

when she learned how valuable her gifts of leadership, pastoring, and encouragement were to others.

Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts

To help you get started in discovering your own spiritual gifts, review the following explanations for each of the twenty gifts listed on page 37.

As you read each definition, think back on your own experience in serving Christ. Then indicate “yes” if you feel you have this gift, “maybe” if you might have this gift, or “no” if you don’t think you have this gift. When your findings are complete, transfer them to your S.H.A.P.E. for Life Profile in Appendix 1 on pages 221–223.

Administration: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by effectively organizing resources and people in order to efficiently reach ministry goals. Individuals with this gift ...

- Are effective organizers of people and projects toward reaching ministry goals.
- Are known for having specific plans to achieve clearly defined goals.
- Naturally delegate tasks, making it possible to accomplish more for God’s kingdom.
- Seek decision-making opportunities.
- Understand what needs to be done for dreams to become a reality.

Yes Maybe No

Apostleship: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by launching and leading new ministry ventures that advance God’s purposes and expand his kingdom. The original Greek meaning of the word is “sent one” (literally, one sent with authority, or as an ambassador). People with this gift ...

- Are driven to start new endeavors for God, most often churches.
- Often welcome risky new challenges.
- Enjoy making a difference in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike.

- Are eager to be known as ambassadors for Christ in the world.
- Willingly work hard to see churches reach their full potential for God.

Yes Maybe No

Discernment: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by recognizing truth or error within a message, person, or event. People with this gift ...

- Find it easy to “read” others, and are most often right.
- Recognize the spiritual source of a message—whether it is from God, Satan, or man.
- Recognize inconsistencies in others.
- Easily identify people’s true motives and agendas.
- Perceive when the truth is twisted or communicated with error.

Yes Maybe No

Encouragement: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by helping others live God-centered lives through inspiration, encouragement, counseling, and empowerment. People with this gift ...

- Are driven to inspire others and impact their lives positively for Christ.
- Rejoice with those whose reliance on Christ has helped them overcome difficult life situations.
- Seek out opportunities to help others reach their full potential in Christ.
- Are natural encouragers, whether in words or through actions.
- Rejoice at others’ success.

Yes Maybe No

Evangelism: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by sharing the love of Christ with others in a way that draws them to respond by accepting God’s free gift of eternal life. People with this gift ...

- Look for ways to build relational bridges with nonbelievers.
- Sense when a person is open to Christ's message.
- Have likely seen many people come to faith in Jesus.
- Win others to Christ through the use of love over logic.
- Are deeply burdened for those who don't know Jesus.

Yes Maybe No

Faith: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by stepping out in faith in order to see God's purposes accomplished, trusting him to handle any and all obstacles along the way. People with this gift ...

- Welcome risk for God.
- Are energized by variables.
- Are challenged by ideas most see as impossible.
- Are often characterized by a passionate prayer life.
- Have great God-confidence in their ventures.

Yes Maybe No

Giving: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by joyfully supporting and funding various kingdom initiatives through material contributions beyond the tithe. People with this gift ...

- Plan and purposely give over and above the 10 percent tithe, in order to see God's kingdom advanced.
- Generally prefer that their donations remain anonymous or low profile.
- Strategically seek out ways to increase their resources, in order to contribute more for God's use.
- See their resources as tools for God's use.
- Recognize God's ultimate ownership of everything.

Yes Maybe No

Healing: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by healing and restoring to health, beyond traditional and

natural means, those who are sick, hurting, and suffering. People with this gift ...

- Believe firmly that people can be supernaturally healed.
- Pray specifically to be used by God to heal others.
- Fully realize that healing occurs only by God's divine permission.
- View medicine as a means God may choose for healing.
- Embrace their gift as from the hand of God, and as a specific way to bring him glory.

Yes Maybe No

Helping: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by offering others assistance in reaching goals that glorify God and strengthen the body of Christ. This aptitude is sometimes referred to as the gift of "helps" or "service." People with this gift ...

- Enjoy and seek out ways to serve behind the scenes.
- Rejoice in the success of others.
- Are often detail-oriented.
- Look for ways to be of assistance to others.
- Do not seek recognition for their efforts.

Yes Maybe No

Hospitality: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by providing others with a warm and welcoming environment for fellowship. People with this gift ...

- Are known for making those around them feel valued and cared for.
- Look for those individuals who may go unnoticed in a crowd.
- Desire that people feel loved and welcomed.
- See their home as God's property, given to them expressly to make others feel welcome.
- Promote fellowship among others wherever they are.

Yes Maybe No

Interpretation: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by understanding, at a specific time, God's message when spoken by another using a special language unknown to the others in attendance. People with this gift tend to ...

- Have a clear idea of what God is saying, even though the language used by the speaker is unknown to them at the specific time.
- Be able to translate words and messages of God in a way that edifies, comforts, and exhorts believers.
- Convey the meaning of sounds, words, and utterances that glorify God, made by others.

Yes Maybe No

Knowledge: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by communicating God's truth to others in a way that promotes justice, honesty, and understanding. People with this gift ...

- Devote much of their time to reading Scripture.
- Love to share biblical insight.
- Enjoy helping others increase their understanding of God's Word.
- Benefit from time spent in studying and researching Scripture.
- Take delight in answering difficult questions about God's Word.

Yes Maybe No

Leadership: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by casting vision, stimulating spiritual growth, applying strategies, and achieving success where God's purposes are concerned. People with this gift ...

- Exhibit a tendency toward huge visions for God and the ability to inspire others to work toward accomplishing those visions for his glory, and to bless others.
- Are naturally drawn into leadership roles.
- Find it easy to motivate people—both individually and in teams—to work together in achieving goals for God's kingdom.
- Naturally grasp the “big picture.”

- Are able to let go of responsibility and delegate it to others who are qualified.

Yes Maybe No

Mercy: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by ministering to those who suffer physically, emotionally, spiritually, or relationally. Their actions are characterized by love, care, compassion, and kindness toward others. People with this gift ...

- Are drawn toward opportunities to practically meet the needs of others.
- Devote significant time in prayer for the needs of others.
- Tend to place the needs of others ahead of their own.
- Grieve with those who grieve.
- Are most fulfilled when visiting people in need—in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, orphanages, villages, or wherever God directs them.

Yes Maybe No

Miracles: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ through supernatural acts that bring validity to God and his power. People with this gift ...

- Recognize prayer as a supernatural vehicle through which God acts in the lives of people on earth.
- Render credit and thanks to God alone for supernatural works.
- Fully grasp the fact that miracles only occur when God wills them to happen.
- See themselves as instruments for God's use.
- Pray and look to supernatural results whenever they encounter impossible life situations.

Yes Maybe No

Pastoring: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by taking spiritual responsibility for a group of believers and equipping them to live Christ-centered lives. Shepherding is another word used for this particular gift. You could have this gift if you ...

- Are driven to help others reach their full potential in Christ.
- Enjoy serving others and look for opportunities to do this.
- Are good at developing personal, trust-based relationships with a small number of people.
- Have a propensity toward meeting the needs of others, willingly giving your time to help them with spiritual issues.
- Believe that people take precedence over projects.

Yes Maybe No

Prophecy: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by offering messages from God that comfort, encourage, guide, warn, or reveal sin in a way that leads to repentance and spiritual growth. The original Greek meaning of this word is “to speak forth the truth.” The gift of prophecy includes both “forth telling” (preaching), and “foretelling” (revelation). You may have this gift if you ...

- Are known for publicly communicating God’s Word, using a variety of means.
- Love to share your strong biblical convictions with others.
- View yourself as God’s tool, ready to be used by the Holy Spirit in changing lives.
- Find it easy to confront others’ motives when they are not up to God’s standards.
- Frequently receive and share messages directly from God for comforting, challenging, and confronting his people.

Yes Maybe No

Teaching: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by teaching sound doctrine in relevant ways, empowering people to gain a sound and mature spiritual education. Individuals who have this gift ...

- Are given to hours in the study of Scripture in order to best apply its principles and truth.
- Enjoy making the Bible clear and understandable to others.
- Seek out opportunities to speak biblical insight into daily situations.

- Are good at helping others learn to study the Bible.
- Recognize a variety of ways to effectively communicate the Word of God, including speaking.

Yes Maybe No

Tongues: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by communicating God’s message in a special language unknown to the speaker. People with this gift tend to ...

- Believe God is prompting them to communicate his message, often through prayer, in a specific language unknown to them.
- Intercede for others in prayer using unknown words, sounds, and utterances.
- Desire opportunities to pray, using these unknown languages for God’s glory.
- Share with others words and/or messages of God given to them using unknown languages.
- Comfort or exhort others using unknown languages inspired by God.

Yes Maybe No

Wisdom: The God-given special ability to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by making wise decisions and counseling others with sound advice, all in accordance with God’s will. You may possess this gift if you ...

- Enjoy speaking biblical insights into life situations.
- Are sought after by others for advice/wisdom.
- Take pleasure in counseling others.
- Are known for making correct decisions and judgments.
- Recognize God as the primary source of wisdom and direction.

Yes Maybe No

Now list the gifts you feel you may have (the “yes” and “maybe” ones) in your S.H.A.P.E. for Life Profile in Appendix I on pages 221–223.

Sharing Your Spiritual Gifts

Now that you have identified some possible spiritual gifts God has given you, start to express them by serving others around you. When we serve in areas that best match our giftedness, we experience great(er) fulfillment and see great(er) fruitfulness for God. On the other hand, when we serve outside our giftedness, we usually end up frustrated and fatigued. Serving others is the best way to clarify your giftedness because it allows you the opportunity to try out your gifts.

That is why we should aspire to serve in whatever way God has designed us to serve, rather than being driven by ambition to achieve what we think are great goals. Helen Keller once said, “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.”

The apostle Paul says giftedness should be expressed in love. Whenever he talks about spiritual gifts, he follows with a message about love. For example, 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 talk about spiritual gifts, but right smack-dab between these two chapters, Paul wrote what has become regarded as the definitive message regarding love:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not 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 have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).

Do you see the importance of love when it comes to using our gifts for God? Paul tells us we may have wonderful and valuable spiritual gifts, but without love we are unusable. To determine what is truly propelling your spiritual gifts, ask yourself, “Who is the primary beneficiary of my actions?” If your actions benefit others, you are serving with love. If you realize you are the prime beneficiary of your actions, you need to immediately realign yourself with God. A love-driven life is the life God uses.

In his book, *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*, Arthur F. Miller Jr. talks about the danger of misusing what God has given us. “The dark

side of giftedness means inflating its payoff beyond its intention until it has assumed the place of God.”

Miller goes on to say, “Unchecked, giftedness is powerful enough to subvert entire systems to the darker purposes of the human heart. This is the real source of systemic evil.” Don't fall into this trap. Rather, let love empower your gifts for the blessing of others and building up of the body of Christ.

Indeed, as you start to bless others through your spiritual gifts, you need to be aware of four common traps Satan often uses to trip up believers and make them ineffective.

Trap #1: Comparison

The first pitfall is *comparison*. This happens when we place greater value on the more visible gifts—those more likely to shine in the spotlight, such as leadership or teaching. If we have those gifts and compare ourselves with others, the result can be a prideful spirit. If we compare ourselves to others who have more visible gifts, we may feel we lack significance. Both are signs that our hearts need a serious love tune-up. Just because a gift is more visible does not guarantee it's more valuable.

Evangelism is an area of giftedness that often invites comparison. People with this gift have the ability to bring many people to faith in Christ. Believers who do not have this gift may feel inadequate by comparison. I am a case in point. My best friend clearly has the gift of evangelism and regularly shares stories of how he is using it to bring others into the family of God. Because my “numbers” weren't as high as my friend's, I believed I was letting God down.

Eventually, I realized I didn't have the specific gift of evangelism. I learned I needed to continue using my gift of *encouragement* as a way to reach out and help people find God. If I had ignored my own spiritual gift because I saw it as unimportant compared to my friend's gift, I would have made myself unavailable to God—and missed out on opportunities to be used by him.

There are no second-rate masterpieces hanging in God's art gallery. Some roles may be less glamorous than others, and self-glorifying people may sniff in disdain at certain kinds of service, but God's Word says *all* the parts of the body of Christ depend on each other: “The eye can never

say to the hand, 'I don't need you.' The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you.' In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary" (1 Corinthians 12:21–22, NLT). None of us should delude ourselves into thinking that the other members of the body of Christ exist to serve us, or that others are important and we are not.

Trap #2: Projection

The second trap is *projection*. When we expect others to be good at the same things we excel at, we're "projecting" our gifts onto them. Projection is especially common in relationships at work, or even at home. For example, I have the gift of administration. If I project that gift onto others and automatically expect them to be organized and punctual at all times, feelings of frustration and resentment can set in and cause the relationship to become strained.

That is exactly what Satan wants. On the other hand, I can choose to celebrate the unique gifts God gives to others and encourage each person to be who God created them to be – which is exactly what God wants.

Trap #3: Rejection

Another common pitfall we encounter is refusing to accept the gifts God has given us. This is the trap of *rejection*. I see this more often when working with people who clearly have the gift of pastoring or shepherding, but won't acknowledge it, often because they don't have the "right" title or official position.

My chiropractor Jeff once said to me, "I'm not a pastor like you, so I can't have the gift of pastoring." Because he felt inadequate, he accepted his lack of position as evidence of a fact – but that "fact" was, in fact, *not* a fact at all. Rejection is one of Satan's favorite mind games, because it keeps us from becoming all God has planned for us. Jeff needed to embrace the *truth* of his giftedness given by God. A few months after our conversation, I saw Jeff after a weekend service and his face glowed with joy. He had taken a step of faith and, with his wife, began leading a small group at his home. He loved the opportunity to encourage, counsel, help, and pray with the ten people in his group. He had finally accepted the fact that he had the gift of pastoring and didn't need the *title* of pastor to express it.

Allowing someone else's opinion to stop you from seizing and sharing your gifts will create nothing but disappointment and sorrow in your heart. Give yourself permission to be who God gifted you to be, regardless of what others have said.

Trap #4: Deception

The final trap Satan uses is *deception*. He manipulates you into believing you have certain gifts that God in fact has not given you – distracting you from putting your true gifts into effect and preventing you from accomplishing what God intended for your life. This deception especially plays itself out when it comes to leadership. John Maxwell has said, "If you think you are a leader, but no one is following you – you are just taking a walk." People like that often expect results that will be blessed by God, yet God never meant for them to be a leader – at least not in the way they imagine.

Be wary of Satan's deception as you begin to share the gifts God has given you. Focus on God so he can reveal the spiritual gifts he has for you and show you how he wants you to use them for his glory. An excellent way to ensure that you don't fall prey to one of these traps is to ask trustworthy people in your life for help and accountability.

Strengthening Your Spiritual Gifts

In *The Purpose Driven® Life*, Rick Warren talks about the importance of developing the gifts God has given us: "Whatever gifts you have been given can be enlarged and developed through practice. For instance, no one gets the gift of teaching fully developed. But with study, feedback, and practice, a 'good' teacher can become a *better* teacher, and with time, grow to be a *master* teacher. Don't settle for a half-developed gift. Stretch yourself and learn all you can."

All of us can practice and improve our ability to use our gifts. If you have the gift of teaching, make a point of learning new teaching techniques. If leadership is part of your unique gift mix, learn how to be the best servant-leader around. If you are strong on hospitality or mercy or pastoral counsel, seek new ways to include, care for, and help others. If your life is pointing toward administration, sharpen that gift through additional training.

Don't wait to begin using your spiritual gifts until you understand all the details about how they will be expressed in your life. In *Seizing Your Divine Moment*, Erwin McManus says: "Don't look for God to fill in all the blanks. Don't wait for Him to remove all the uncertainty. Realize He may actually increase the uncertainty and leverage all the odds against you, just so you will know in the end that it wasn't your gifts but His power through your gifts that fulfilled His purpose in your life."

The apostle Paul uses a great word picture to show the importance of strengthening what God has given us when he tells young Timothy to "fan into flame" his gift (2 Timothy 1:6). Imagine smoldering embers that burst into flame as you fan them. This is exactly what happens when you develop the gifts God has given you—they become more powerful and purposeful for God and eventually boost your Kingdom Purpose like nothing else.

You have been gifted for greatness—in service, not status. Identifying your spiritual gifts is the crucial first step to finding the unique role God intends for you to fulfill. Now that you have begun to recognize your unique gifts, you need to hear from God about how he wants you to put them to work. In the next chapter, we'll take a closer look at hearing God's voice—by listening with your heart.

Reflect on what you have learned. What did this chapter show you about spiritual gifts?

Realize what you have been given. What spiritual gifts do you believe God has given you?

C R A B B I N G H O L D