

Spiritual Gifts

God equips people to serve him, notably by giving them spiritual gifts.

God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Spirit

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all. ⁸For one person is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, and another the message of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another performance of miracles, to another prophecy, and to another discernment of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7–10

Broadly speaking, “the message of wisdom” and “the message of knowledge” (v. 8) quite possibly are respectively “the ability to give wise advice” (NLT) or insight and “the gift of special knowledge” (NLT) – with probably the application and conveying of spiritual truths being particularly in view.

The term “faith” (v. 9) does not refer to saving faith, but to exceptional faith or trust in God. The gift of “prophecy” (v. 10) is the communication of a revelation from God, such as a foretelling of a future event or a revelation of God’s will regarding a certain matter.

The gift of “discernment of spirits” (v. 10) appears to be the ability to distinguish whether something, such as a prophecy or teaching, is prompted by the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit. The gift of “tongues” (v. 10) is the ability to speak in an unlearned language. (Note that further gifts are mentioned in the following subsection.)

Use your spiritual gift to build up the church

It was he [Christ] who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God – a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature. EPHESIANS 4:11–13

As parts of the body of Christ, believers are to use the gifts they have been given (v. 11) in ministry (v. 12a) so that Christ’s body may be built up and become mature (vv. 12b–13).

28. Serving God

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I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

All of God's people are his servants – and so need to be prepared to serve him. This requires devotion to God, and to his work. As well as instructing us to serve God, the Bible provides plenty of encouragement to persevere in doing so. The Bible also gives insights into being guided by God, something which is very much applicable to serving God as well as to other areas of our lives.

Be Prepared to Serve God

Be prepared and ready to do God's work

So prepare your minds for service and have self-control. [1 PETER 1:13A](#) NCV™

[GOD:] But you, Jeremiah, *get yourself ready!* Go and tell these people everything I instruct you to say. [JEREMIAH 1:17A](#)

Being prepared for God's work requires godly living

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF CHURCH LEADERS:] For *the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain.*⁸ *Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self-controlled.* [TITUS 1:7–8](#)

Be Devoted to God's Work

Serve only God

Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really turning to the LORD with all your hearts, remove from among you the foreign gods and the images of Ashtoreth. *Give your hearts to the LORD and serve only him.* Then he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." ⁴So the Israelites removed the Baals and images of Ashtoreth. *They served only the LORD.* [1 SAMUEL 7:3–4](#)

Devote yourself to God's work

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your work in the Lord is never wasted. [1 CORINTHIANS 15:58B](#) NCV™

The Manner in Which to Serve God

Serve God in holiness and righteousness

[ZECHARIAH, THE PRIEST:] This oath [of God] grants ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, may *serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness* before him for as long as we live.

[LUKE 1:73B–75](#)

Serve God wholeheartedly

[MOSES:] And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to *serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ...* [DEUTERONOMY 10:12](#) ESV

Be strong and courageous

The LORD gave this command to Joshua, son of Nun: "*Be strong and courageous, because you will bring the Israelites into the land that I swore to give them, and I will be with you.*" [DEUTERONOMY 31:23](#) GW

Working with Other Believers

Serve each other

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Serve each other with love.* [GALATIANS 5:13](#) NCV™

Do God's work together

[PAUL, TO SYZYGUS:] And, my true partner, *I ask you to help them. These women have worked together with me and with Clement and with the others in spreading the good news.* [PHILIPPIANS 4:3A](#) CEV

Encourage each other in doing God's work

We must also consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things. [HEBREWS 10:24](#) GW

He [King Josiah] appointed the priests to fulfill their duties and *encouraged them to carry out their service in the LORD's temple.*

[2 CHRONICLES 35:2](#)

much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing.

JOHN 15:4–5

[PAUL:] I planted the seeds, Apollos watered them, *but God made them sprout and grow.* ⁷*What matters isn't those who planted or watered, but God who made the plants grow.* 1 CORINTHIANS 3:6–7 CEV

God's servants cannot themselves produce any true and lasting spiritual results or growth from the work that they do – only God can.

So, pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray

[THE EARLY BELIEVERS, PRAYING:] Lord, listen to their threats! *We are your servants. So make us brave enough to speak your message.* ³⁰*Show your mighty power, as we heal people and work miracles and wonders in the name of your holy Servant Jesus.* ³¹*After they had prayed, the meeting place shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and bravely spoke God's message.* ACTS 4:29–31 CEV

[PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS:] *Pray for me also, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak – that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰*for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.* EPHESIANS 6:19–20

Do God's work with his help

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Whoever speaks, let it be with God's words. Whoever serves, do so with the strength that God supplies,* so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. 1 PETER 4:11

The first statement is probably indicating that we should rely on God's help in what we say in ministering to others – as is paralleled in the second statement regarding serving with God's strength.

Serve God through the Holy Spirit

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that *we serve in the new way of the Spirit* and not in the old way of the written code. ROMANS 7:6 ESV

God's people serve and obey him now by following the directing of the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit's empowerment, rather than by focusing on "obeying the letter of the law" (NLT).

Dedicate your life to living for God and Jesus Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: *offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.* ROMANS 12:1 GNT

Then he [Jesus] said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, *he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.* LUKE 9:23

We must deny ourselves – give up living for ourselves and what we want – and live for Christ instead, daily shouldering the accompanying difficulties.

Reasons to Serve God

God is our God, who has done great things for us

[MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Revere *the LORD your God, serve him,* be loyal to him and take oaths only in his name. ²¹He is the one you should praise; *he is your God, the one who has done these great and awesome things for you that you have seen.* DEUTERONOMY 10:20–21

Your work for God will be productive

[JESUS, EXPLAINING A PARABLE:] But the ones on the good soil are the people who hear the word but also hold on to it with good and honest hearts, *producing a crop through endurance.* LUKE 8:15 ISV

As with "fruit" elsewhere in this chapter, "crop" may well be referring to – or at least may be applied to – the productivity of one's work for the kingdom (the theme of this subsection). Alternatively the spiritual growth of the individual believer may be in view.

You will be rewarded for your work

But as for you, be strong and don't get discouraged, for *your work will be rewarded.* 2 CHRONICLES 15:7

Whoever does not produce "fruit" will be cut off from Christ

[JESUS, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit.* JOHN 15:2A NCV™

Being Guided by God

The topic of being guided by God is very pertinent to serving God – such as in ascertaining his will in regard to how we should serve him. It is also of course important in other aspects of our lives. For it is vital in living righteously generally and in navigating through troubled times, as reflected in some of the following verses. God's guidance also becomes an issue when we need to make a significant choice or decision.

God's guidance may come through such sources as: the Holy Spirit's promptings; inner conviction or assurance (itself largely of the Holy Spirit); Scripture; circumstances; or advice from others. But God does not always guide his people by making them aware of his will. They may not even be aware of being guided by God, only recognizing his guidance in retrospect. The Bible actually says little about how one should find out God's guidance. But it does speak of how living a godly life and prayer are critical for being open to it – as is indicated in the following subsections.

To be guided by God, live a godly life

[DIRECTIVES TO ISRAEL:] *You must remove the burdensome yoke from among you and stop pointing fingers and speaking sinfully.* ¹⁰*You must actively help the hungry and feed the oppressed. Then your light will dispel the darkness, and your darkness will be transformed into noonday.* ¹¹*The LORD will continually lead you; he will feed you even in parched regions.* [ISAIAH 58:9B–11A](#)

Pray, asking God to guide you

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *For you are my rock and my fortress; for the sake of your name guide me and lead me.* [PSALMS 31:3 ISV](#)

Remember the persecuted

II. Doing God's Work

In instructing us in how to do God's work, serving him, the Bible urges us to do our best but emphasizes God's role and the need to rely on him. The Bible also teaches us about: the manner in which we should serve God; serving God in a church context; and God's extraordinary spiritual gifts to his people for serving him.

Do God's Work – the Best You Can

Do the work assigned to you

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.* [EPHESIANS 2:10 GNT](#)

Paul appears to be speaking of God preparing particular work for each believer to do (cf. AMP). As such, believers need to look to God to guide them and enable them to do the work – and willingly do it.

Work hard at God's work

[PAUL, TO THE ROMAN BELIEVERS:] *Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard for the Lord. Greet dear Persis, who has worked very hard for the Lord.* [ROMANS 16:12 GW](#)

Do quality work which bears "fruit" – "fruit" that will last

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *You did not choose me. I chose you and sent you out to produce fruit, the kind of fruit that will last.* [JOHN 15:16A CEV](#)

Here "fruit" likely refers to spiritual outcomes of quality work for God.

Do the Work through God

Apart from God and Jesus Christ, we can accomplish nothing

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.* ⁵⁴*I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears*