

PNEUMATOLOGY (100)

Question #7 - How may a believer discover his spiritual gift?

There is a seven-fold formula which may be used for determining one's spiritual gift. This teacher did not invent this formula, he just compiled it; however, it is one that will work.

(Ingredient #1) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be spiritual. Rom. 12:1-2

One does not have to be perfect to discover his gift (no one would ever discover it) but one does have to meet certain spiritual prerequisites clearly set forth in these very verses. One must be consistently living a holy and sacrificial life for God and must be continually having his mind transformed by the Word of God. Many do not discover their spiritual gift because of a neglect right here.

(Ingredient #2) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be prayerful. James 4:2

It is certainly biblical and spiritual to ask God to reveal to you what your specific gift is. James says, "you do not have because you do not ask." Many do not know what their gift is because they have never asked God to reveal it to them.

(Ingredient #3) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be informed. I Cor. 12:1

God does not want us ignorant of this subject. Hopefully this doctrinal study will make us better informed concerning the works of the Holy Spirit and the subject of spiritual gifts. The more we know biblical truth, the more we are in a position to discern what is true even concerning our own spiritual gift.

For example, I have known people who really believe they have a spiritual gift that is clearly stated in Scripture to have been a temporal gift (I Cor. 13:8). Some spend most of their Christian lives in ignorance of what the Bible does say and therefore cannot possibly come to understand their real gift.

(Ingredient #4) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be opportunistic.

One who will discover his or her spiritual gift will be one who sees opportunities and takes advantage of opportunities to serve God in the church. Every opportunity one has in the church is an opportunity for God to reveal what one's gift is or isn't. Certainly a submissive attitude will be demonstrated here—one will not try to push and shove his way to use his gift—but one will take advantage of opportunities for service and more than likely will feel so insecure that there will have to be a total dependency on God.

(Ingredient #5) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be active.

One must be active in God's church. One must plug in and fit in. A person may not succeed at everything, but that is all part of the process of development. But one who sits on the sidelines and is not actively involved will never discover his or her gift.

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(Ingredient #6) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be willing.

God uses people who are willing to do what He wants them to do. If a person is willing to be what God wants and willing to serve where God wants (not always the same as what and where we want) God will surface the gift. Dr. Charles Ryrie said one who is not dedicated will never discover all of the abilities that God has given him, nor will he fully develop those which he does discover. It has often been observed that knowing God's will is 95% being willing to do God's will before you know what it is. If one is willing to be used of God in the way God wants, God will lead that one to an understanding of one's gift and powerful use of it.

(Ingredient #7) - To discover one's spiritual gift one must be counseled.

Those who are spiritually mature, who themselves have been gifted by God, are in the best position to counsel others concerning their spiritual gift. When they have opportunity to observe and counsel you, they can be used greatly by God to help you determine whether or not you have a particular gift. It is possible that they have spotted something that you have not even considered or that others have not even seen.

It is imperative in such situations to receive counsel from those who truly are spiritual, not those who are spiritually dead. Proverbs emphasizes time and time again the importance of not listening or even associating with those who are going nowhere for God. People who are not spiritual are not in any position to counsel you concerning your spiritual gifts, although they may help in the process. After all, if God can speak through Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28-29) he can certainly speak to and through those who are not spiritual.

Question #8 - What are some key observations we may make concerning spiritual gifts?

(Observation #1) - No list of gifts in any passage contains a complete list, they are all a partial list.

This is important because many desire to look to just one or two passages for their information. For example, some will use I Corinthians 14:2 to form their whole belief about tongues. This is not a legitimate method of handling God's Word, for all passages must be carefully considered.

(Observation #2) - Some spiritual gifts are specifically said to be temporal and some are specifically said to be permanent.

For example, I Corinthians 13:8 specifically lists three gifts and specifically states that these three gifts are temporal. On the other hand, in the same context, I Corinthians 13:13 lists "faith" as an abiding gift, one that is permanent. It is the responsibility to carefully study to determine which gifts may be classified as temporal and which may be classified as permanent.

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(**Observation #3**) - Some spiritual gifts are specifically said to be apostolic .

Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to **us** by those who **heard**, God also bearing witness with **them**, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

II Corinthians 12:12 says, “The signs of a true **apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.”

Both of these texts make it very clear that certain gifts were given to the apostles .

(**Observation #4**) - Spiritual gifts need to be studied in view of the completed Bible.

I Corinthians 13:10 does allow us to see a connection between spiritual gifts and the completion of Scripture. It is the contention of several commentators, including myself, that I Corinthians 13:10 is a reference to the completion of the revelation of God, the completion of the Bible.

In I Corinthians 13:10, the word “perfect” is one that means to be finished or completed (G. Abbott Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 442). Paul’s point was when something was finished or completed the temporal gifts would be done away.

Now there have been at least five views as to what is meant by “the perfect”:

- 1) Some say it refers to the Rapture - when it occurs, the temporal gifts named—knowledge and prophesy—will be done away. The problem is prophecy does not stop at the Rapture; in fact, it in many ways just begins.
- 2) Some say it refers to the church reaching maturity - when it occurs, gifts disappear.
- 3) Some say it refers to when we all get to eternity - then the gifts disappear.
- 4) Some say it refers to Christ’s second coming - when He returns the gifts disappear.
- 5) Some say it refers to when the Bible is completed . We believe this is correct:
 - A. Because the noun “the perfect” is neuter - literally “that which is perfect,” not masculine “he who is perfect.” If Paul had Jesus Christ in mind, he would have used a masculine noun or pronoun, no neuter. “The perfect” refers to the completion of some thing rather than to some person .
 - B. It makes sense in view of the two gifts mentioned in verse 9. The thing that eliminates the need for the gift of prophecy and the gift of knowledge is the completed Scriptures. In fact, once the Scriptures are completed, it is eternally dangerous to claim to have additional revelation (Rev. 22:18-19).

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- C. It is consistent with how a person comes to mature and develops from a child into a man—by the Word of God (I Cor. 3:1-2; I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-13).
- D. It makes sense when the gift of tongues eliminates itself. The gift of prophecy and knowledge are needed until the Bible is completed but tongues is not. Tongues could pass off the scene by itself as soon as sign gifts were no longer necessary to establish apostolic authority and truth.
- E. It makes sense because it is the Word of God that does reveal “face-to-face” what a man truly is in the sight of God. Any person who will look into the Bible will have his soul cut open (Heb. 4:12). God’s Word will show exactly where a person is in his relationship with God.

Gifts must be studied in view of the entire Bible. We may observe that in the chronology of the four major passages that deal with the subject of spiritual gifts, the order is I Corinthians (A.D. 54); Romans (A.D. 58); Ephesians (A.D. 60) and I Peter (A.D. 64). As the N.T. books increased, the gift lists decreased. I Corinthians lists 14 spiritual gifts, Romans lists 8 spiritual gifts, Ephesians lists 4 and I Peter lists 2. When Paul wrote I Corinthians, only three other letters were written (Galatians, I & II Thessalonians). I Corinthians was written before 23 other books, which must be considered. Most who study spiritual gifts miss this important point.

(Observation #5) - Some spiritual gifts are speaking gifts and some are non-speaking serving gifts.

I Peter 4:11 clearly makes this distinction by stating—“Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies...”.

In this one verse, the Apostle Peter draws a clear distinction between a speaking gift and a non-speaking serving gift. Unfortunately, many people who love God do not realize this important point and the result may be counterproductive. For example, if one who does not have a speaking gift tries to function as one who does, his ministry will not be effective. It is one thing to take advantage of an opportunity to minister, but it is quite another to take on a ministry when one doesn’t have the supernatural gift of God. In such cases, both the person and the people will be miserable.

If one is to “rightly divide” the subject of spiritual gifts, one must look at each gift and make the following determinations: 1) Is it a temporal gift? 2) Is it an apostolic gift? 3) How may this gift be interpreted in light of completed Scripture? 4) Is the gift a speaking gift? 5) Is the gift a non-speaking serving gift? 6) Is the gift really for today?

(Observation #6) - Some spiritual gifts are gifts given to an individual and some spiritual gifts are given to the church.