

15 Spiritual Gift definitions

Administration

Definition: The supernatural ability to provide organization for the goals of the body of Christ by designing and carrying out an efficient plan of action.

Gift Characteristics

1. Like a navigator on a ship, they plot the course, handing it back to the captain who then involves the crew.
2. Putting the details into a plan of action.
3. Tend to be more task- and detail-centered than people-centered, often linear planners
4. Focus on the detailed implementation, rather than the "big picture."

Gift Liabilities

1. May view people as "task completers" rather than people.
2. May be unresponsive to others' suggestions and changes in plans they have made.
3. May overly rely on their well-organized plans rather than the Spirit and prayer.
4. May be too careful and block the overall vision with their many specific details.

Discernment of Spirits

Definition: The supernatural ability to determine whether a certain action has its source in God, man, or Satan.

Gift Characteristics

1. Able to discern the source of a message or special word as being from God or Satan.
2. Able to discern a person's spiritual motivation to be from God or Satan.
3. Have a profound sense of the spiritual realm, often sensing things in the spiritual realm that others simply do not experience.
4. Often able to help others discover the spiritual source of their problems.

Gift Liabilities

1. May unnecessarily become overzealous in hunting satanic heresy.
2. May be overly judgmental of others and their motives.
3. May be insensitive to the process when offering spiritual input on the source of problems or spiritual warfare.
4. May expect everyone else to be as spiritually discerning as they are, and thus frustrated when others are not.

Evangelism

Definition: The supernatural ability to share the Gospel with unbelievers in such a way that people respond and become followers of Jesus.

Gift Characteristics

1. Share the Gospel in such a way that people respond by accepting Christ.
2. Have an ongoing desire to share the Good News with many people.
3. Often most effective in one specific type of evangelistic effort: one-to-one, preaching, or small group settings.
4. Want others to share their faith effectively and win the world for Jesus.

Gift Liabilities

1. May motivate by guilt when encouraging others to share their faith.
2. May be very narrow in their evangelistic focus and discount the gifts of others.
3. May see people as "targets" and not as people with needs.
4. Often are seen as overly directive by others, Christian or non-Christian.

Exhortation

Definition: The supernatural ability to encourage, rebuke or challenge others to action in such a way that they respond.

Gift Characteristics

1. Encourages and motivates others to practical application of specific Biblical truths.
2. Able to tell others the truth about them with great encouragement and understanding.
3. May take the form of rebuke, though people will still feel helped by such an approach.
4. Often more effective in short-term engagement rather than long-term counseling or shepherding.

Gift Liabilities

1. May offer "quick fixes," ignoring long-term needs.
2. May jump to conclusions before listening to the whole story.
3. May offer too direct or harsh counsel at one extreme or be insensitive to the real need at the other.
4. May discourage people by pushing too hard.

Faith

Definition: The supernatural ability to trust God with extraordinary confidence, knowing that He will work out His purposes in every situation.

Gift Characteristics

1. Able to trust God to work in supernatural ways, even when the situation seems impossible.
2. Willing to pursue God's will in the midst of enormous difficulties or barriers.
3. Willing to yield to God's will rather than question or waver because of circumstances.
4. Often move out in faith when others are unwilling.

Gift Liabilities

1. May exercise faith without love.
2. May be impatient when others are more timid or careful.
3. May be stubborn and unyielding instead of being willing to listen to counsel.
4. May be indifferent to the concerns or questions of others.

Giving

Definition: The supernatural ability to freely and sacrificially give of one's money, possessions, or resources for the sake of Christ.

Gift Characteristics

1. Give freely out of whatever resources are available.
2. See money and possessions as tools to serve God.
3. Their giving is often quiet and confidential -- no fanfare is desired.
4. Show strong interest and support in the people and/or causes they support.

Gift Liabilities

1. Giver's own family may suffer because too much has been given away.
2. May be critical of how others spend their money.
3. May expect others to give like they do.
4. May give out of duty rather than conviction.

Helps

Definition: The supernatural ability to unselfishly meet the needs of others, freeing them to exercise their spiritual gift(s). The helps gift focuses on freeing a person to use their gifts.

Gift Characteristics

1. Sees what needs to be done in assisting others and does it.
2. Typically unselfish because of the strong desire to help.
3. Finds great joy in freeing others from responsibilities so that they can share their gifts.
4. Rejoices in the fruitfulness of others.

Gift Liabilities

1. May have difficulty saying "no" when asked to help.
2. May easily become overextended physically and/or emotionally.
3. May take too much ownership in helping others or in not letting others help.
4. May neglect their own needs and their family or close friend's needs to help others.

Leadership

Definition: The supernatural ability to provide inspiration and direction in such a way that people work together to fulfill God's purposes.

Gift Characteristics

1. Conducts the orchestra, involving each person meaningfully in the symphony.
2. Discern vision and direction for the overall process, the big picture.
3. Shares vision and effectively involves others in completing the task.
4. People may look to this person for direction, even if not identified as the official leader.

Gift Liabilities

1. May forget how much they need others to understand and carry out the specifics of the vision.
2. May become insensitive or "use" people to carry out specific parts of the vision.
3. May become overly dominant or demanding.
4. May become prideful of their position or power.

Mercy

Definition: The supernatural ability to show empathy and compassion for those who suffer physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Gift Characteristics

1. Show sincere kindness and compassion to those in need.
2. Reveal love in action to those who are hurting, ill, or downtrodden.
3. Often drawn to those who may be outcasts or outsiders.
4. Attempt to relieve people's suffering.

Gift Liabilities

1. May be too protective of the person(s) for whom they care.
2. May identify too strongly with someone hurting or ill, without realizing it.
3. May base caregiving decisions on emotion rather than reason.
4. May have great difficulty saying "no" to needs.

Pastor

Definition: The supernatural ability to care for, feed, and protect the long-term spiritual needs of individuals or groups.

Gift Characteristics

1. Able to provide care, spiritual nourishment, and protection for people over an extended period.
2. More person-centered than task-centered.
3. Derive great strength from encouraging and verbally supporting others.
4. Usually counsel and guide many people, whether or not they have had training to do so.

Gift Liabilities

1. May be protective of people and create a situation where people become too dependent on them.
2. May have a difficult time saying "no" to others, often at the expense of their families/close friends and their own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
3. May be indecisive because of the strong desire to be sensitive to others.
4. May struggle with releasing people to grow beyond their control -- more so than any other equipping gift.

Prophecy

Definition: The supernatural ability to proclaim God's present and future truth in such a way that the hearers are moved to respond.

Gift Characteristics

1. May speak forthrightly about present situations, or may challenge people by speaking about a future event ("forthtelling" and foretelling).
2. Proclaim timely, urgent messages from God with authority, calling people to action.
3. Uncompromisingly calls people to repent or receive strong encouragement.
4. Pleads the cause of God and calls out change.

Gift Liabilities

1. May preach gloom and despair that is not from God.
2. May experience pride and self-centeredness growing out of the authoritative nature of the gift.
3. May move from Spirit-led indignation into fleshly anger without realizing it.
4. Can be too blunt.

Service

Definition: The supernatural ability to identify unmet needs, and to do whatever necessary to practically meet them. This gift focuses on the tasks and not the people involved.

Gift Characteristics

1. Resourceful in meeting needs and carrying out practical solutions.
2. Love to serve, often without receiving any public affirmation. Doing the task is enough.
3. Will often change their schedule to serve others.
4. Able to respond to needs before others see them.

Gift Liabilities

1. May neglect responsibilities at home to serve others.
2. May exclude others from helping because of their own drive to serve.
3. May overcommit and wear out physically because of their difficulty with saying "no."
4. May find their significance in "doing" for others rather than accepting themselves for who they are.

Teaching

Definition: The supernatural ability to accurately communicate the truths of the Bible in such a way that people understand.

Gift Characteristics

1. Have a deep conviction to communicate Biblical truth.
2. Able to use the Bible to powerfully provide a framework of truth.
3. Able to pull scriptural insights together in a clear and insightful way.
4. Communicate truth in such a way that people understand what was conveyed from God's Word.

Gift Liabilities

1. May appear to have all the answers, leaving little room for discussion.
2. May communicate too much information too quickly for the average learner.
3. May become prideful of their own learning to the point of not listening to others' insights.
4. May overly focus on content rather than people.

Word of Knowledge

Definition: The supernatural ability to receive and share revealed knowledge which was not otherwise known.

Gift Characteristics

1. Have a clear sense of receiving messages from God of things that they did not know naturally.
2. May manifest itself by a sense of supernatural insight coming out of prayer.
3. Words, phrases or word pictures may spontaneously appear in their mind.
4. Such words are most often timely in their content.

Gift Liabilities

1. May respond to false or self-initiated impulses.
2. May take such a word and expand it beyond what God gave.
3. Pride may grow because of the "great Biblical insights" discerned or messages received.
4. May mistakenly give a personal message to a group of people, thus creating confusion for many people.

Word of Wisdom

Definition: The supernatural ability to offer pertinent spiritual counsel toward application in situations where such guidance is needed.

Gift Characteristics

1. Able to apply spiritual knowledge in practical ways through Spirit-given insight.
2. Have a supernatural understanding of situations in which they have no previous knowledge.
3. Offer practical, helpful solutions to problems -- i.e. wise counsel.
4. Provide consistently accurate and wise spiritual counsel.

Gift Liabilities

1. May offer only human wisdom causing their counsel to be ineffective in the situation.
2. May force their own personal view on others.
3. May become prideful because of the counsel they consistently provide.
4. May begin to believe that they are wise in their own eyes.