



# BE THE BODY SPIRITUAL GIFTS

## STUDY

### SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DEFINED

Identifies, develops, and deploys one's Spiritual gifts for the good of others in and through the body of Christ.

### SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DESCRIBED

A brief glance at the headlines, and it's clear, brokenness and pain abound in this world. The normal and natural response to the pain we experience and observe is to wonder what God is doing about

Scripture shows us that when Jesus was physically present, He informed and demonstrated to His followers that He came to bring healing, restoration, freedom, and hope (Luke **4:14-30**). Or put another way, the very reason He came was to address the brokenness we all experience. When preparing to return to the Father, He told his followers: "*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*" (John 20:21). He would be sending them - and ultimately us - to continue the work He had started. We would be His extension - His body - in a world in need of his healing touch. When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul made clear their unified purpose: "*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it*" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

The "you" in this statement is plural. He is telling the church that collectively we make up the body of Christ in this world. By joining together in the gifts God has given us through His Spirit, we represent Christ to each other and to the broken world that surrounds us. We are Christ's hands and feet and we are called and encouraged to continue the good work Christ started when He walked the earth. This calls for wisdom and discernment in Christ's followers.

Each believer is given specific gifts by the Spirit to serve the Body. No one is asked or expected to be the entire body of Christ. We each have a part to play, and those who follow Christ will seek these gifts from God so they can maximize their impact in a world that desperately needs healing and reconciliation. The practice of uniquely gifting individuals is not entirely new at the time of Christ. Scripture records unique gifting given by the Spirit to God's people throughout history. The clarity we now have about God's mission and purpose in this world and the invitation and expectation we have to fully participate in the hope and restoration God is bringing in and through His people.

*"God has created and designed us with a purpose in mind. We are 'wired' to care about some things more than others. We have been given spiritual gifts to competently accomplish ministry tasks. We have also been designed with a personal style of relating to others and the world around us. We have been given a passion."*

- Bruce Bugbee

## EVIDENCE OF THIS SPIRITUAL OUTCOME IN A PERSON'S LIFE

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- Aware of one's spiritual gifts.
- Continually developing and maturing in one's spiritual gifts.
- Knows the strengths and weaknesses associated with one's spiritual gifts.
- Looks out for the spiritual gifts in others and seeks to encourage them to walk in those gifts.

### GUIDANCE

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

#### EXODUS 31:1-11

Observations:

Discernment Question: How might God have gifted you in ways you perceive as natural (like the craftsmen in this passage) but are not natural for others?

#### ROMANS 12:3-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: How aware are you of the Spiritual gifts you've been given? Do your areas of giftedness bring about arrogance or humility in your life? In what manner and attitude are you walking in your gifts?

## **1 CORINTHIANS 12**

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you covet others' gifts or view yours as more important? Do you elevate some gifts over others? How does this impact the way The Body functions? How could you increasingly partner with others and empower them in their own gifts moving forward?

## **EPHESIANS 4:11-16**

Observations:

Discernment Question: Would you describe your current participation in the Body of Christ as active or passive? What is it that drives you to or detains you from ministering to the boy of Christ through the spiritual gifts you have been given? What thoughts or feelings arise from reading about the integral part you play in the building up the church and bringing it to maturity in Christ?

## **2. TIMOTHY 1:6**

Observations:

Discernment Question: What are you currently doing to fan the flame of the gifts God has given you? How are you increasing your effectiveness? What sort of development, training, or experience could you engage in to make you more fruitful in the body of Christ?

**1 PETER 4:10-11**

Observations:

Discernment Question: How do you lean on God's strength in your service? How might you do so increasingly in a way that will give you greater strength and endurance in your serving?

## NEXT STEPS

What are practical next steps you will do based on what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture about cultivating your spiritual gifts? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life, as well.

## MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

### **1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV**

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

### **1 Peter 4:10, NIV**

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*



# BE THE BODY

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### THE TINKERERS

A passage may initially seem like sand in the midst of more sand. But upon further reflection, we discover an event that must have been remarkable. In the middle of a long description of the measurements of the tabernacle, right in the midst of fabric folds and cubits, we read this...

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills — to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent" (Exodus 31:1-7).*

There are these two guys, Bezalel and Oholiab. Somewhere along the way — let's assume it was at a young age — Bezalel and Oholiab received something unique from the Spirit of God. They were given uncommon ability to "engage in all kinds of crafts." They simply had a knack for fixing things, for putting things together, for creating stuff others couldn't create.

As youngsters, Bezalel and Oholiab would have tinkered. They would have fixed things, created things, built things, and torn things apart. This tinkering may have even caused trouble at times.

Bezalel marches off with his mother's earrings, nails them to a piece of wood, and turns them into something that is mildly attractive, but not exactly what Mom had in mind. "What am I to do with this boy?" Mom would ask.

Oholiab is constantly losing Dad's tools. Every time Dad is looking for the handy blade to fix the family tent, it's nowhere to be seen and Oholiab is unusually quiet. "What am I going to do with you?" Dad would ask with as much restraint as he could muster.

Nobody suspected the abilities were anything more than children's tinkering. Yes, everybody could see the skills. But it's unlikely that they had uncommon charisma or the ability to lead their peers.

Bezalel and Oholiab were good with their hands. That's all. That's all?

Not exactly.

Unknown to family and peers, in the unseen world, a plan was unfolding.

The tinkering was not by chance. The abilities given to Bezalel and Oholiab were given by the Spirit of God. These gifts and abilities would be refined over the years for a purpose both specific and profound.

Bezalel and Oholiab, along with others gifted with their hands, would use their skills to create the tent of meeting which would represent God's presence with His people. Even more, Bezalel would build the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant would house the Ten Commandments and be considered so sacred that later people would die for touching it in an unholy manner.

Imagine: one day, Bezalel and Oholiab would stand at a distance from their work and watch as ...

*...the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35).*

That's a powerful moment.

God had prepared Bezalel and Oholiab for a date and time when He would need exactly what they had to offer. The work God did in their lives would match the work God was doing in the world. What likely started as the play of children was later revealed to be the very work of God.

This leads to a question: Are Bezalel and Oholiab unique?

## **GOD'S WORKMANSHIP**

"Of course, they're unique!" we think. "That's the very idea. They had competencies from God others did not have. God prepared a unique work for these unique people."

But is it unique for God to prepare a unique work for unique people? Does God do for others what he did for Bezalel and Oholiab? Are they unique in finding a way to use their gifts and competencies? Does God do that for others or just a select few?

Consider the following from Paul's letter to Ephesus: *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Two things...

We are God's workmanship.

God prepared work for us to do.

That sounds familiar.

Bezalel and Oholiab were God's workmanship. Through God's Spirit they received the ability to do things and the wisdom and knowledge to perform them in a way that the holy abode of God would require. The work God did in them was then matched by a work He had prepared for them. Not only did He give them gifts, but He gave them an opportunity to do something significant with those gifts.

With this work of God through Bezalel and Oholiab in mind, consider the massive work God is currently doing: *"I am making everything new!"* (Revelation 21:5).

God is up to something. He's making all things new. He's doing this through the establishment of the kingdom of God. Christ described His purpose this way: *"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God... because that is why I was sent"* (Luke 4:43).

So, Christ came to establish the Kingdom of God. How is He continuing this work today? *"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it"* (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Christ is working, creating, and building. His "body" is at work. Each of His followers *"is a part of it."*

Imagine the moment when Christ's people will stand back, survey their work, and discover, *"... The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever"* (Revelation 11:15).

This will be a resounding echo of the moment Bezalel and Oholiab saw the Spirit of God descend upon their work. This coming moment will be the revealing of a new existence where justice and mercy will prevail, and the presence of God will be realized, recognized, and revered.

Like Bezalel and Oholiab, the people of God will see the fullness of their work. They will see that God was orchestrating a good and mighty plan, and by grace, they were allowed to take part in it. What often didn't make sense will then make sense. What at times felt insignificant will then be fully known as miraculous.

Preparation and work toward this moment is happening right now. Christ is creating, and we are all invited to take part in His work. This leads us to important questions:

How does this work? What must we do? How do we discover the workmanship of God in our own lives along with the work "God prepared in advance for us to do?"

## **DIVERSITY IN THE BODY**

An important statement about the body of Christ is found in the following passage:

*Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body (1 Corinthians 12:14-20).*

The beauty of the body is that it's composed of a diversity of parts, but together form a unified whole. One of the great inhibitors to a fully functioning body of Christ is the common misperception that the kingdom of God is built only by people with visible roles in the church. Not only does this deny the many essential roles played by all God's people, but it also denies the job description given to pastors and teachers.

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12).*

The very purpose of pastors and teachers is "to prepare God's people for works of service" so that the body of Christ might grow and flourish. The entire body of Christ is moved to action. Yes, the mouth speaks, but it speaks in order to inspire and equip the hands, legs, and feet. The work of God is not limited to a couple of people, to a once-a-week event, or to a certain physical location. The work of God is done seven days a week, by all God's people, in every sector of society.

This leads us to a second thought. What are spiritual gifts?



## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Consider two passages of Scripture where spiritual gifts are mentioned explicitly.

Romans tell us:

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6-8).*

1 Corinthians tells us:

*To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).*

Each of these passages offers its own listing of gifts. There is overlap, but there are differences. Scripture is not attempting to give a comprehensive list of spiritual gifts but is giving us a concept. The concept is that the Spirit of God crafts and empowers each person uniquely.

Names for the gifts will vary. Even today, one church will define the gifts a little differently from another. This doesn't mean we can inject any meaning we want into Scripture's named gifts. But it does mean we should simply be asking, "How has God made and empowered me? What is a unique contribution I can make?" rather than attempting to force ourselves into a mold Scripture did not create.

One such example of unique gifting in Scripture is Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We read that, "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds" (Daniel 1:17). In today's language, we would say they were gifted in knowledge. In addition, Daniel was given the ability to interpret dreams.

The story of Daniel shows the critical nature of these gifts. These men had tremendous influence because of the respect they gained for their proficiencies. Even more, Daniel, with his ability to understand dreams, spoke powerful words to powerful people at critical moments in history. These gifts mentioned in Daniel are gifts that may or may not be on the lists given in the New Testament, but they are reflective of the ways God may empower a person for the contribution He is preparing him or her to make.

In light of the diversity of potential gifts, it's critical to observe that *all* of the gifts find their source in the Spirit. Equally attributed to the Spirit are gifts of healing and encouragement, miraculous powers and leadership, prophesying and teaching. We err when we attribute one kind of gift to a person's natural abilities and another kind of gift to something done by the Spirit of God. All of our abilities find their source in the workmanship of God. "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

As we consider the contributions we can make, we shouldn't limit ourselves to certain categories or to things traditionally considered natural or supernatural. Ultimately, it's all supernatural if its source is the Spirit of God.

## **SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE NOT STATIC**

God is at work. This does not mean He utilizes our gifts without our cooperation. We must be open and willing to let Him work through us.

Scripture tells us *“we are God’s workmanship.”* But this doesn’t mean we simply sit back and wait for competencies to appear. At least two passages of Scripture point to our opportunity and our responsibility.

First, the opportunity: *“Now eagerly desire the greater gifts”* (1 Corinthians 12:31). This message Paul gives to the Corinthian church comes right before His exhortation on love. Love is the greatest gift because if we are pursuing the love of God and love of others first and foremost, we will be most available and willing to walk in the right and best Spiritual gifts needed at any given moment.

We must guard against categorizing ourselves and limiting our influence by what’s true of us today. God may want to use us in ways that will require new workings of the Spirit in our lives. It is a good and noble prayer to request that God would increase our effectiveness, give us gifts we don’t currently have, and equip us to accomplish works we are not currently equipped to accomplish.

And second, the responsibility: *“I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands”* (2 Timothy 1:6). Timothy was ordained and commissioned in his spiritual gift of ministry, but as his close mentor and Spiritual father, Paul, reminded him, he needed to continually invest in his gift and guard against growing timid or hesitant to walk in it. It is when we exercise our gifts, train these gifts, and pray over these gifts that we continue to fan them into flame.

This leads to another critical question. How do we discern our spiritual gifts?

## **SPIRITUAL GIFTS CONFIRMED**

Paul was gifted as an apostle. Perspectives vary as to what this means exactly. But at a minimum, the word apostle means, “one who is sent.” Paul traveled the world and entered into villages where *“he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ ...”* (Acts 28:31). Despite evidence of his gifting to us today, there were some in his day that challenged the validity of his ministry. They questioned if he was truly gifted and called to do the work he was doing.

Paul’s response is instructive:

*...Do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts* (2 Corinthians 3:1-3).

According to Paul, the evidence and confirmation of Paul’s spiritual gifting was the fruit of his ministry among the Corinthian believers. While we gain insight into our gifting through exercises, assessments, and conversations with friends, ultimately, it through discerning the fruit that brings affirmation of our gifts and calling. This is not to say that if we do not see immediate fruit from our service that it means we lack gifts in this area. Reaping a harvest takes perseverance. But, affirmation of spiritual gifts is most effectively found in their usefulness.

## THE SPIRIT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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The following passage is commonly read at weddings. The context, though, is not marriage, but spiritual gifts. Listen carefully to the words.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).*

Spiritual gifts can be compared to tools. Tools can be used for good or evil. A hammer can be used to build a shelter for those in need of protection, but it also can be used as a weapon. Most important is not whether people have this or that gift, but the spirit in which they use whatever gifts they have. Spiritual gifts are not for building up self. They are given, by grace, for the good of others- for the building up of the Church.

As we increase our service and our participation in the body of Christ, we must be driven by love. If we do it for the applause of others, or at the expense of others, not only are we the clanging cymbal mentioned above, but we will ultimately discover it's not worth it.

Service is hard. Yes, there is joy and even a thrill in using our gifts. But we quickly learn that for every person who celebrates our actions there will be another who challenges our work or is offended by our efforts. Hear Christ's warning: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me" (John 15:18, 21). We deploy our gifts for service because we have been liberated by the love of Christ and we want others to experience this freedom.

**An important note:** There are certain gifts that are also attributes related to being a Christ-follower. Just because you don't excel in certain kinds of spiritual gifts, does not mean you're exempt from pursuing them. For instance, if you're not specifically gifted in showing mercy, hospitality, or generosity, this doesn't mean that you are off the hook for being merciful, hospitable or generous and growing in these attributes.

## ENGAGEMENT

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Let's consider our friends Bezalel and Oholiab again. At some point (and Scripture does not record this interaction), we can imagine that Moses might have approached them with an opportunity. "We need your service," he might have said. "God has asked us to build His tabernacle, and He had given you both have the ability and knowledge to accomplish this." Their knowledge of their gifting helped them embrace the service God had prepared for them.

We, too, must know ourselves. The failure to recognize God's workmanship in our lives can prevent us from realizing the work He prepared us to do.

So now it's time for us to evaluate, pray, reflect, and assess. How are we gifted? With what other gifts may God want to empower us if we would simply ask Him? And most importantly, what's motivating us? Are we driven by love? Or, are we driven by the desire for attention or power?

The **Apply** section of this outcome will help you recognize these very things with the confidence that there are works that God has specifically prepared for you to do!



# BE THE BODY SPIRITUAL GIFTS

How has God gifted you? What has He uniquely designed you to do? One of the best ways to find the answers is to simply dig in and prayerfully self-evaluate. The pages that follow are designed to help you do just that.

After completing an online spiritual gifts assessment, you will be asked to write a list of suspected spiritual gifts. Then through additional questions and reflection, you will be asked to revise and improve upon that list.

As critical as this exercise is, it also comes with an important warning label. Spiritual gifts are fully affirmed not through assessments but through service. This assessment should not be viewed as an ending point but a starting point. The purpose of assessing our spiritual gifts is to point us toward the most likely place for spiritual impact. You are encouraged to use what you learn here to accelerate your optimal service. As you act on what you learn, you will gain increased understanding about the contributions God has empowered you to make.

Engage the following three steps to gain clarity on your spiritual gifts.

- **Assess my gifts**
- **Explore my gifts**
- **Apply my gifts**

## **FIRST STAGE: ASSESSING MY GIFTS**

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Start by completing the spiritual gift assessment:

<https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts-test-adult-version/>

Once you have completed your assessment, write your highest-scoring gifts here:

**INITIAL SPIRITUAL GIFTS LIST:**

## **SECOND STAGE: EXPLORING MY GIFTS**

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Though assessments can be a useful tool, they are not the final authority on giftedness. Ultimately, spiritual gifts are confirmed or denied by the fruit that is born from their use. In this second stage, you are asked to test your initial list by researching the gifts and searching for evidence of their presence in your life.

### **STEP 1: Research the gifts.**

**1. Descriptions** — When you have completed the assessment, read the descriptions of all the gifts represented in that assessment, including those for which you scored low. Do the descriptions of the gifts for which you scored high fit what you perceive of yourself? Are there gifts for which you scored low but with which you still identify?

**2. Research** — If you would like to learn more about your suspected spiritual gifts, search and study the passages that speak on these specific gifts and write down what you find.

**3. Community** — Invite trusted community into your assessment. Ask them what Spiritual gifts they see evident in you, or any gifts they think are there, but could be used more fully. Does their assessment align with what you have found?

How does this additional information and scriptural context refine your understanding of your Spiritual gifts?

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**STEP 2: Consider Past Experiences.**

Because Spiritual gifts are best confirmed by Spiritual fruit, prayerfully and thoughtfully reflect about times you have seen your suspected Spiritual gifts in action. Record those events here. If you scored high on the Spiritual gift of encouragement, for example, have there been times where you have come alongside a friend and helped him or her get through a hardship? Or if you scored high on the Spiritual gift of leadership, when in your history have you noticed your ability to rally people toward a particular objective or goal? The experiences may or may not be directly related to service in and through a church.

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### **STEP 3: Revise Your Gifts List.**

Based on your considerations in Steps 1 and 2, revise your initial spiritual gifts list — adding any gifts that you sense may be present and removing any gifts that don't seem to fit.

#### **REVISED SPIRITUAL GIFTS LIST:**



### **THIRD STAGE: APPLY MY GIFTS**

Where do you see evidence of you living, loving, and serving with the use of your Spiritual gifts recently?

Identify some potential ways you can step into a situation(s) where you can't use your Spiritual gifts.

Notes: