

I. Intentional

- A. Our mission here at Restoration Fellowship is to gather, equip, and commission disciples of Jesus. As we grow in our understanding of the purpose of spiritual gifts, it becomes clear that in order to walk out our mission, intentionality on the elder's part in making sure the body is operating in—and receiving from—spiritual gifts is paramount. (Eph. 4:1-16)
- B. Staying true to our calling as a church—The scriptures are clear that growth and maturity of the spiritual gifts happens through intentional focus, desire, and shepherding. Therefore, the abundance or lack of the expression and maturity of the spiritual gifts are directly related to the intentionality of the church family or individuals to those gifts. (1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1)
- C. Cessationism and Continuationism –These are two opposing Christian theological views on whether spiritual gifts are still available to the church, or if they ceased with the Apostles and the establishment of the complete canon of scripture. Cessationists believe that gifts, more specifically the gifts known as the “sign gifts”, such as prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues, have divinely ceased. Continuationists believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the "sign gifts", are still available today.

*Let's consider an objection to the notion that some of the gifts have ceased. Doesn't scripture teach that the gifts last until Jesus comes again? Certainly, there are texts that teach that the gifts could last until Jesus returns. **There's no definitive teaching in the Bible that they've ceased.** Based solely on scripture we might even expect them to last until the second coming. I conclude, then, that certain texts permit but don't require the gifts to continue until the second coming. - Thomas Schreiner (Dr. Schreiner is one of the leading theologians of the cessationist position in the 20th century.)*

II. General Understanding

- A. Rooted in Love - The entire reason for the giving and intentionality that is placed upon the spiritual gifts in the scriptures is unto a greater measure of growth in the internal and external love of Christ. (1 Cor. 13; Matt. 22:37)
- B. Progression of Maturity - We believe that there are three distinct areas of intentionality that must be focused upon concerning fostering a culture of spiritual gifts. (1 Cor. 12-14)

1. Understanding - What they are and how they are supposed to function?
2. Activation - What yours are and are you positioned to function in them?
3. Maturity - Seeing an increase of love, wisdom, and power unto the measure of the fullness of Christ.

III. General Truths

- A. Gifts according to Grace not Merit - The gifts of the Spirit are given according to the will of God based upon His wisdom and benevolence, not according to our merit of righteousness, obedience, or maturity. (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:1; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:7)
- B. Desire - The spiritual gifts in variation of both the kind and increase of power or impact are given as we intentionally desire and ask for them. (Lk. 11:9-13)
- C. Immature to Mature - No matter the type of gift or amount of power that accompanies it, every individual, regardless of age, is on a journey of maturity in their gift. This maturity is not measured in power or impact but rather in operating in your gift with greater cooperation with the Spirit in love. (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 13:1-3)
- D. Diverse yet Equal - There is not one gift that is higher in importance than another. The diversity of gifting is given according to the wisdom of God in giving the gifts to us, according to the lack of the body in coming to the fullness of love.
- E. Edification of the Body - The gift that you are given is not for you, or about you; it's for the benefit of others so that they may be strengthened in their faith and love for Jesus. (1 Cor. 14:12, 26)
- F. Difficult in Current Cultural Structures - In my opinion, the current church culture in the West needs to make a massive shift in its structure and understanding in order to operate according to God's design concerning the function and form of the entire church family in its spiritual gift. (Eph. 4:4-12; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
- G. Fighting the Inclination to Pride and Superiority - The pervasive and continual battle that we will face when pursuing the spiritual gifts is the tendency toward pride concerning our gift and an elevation of certain gifts over others as it pertains to desirability and a false perception of Godliness. (1 Cor. 12:20-22)

- H. Tendency to surround yourself with your gift - A very common pitfall is to be drawn to, and to prioritize your community and exposure to your gift type. It's also very easy to create false expectations that lead to offense concerning the prioritization and expression of your gift above others. (1 Cor. 12:14-19)

IV. General Misconceptions

- A. Not a Hierarchy - Commonly, the gifts are seen in an order of a hierarchy of authority, which is a great error and has led to massive damage and abuse within the church. The list of gifts seems to give an order on how the church is built up (foundation to roof) rather than hierarchy of authority (foundation is in charge of the roof). (1 Cor. 12:28; 31 advantageous, needful)
 - 1. Gifts according to grace, not the merit of Godly character - The giving of the gifts in both power and type are not given as a result of, nor in validation of, an individual's Godliness. (See III. A.)
 - 2. Authority given according to merit of Godly character not grace - Authoritative leaders (Elders and Deacons) are biblically scrutinized and selected based upon their consistent history of proven Godly character. (1 Tim. 3:1-13)
- B. Not a Validation of Maturity of Love (Life in God) - Certain gifts seem more Godly because of the power or impact that they display. It's also very common to feel nearer to God or more validated in the maturity of your faith and love when you operate in your gift. These wrong views of spiritual gifts only produce legalism and roller-coaster-type unhealthy issues when it comes to your relationship with Jesus.
- C. Not a validation of authoritative leadership - Spiritual gifts must be recognized and given an environment in which to be activated and have influence within the body. However, we are never to submit ourselves under, or give a person authority in our lives, simply because they have a platform and power. Only elders and deacons are to be submitted to. (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Rom. 16:1-2; Phil 1:1)

And concerning the Apostles and Prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in a spirit. Rather from his behaviour, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known. And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he does not what he teaches, is

a false prophet. But whosoever shall say in a spirit 'Give me money, or something else,' you shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him. But every true prophet who wishes to settle among you is "worthy of his food." Likewise a true teacher is himself worthy, like the workman, of his food. Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you through the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honourable men together with the prophets and teachers. - Didache (Roughly AD 300)

- D. Not Static - The gift and power that you operate in today may or may not be the same 10 years from now. In fact it is my observation that both biblically and practically, both gifting and power shifts as the body has need, according to the wisdom and leadership of God. (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:31 advantageous, needful)

V. This Week and in Lifegroups

- A. Take the Gifts Test giftstest.com