and providing for others with warmth and generosity
	Administration	Organizing and managing people, resources, and ministry functions
	Leadership	Providing spiritual direction and influence to guide others well

1

These categories come from Sam Storms. His book *The Beginner's Guide to the Spiritual Gifts* is a helpful resource if you want to study this further.

Some of the gifts on this list raise questions for many. Some even raise discomfort, church hurt, or even controversy. Let's talk about some of them.

The real issue with the Holy Spirit is this: We tell people, *Don't be weird about it*. But we're more concerned with how weird it is than we are with how true it is.

Our modern discomfort often isn't with falsehood, but with what feels uncomfortable or unfamiliar.

But the Bible doesn't use categories like weird or socially acceptable. In fact, the things of the Spirit on the pages of our Bible aren't weird at all. They are normal operations of the Spirit in the Kingdom of God.

Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (NLT)

Scripture is concerned with truth or falsehood — not with how palatable or familiar something feels.

This is a challenge to discern spiritually, not culturally. Our filter with Scripture: not asking *Does this feel strange?* But *Is this true?*

Tongues

I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.

1 Corinthians 14:5 (NLT)

There are two uses of tongues, one for public ministry and one for private prayer. You can read about this most fully in 1 Corinthians 14, but here is my conclusion.

Paul says it is not useful and could be harmful to publicly speak in tongues if no one to interpret is present.

¹ This list is from Sam Storms in his book *The Beginner's Guide to the Spiritual Gifts*

But it is wonderful and should be desired to speak in this private prayer language to God.

I'll get this one out there first. I have no firsthand experience with tongues in private myself, and I have only seen tongues publicly from a distance.

Paul instructs believers to make sure there is someone there to interpret tongues in services where someone is speaking them. The gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues go hand in hand.

When I was in India, we were traveling around villages, and people were asking us to pray for them in their native language. I so desperately wanted to know and be able to share the gospel of Christ with them in their own language. So, I prayed and asked God to allow me to speak in their language. I didn't receive the gift for that day, but I will continue to pray and ask God to grant me the ability to speak or interpret to build up the believers.

Different churches represent the gifts in different ways, and this is a beautiful representation of the diversity and generosity of the Spirit of God in our churches.

Prophecy

Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT)

Paul says that we should desire Spiritual gifts, but especially desire prophecy!

What is prophecy?

Does God speak to us? Do you think that God speaks to you about other people?

Old Testament Prophecy/ New Testament Prophecy

Know in part or prophesy in part.

Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!

1 Corinthians 13:9 (NLT)

Prophecy can be a prediction about the future, but more clearly, I think that prophecy is using human words to describe something that God has brought to mind.

But this revelation comes only from God; it does not come from human knowledge, but specifically from God.

Prophecy, therefore, is not based on a hunch, a supposition, an inference, an educated guess, or even on sanctified wisdom. Prophecy is not based on personal insight, intuition, or illumination. Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation. This is what distinguishes prophecy from teaching. Teaching is always based on a text of Scripture. Prophecy is always based on a spontaneous revelation.

Sam Storms

Prophecy isn't primarily about predicting the future. It is often about sensing what God is doing in the moment, what He wants to say about it, and delivering it to the person affected.

Prophecy doesn't function like a crystal ball. It is often a burden that God wants to speak to a person about something right now. The gift of prophecy brings that into focus.

We only prophesy in part.

Words of Wisdom and Knowledge

The only mention of these gifts in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

I think the clearest way to see these gifts is in the person of Jesus. He knew things about people.

He knew about the scribes, the Pharisees, "saw" Nathanael sitting under a fig tree, and talks to the Samaritan woman about her secret sins.

Words of Knowledge may feel like an inner prompting or revelation about someone's situation that comes from God. Words of Wisdom give you divine guidance on what to do with that knowledge. One reveals things, and one applies things.

Godly wisdom comes from God and honors God, while Earthly wisdom is primarily concerned about pleasing oneself. But this gift is...

The gift about Godly wisdom is about replacing Earthly values with Heavenly ones.

Godly wisdom looks different than Earthly wisdom. Here are a few examples of this.

- Heavenly Math – 90% is more than 100%.
- Pray for your enemies.
- Self-control over indulgence.
- Honesty over deception.
- Love vs Self Interest.

At Brookwood, we welcome those who are still wrestling with these gifts. But we cannot afford to ignore them.

We cannot expect to be a New Testament church while ignoring New Testament gifts and power.

3. PUT your gift to WORK.

(Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 13:1. C/R: Matthew 7:24-27; Philippians 4:9)

We have spent time talking about why spiritual gifts matter, what they are and how the Spirit works through them. But all of that is moot if we don't actually utilize them.

One of the biggest myths in the church is that: *I'll start using my gifts when I am good at them, when I have enough time, and when I find the perfect role.* But our gifts cannot grow on the shelf. They grow when we use them.

My mentor once told me that someone has to let you be sorry before you get good. So many of you might be thinking, *Yeah, I know what God has given me as a gift, but I am not good at that.*

But I think it is important for us to understand that our gifts can only be improved if they are being utilized.

Benched gifts rot. Active gifts grow.

I remember when I started teaching. It was awful, but I heard the community around me telling me that God really spoke through me. My words seemed to be helping people grow closer to God, and that gave me the confirmation to keep going. There might be more there.

Most of my teaching opportunities when I was younger were in small groups or in youth group.

I also started to look for ways to do the oral portions of the group projects that I was assigned in high school and college. I wish I could tell you that it was a part of an intentional growth plan, but really, it was just that I was better at that, so I would be voluntold to do that part.

If I can get better at teaching, then so can you.

Here at the church, you may have a teaching gift, but you need to hone, practice and grow in that gift.

Even more important than developing your gift is your motive, your why. Paul says that it doesn't matter how gifted you are, if love isn't your motive, all of your giftedness is clanging cymbals.

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NLT)

Love is like gasoline for our spiritual gifts. With love, big impact, without love, just a bunch of useless tools.

There are no small parts, only small actors, Konstantin Stanislavski, the Father of modern acting. While this idea was for the theater, I think it applies to our gifts and roles. God is truly in charge of the gifts we receive, and we should accept them with joy and develop them with passion. There are places to teach with children, students, and in small groups. There are also nursing homes that would gladly take teachers to get reps every single week.

We must seek to excel in the part that God has given us and not be disappointed in the role that God has us playing.

You can start using these gifts right now on a serving team in our church, practice them in your community group and also with your family, your job and your neighborhood.

Our gifts are a lens that we can operate with in whatever capacity we can find ourselves in.

One of the things we often get asked is: *Where do you need me?* And as leaders, we need to approach this in two ways:

1. We want you to be in the place that God calls, which will give you the best opportunity to utilize your gifts, story, and skills.
2. We also have real needs that change season over season.

So today we want to offer you a step with both priorities in mind. Take out your insert.

We're giving you a tool today, a spiritual gifts assessment—to help you begin the discovery process. But hear me clearly: this tool is a start, not the solution. The best way to discover your gift is by serving, not just taking a test.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment

It's easy to find it in one of 4 ways:

1. Click the banner at the top of the app.
2. Click the banner at the top of the website.
3. Visit brookwoodchurch.org/spiritualgifts
4. Check out the insert in the Program for the link and general (yet essential) opportunities to get connected today to make a meaningful impact.

In addition to the assessment, we have identified some roles that are high priority for us in this season. So, if you are a just put me in coach, wherever you need type of person, fill this card out with your area of interest and drop it in the boxes when you leave today.

As we close.

Close

In the 1997 NBA Finals, the Chicago Bulls were up 3-2 in the series. They could clinch their 6th title with the win.

Arguably, the greatest team ever assembled is getting back together for one last ride. At the end of this historic run in the NBA finals, there is a moment that sticks out to me as a young boy.

Michael Jordan, the GOAT, gets double-teamed and passes the ball to Steve Kerr.

To make sure you understand this in terms of the gravity of this moment.

Michael Jordan is considered to be the greatest basketball player of all time. According to JC, he is for sure the GOAT. He has so many clutch moments, buzzer-beater shots, amazing athletic feats, and incredible defensive stops. He is 6'6" of pure athletic material. With the game tied, Michael, the greatest, passes it to Steve Kerr.

Steve Kerr is 6'1" and probably 180 lbs., soaking wet with a heavy backpack. He is not a picture of athleticism; in fact, he looks more like a car salesman or a lawyer.

Put it this way, as a kid, I knew I would never be Michael Jordan, but Steve Kerr seemed attainable.

Michael Jordan, in a timeout before this moment, looks at Steve Kerr and says, *They are gonna double me, Steve, I'm coming to you.*

In the biggest moment, when the Bulls needed a bucket, the greatest basketball player of all time told a guy who had struggled all series long, I am passing the ball to you.

[Clip of Steve Kerr shot]

I want you to understand something, Brookwood. We are playing for something much larger than a sixth NBA Championship. We are the children of God up against the Prince of the Power of the Air. We are the representatives of God for this world, and we may be the eternal difference for someone.

The Holy Spirit who is infinitely more capable of anything than Michael Jordan. He is more powerful, He is wiser, He is more understanding, He has more insight, He has the very plans of God, and He will not fail. The Holy Spirit is looking at you and saying, *I'm coming to you.*

This is your moment. God might have been speaking to you even this week. The Spirit is passing you the ball. How will you respond?

What will you do with the gift that God has given to you?

He has picked out a gift for you to use in our church, in your community group, in your home, in your workplace, and He is coming to you with the opportunity.

Remember, there are no All-Stars in the kingdom of God, only those who are available.

I'd like to take a moment and give us some time to respond to the Holy Spirit. Let's ask Him to speak, stir us and lead us to our next step.

You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be available. The Holy Spirit has given you something that only you can bring to this church and these people.

What's your next step with the gift that God has given to you?

Let's Pray.