

## Temperament, Character, and Spiritual Gifts

### Lesson 13 Dr. Lamar Allen

1. **Building up the Body of Christ:** All Christians, past, present, and future together make up the mystic body of Christ, the church universal. God is Creator, Savior, and Lord. All that we are and all that we have is from Him. He gives us life in His image and likeness. At our natural birth we receive temperament. When the Holy Spirit regenerates a person in spiritual rebirth, He begins to transform their character into a likeness of Christ. While moral character is transformed, temperament, which is morally neutral, remains about the same. Because of character transformation, the way temperament is used changes (immoral uses are gradually eliminated, and moral uses added), but the underlying preferred way of perceiving, making decisions, and doing things remains unchanged.

With spiritual rebirth, God gives spiritual gift(s). While Spiritual gifts are given to individuals, spiritual gifts but are intended for the common good of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7) not primarily for the benefit of the individual to whom they are given.

What is a “spiritual gift”? A spiritual gift is an ability given by God to an individual to enable them to perform a function needed for the common good of the church universal, the body of Christ. All people have natural gifts – particular craft skills and/or artistic, athletic, or mental abilities. Natural gifts come with natural birth, genetically inherited from our parents, but ultimately from God. Spiritual gifts are given directly by God, the Holy Spirit, as a part of spiritual rebirth. Every Christian is been given at least one spiritual gift for benefit of the whole.

2. **Gifts of Grace:** Spiritual gifts are gifts of grace, freely given by God for the benefit of His Church, because He loves His people and is a good and gracious Giver. We are to focus our eyes on the Giver and use the gift as He intends. Failure to use a spiritual gift is dishonoring to God. Spiritual gifts often are based on natural gifts, but the Spirit adds crucial factors. The Spirit may convert a natural gift into a spiritual gift by supernaturally giving special motivation inclining a person to use natural talent for God’s glory and the common good of the Church.

Special motivation can be and sometimes is suppressed. But, when we strive to use God’s gift in the way He intends, He gives us energy and endurance to persevere even in the face of adversity. As already mentioned, spiritual gifts are imparted supernaturally by the Holy Spirit and are often grounded in natural gifts but have added supernatural components. The ratio of supernatural to natural components varies. The gift of performing miracles seems to be mostly, if not entirely, supernatural. The gift of service or encouragement may be mostly natural. Every spiritual gift is supernaturally given by the Holy Spirit to a specific person for a specific reason.

3. **Apostle Paul:** Think of the Apostle Paul as he was before conversion. He was Saul the Pharisee, multi-talented, zealous for the Law, and active in suppressing Christian deviations from “true Judaism”. He was a natural leader. When he was converted on the Damascus road,

the Holy Spirit gave him spiritual gifts. Were these spiritual gifts wildly different from his pre-conversion natural gifts? In one sense, yes. Before his conversion, Saul's gifts were focused on his pre-conversion beliefs and motivated by his unconverted character. His zeal was focused on eliminating Christianity to benefit what he believed to be true religion.

Converted on the Damascus road, Saul became a new creature in Christ called Paul. Formerly actively against Christ, he became in all things for Christ. He received spiritual gifts which he focused on the work of Christ. In that sense they are new. But, God used his natural gifts as the foundation on which his spiritual gifts are built. His leadership, scholarly, and speaking gifts are transformed and reenergized. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit and drawn to the things of Christ, he desires in all things to be obedient and pleasing to Christ. His moral outlook is changed drastically, from persecuting Christians to evangelizing in Christ's name. From his new position in Christ, he looks back in horror at what he was and what he had done.

4. **Spiritual Gifts and Temperament:** Every spiritual gift from God must of necessity be expressed through our God-given temperament. He could certainly change our temperament, but He doesn't seem to do that. He could give us a spiritual gift incompatible with our temperament, but it seems very unlikely. God is God of order, not of chaos.

Understanding our temperament helps understand what our spiritual gift(s) are likely to be. Many spiritual gifts are supernaturally motivated and enhanced natural abilities. But not always! Miracles and prophecy seem to have little to do with natural abilities. Those gifts seem to be totally a result of the Holy Spirit acting through a person.

If temperament inclines us to be compassionate and hospitable, our spiritual gift likely lies in an area compatible with compassion and hospitality. A person who has a natural talent for music will often have a spiritual gift that involves music.

5. **Use of Spiritual Gifts:** Spiritual gifts are given for building up the church. "Building up" includes two categories of activities. (1.) Working for the common good of those already in Christ, and (2.) reaching out to bring others into the Christ (Eph 4:12).

The New Testament has five lists of spiritual gifts: 1Cor 12:8-10, 29-30; Rm 12:6-8; Eph 4:11; and 1Pt 4:11. Each list has different numbers of gifts. Some gifts have somewhat different names in different lists. No list contains all the gifts mentioned in the combined five lists. There is no indication that the lists taken altogether are complete.

Instead, the implication is that God gives all the spiritual gifts that are required to meet the needs of the Church at any given time. The Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation on which all spiritual gifts rest. He is both the cornerstone of the Church and the head of the Body. Within the five lists there are three categories of spiritual gifts: Equipping, Service, and Signs.

**Equipping gifts include:** Apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastor, teacher. **Service gifts include:** Administration (leadership), advocate (encouragement), faith, giving, helping,

showing mercy. **Sign gifts include:** Miracles, healing, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and the ability of discernment to distinguish between good and bad spirits.

Equipping gifts are public in nature. They focus on the ministry of the Word and teaching for equipping the saints for service and for evangelizing unbelievers. Service gifts function within the body in a more private manner. People with service gifts take on the ministry of governing, encouraging, strengthening, and building up the body. Sign gifts are direct supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power. Sign gifts were used to authenticate God's message and His messengers when the Church was in its infancy had no completed Bible to instruct and guide its people. Sign gifts testified to God's gift of salvation through imputed righteousness. That message was confirmed by those who heard and saw the Lord, as well as testified to by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Heb 2:3b-4).

In the Romans 12 introduction to the subject of spiritual gifts, Paul calls for believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. To avoid being squeezed by pressure from the world into its mold, believers are to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. They are to view themselves in proper perspective with sober judgment, having both humility (1Cor 12:12-21) and dignity (1Cor 12:22-27). Though there are many Christians, ***“we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another”*** (Rm 12:5). The Holy Spirit's gives different spiritual gifts to each believer but ***“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness”*** (Rm 12:6-8).

6. **Gifts of Equipping: Apostleship** (Eph 4:11, 1Cor 12:28). The work of apostles provided a sturdy framework for the developing Body of Christ. Commissioned directly by Christ (including Paul), the apostles had virtually absolute authority in the early church. Their ministry of instruction was authenticated by signs and wonders. The ministry of apostles was foundational in the establishment of the Church and apostleship was given only during those early groundbreaking days.

**Prophecy** (Rm 12:6; 1Cor 12:10, Eph 4:11). A prophet is God's spokesman – an infallible messenger speaking for God. This gift was essential during the foundational stage of the Church to provide necessary authenticated instruction until the blueprint of His Word was completed. Prophecy appears to have been a phenomena that ceased with the completion of the New Testament documents.

**Evangelism** (Eph 4:11). This is a gift of unique ability to share the gospel of salvation with ease, courage, and effectiveness. The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts of hearers.

**Pastor** (Eph 4:11). A pastor functions as the heart of the local ministry. He nourishes and protects. Like a shepherd, he leads his congregation to proper spiritual nourishment, watches over them to protect them from harm, and equips them to live in a manner pleasing to God.

**Teaching** (1Cor 12:28). Closely related to the gift of pastor is the gift of teaching. Some are in fact pastor-teachers. The principal function of a pastor is to be the overall guardian of the flock. The principal function of a teacher is to be a guardian and expositor of the truth.

Unlike a prophet, a teacher originates nothing new; they strive to define, describe, clarify, and declare existing revelation.

7. **Gifts of Service: Administration (leading, governing)** (Rm 12:8). A person with this gift is goal-oriented and decisive. They might also be visionary. They are leaders. The Greek word in 2Corinthians means “one who steers a ship” or “helmsman”. A person with this gift has the ability to steer a committee, or a church, or a global ministry – to keep them on course, on schedule, and out of trouble

**Faith** (1Cor 12:9). Every Christian receives the gift of faith (Eph 2:8), but some people are given faith as a special spiritual gift giving them an extra unique ability to trust God even in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. People with this gift live their lives on faith’s edge with such daring trust that their lives would be nonsense if God did not exist. They are “Hebrews 11 people” – living monuments of faith and examples to the Church.

**Giving** (Rm 12:6-8). Persons with the spiritual gift of giving detect and provide for the needs of the saints with great joy and generosity. Everyone in Christ is expected to give consistently and generously (1Cor 16:2; 2Cor 9:6; 2Cor 8:3), but the spiritual gift of giving is a special capacity to give, a unique inner drive and longing to provide for the needs of others.

**Helping** (Rm 12:7). Persons with the spiritual gift of helping have a unique ability to assist and support others in the family of God in everyday, practical ways with great faithfulness and delight. Jesus said, *“whoever among you wants to be great must become the servant of you all, and if he wants to be first among you he must be the slave of all men! For the Son of Man himself has not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to set many others free”* (Mark 10:44-45, Phillips NT).

**Showing mercy (compassion)** (Rm 12:8). A person with this spiritual gift has the ability to empathize or identify emotionally with the needs, pains, heartaches, disappointments, and sorrows of others and to be an agent of healing and restoration. The good Samaritan of Christ’s parable (Lk 10:30b-37) shows mercy.

8. **Sign Gifts:** Sign gifts were God’s provision for authenticating both His message and His messengers. In the first century while the New Testament writings were in process, it was necessary for the Church to receive special revelation from God. In this transitional period apostleship, prophecy, message of wisdom, and message of knowledge gifts met this need. To

authenticate these messages and messengers, God validated them with signs, wonders, miracles, and healings.

9. **Closing Summary - Paul's Introduction to Spiritual Gifts:** Hear the Apostle Paul's summary introduction to spiritual gifts. *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"* (1 Cor. 12:1-7).