

The gifts explained

29 spiritual gifts, in 4 families – understand the gift God has entrusted to you

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” – 1 Peter 4:10

Discovering a gift is only a beginning. For each one: what it is, how it shows, the shadow to watch, how to grow it, and its biblical ground. List and definitions inspired by the “Spiritual gifts” dossier (Essor magazine), reworded.

Gifts of proclamation

Announce and enlighten: these gifts proclaim the Gospel and nourish faith through the Word.

Apostle (Ephesians 4:11)

What it is : Being recognized as a spiritual authority by several churches: founding, strengthening and connecting communities, like one who is sent.

How it shows : You open new places of faith; others recognize your spiritual authority; you connect and strengthen churches.

Its shadow : Domineering, building on self rather than on Christ, moving without accountability. (3 John 9)

Growing it : Stay submitted to the Church and the Word; raise up local leaders; hand over the work.

Your field : new plantings, churches to strengthen, pioneers.

“Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” – Acts 13:2

Artistic creativity (Exodus 31:1-11)

What it is : Using art in all its forms to build up the Church and witness to unbelievers.

How it shows : You express yourself through art (painting, writing, drama, video...) for the Gospel.

Its shadow : Art for art's sake, vanity, losing the message in the form. (Exodus 32:4)

Growing it : Put your creativity at the service of truth; “to God be the glory.”

Your field : art, the stage, writing, creative evangelism.

“I have filled him with the Spirit of God... to design artistic works.” – Exodus 31:3

Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11)

What it is : Presenting the Gospel in such a way that people come to faith in Jesus.

How it shows : You speak of Jesus easily; the plight of the lost weighs on you; you seize opportunities.

Its shadow : Pressing without listening, chasing the “score,” neglecting follow-up after the decision. (Matthew 23:15)

Growing it : Listen as much as you speak; walk with people to discipleship, not only to a decision.

Your field : strangers, colleagues, neighbors far from faith.

Philip “preached Jesus to him.” – Acts 8:35

Interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:26-28)

What it is : Faithfully conveying a message in the listener's language: the ministry of translation.

How it shows : You translate faithfully; you make a message from another language accessible.

Its shadow : Betraying the meaning, adding to the message, seeking the spotlight. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Growing it : Serve the text and the listener; step back behind the message.

Your field : translation, preaching, publishing, media.

“Let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” – 1 Corinthians 14:13

Knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8)

What it is : Discovering, gathering, analyzing and formulating the truths of the Word for the growth of believers.

How it shows : You love research and exegesis; you synthesize a great sum of biblical information.

Its shadow : Knowledge without love, theory cut off from life, intellectual pride. (1 Corinthians 13:2)

Growing it : Put your research at the service of building up; always tie it to Christ and obedience.

Your field : research, writing, training, Bible study.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” – Colossians 3:16

Missionary (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

What it is : Adapting with ease to other cultures to serve and proclaim Christ there.

How it shows : You feel at ease in other cultures; you learn languages and customs; you serve far from home.

Its shadow : Despising the host culture, burning out without roots, mistaking comfort for mission. (Galatians 2:12)

Growing it : Learn before you teach; work with a local team; keep your own altar fed.

Your field : other cultures, unreached lands, church planting.

“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” – 1 Corinthians 9:22

Music (1 Samuel 16:14-23)

What it is : Singing or playing an instrument to praise God, build up the Church and witness.

How it shows : You serve through song or music; your praise lifts and touches hearts.

Its shadow : Chasing performance, becoming a star, music without worship. (Amos 5:23)

Growing it : Let your music serve worship, not your glory; stay at the assembly's service.

Your field : worship, concerts, evangelistic programs.

“David would take a harp... and Saul would become refreshed and well.” – 1 Samuel 16:23

Prophecy (Romans 12:6)

What it is : Receiving and delivering with strength a message from God that builds up, exhorts, comforts and calls people back to Him.

How it shows : You quickly tell true from false; injustice troubles you; your word shakes and sets people back on their feet.

Its shadow : Harshness, judgment, impatience with the weak. Truth without love wounds. (Ephesians 4:15)

Growing it : Speak with tenderness; test your message by the Word; pray before you correct.

Your field : those who have drifted, the lukewarm, situations of injustice.

↔ This gift spans two families: it announces the Word (proclamation) and leads the people (leadership).

“Let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.” – Romans 12:6

Teaching (Romans 12:7)

What it is : Making biblical truth simple and clear, within everyone's reach.

How it shows : You love digging into a text; you make the confusing clear; people remember what you explain.

Its shadow : Knowledge that puffs up, teaching without practicing, theory without love. (1 Corinthians 8:1)

Growing it : Teach first by your life; aim at obedience, not admiration; stay simple.

Your field : new believers, study groups, those who have questions.

"Making the difficult clear is the mark of a good teacher." – cf. James 3:1

Tongues (Acts 2:1-11)

What it is : Speaking a real foreign language in order to proclaim the Gospel in the language of the listener.

How it shows : You learn and speak other languages; you open the Gospel to those of another tongue.

Its shadow : Making yourself unintelligible, showing off the gift, neglecting the sense of the message. (1 Corinthians 14:9)

Growing it : Let language serve clarity and love; aim to be understood, not admired.

Your field : missionaries, translators, hosts of foreigners.

"We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." – Acts 2:11

Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8)

What it is : Applying God's truth to concrete situations to unblock, redirect, or defuse a conflict.

How it shows : People ask your advice; you perceive what is hidden; you find the right word in hard cases.

Its shadow : Pride of always being right, a critical spirit, paralysis by analysis. (James 3:15)

Growing it : Seek the wisdom from above – pure, peaceable, gentle; speak to build up.

Your field : those facing decisions, complex situations, mentoring.

"Give to Your servant an understanding heart... to discern." – 1 Kings 3:9

Gifts of leadership

Lead as a servant: these gifts gather, guide and care for the body.

Administration (Exodus 18:13-27)

What it is : Understanding a goal, then planning, coordinating and managing effective programs to reach it.

How it shows : You have a sense of organization and foresight; you plan and delegate.

Its shadow : Rigidity, managing tasks while forgetting people, controlling everything. (Mark 2:27)

Growing it : Organize to serve people, not the reverse; delegate and trust.

Your field : administration, projects, the Church's logistics.

Jethro to Moses: "Select able men... and place them over them." – Exodus 18:21

Faith (Romans 4:18-21)

What it is : Recognizing and carrying out God's will with an exceptional confidence that dares the impossible.

How it shows : You see the possible where others give up; your confidence carries people; you take risks for God.

Its shadow : Presumption, contempt for the cautious, promising in God's name what He has not said. (Matthew 4:7)

Growing it : Anchor your faith in the Word, not in emotion; dare, but submit everything to His will.

Your field : new ventures, persevering prayer, those who have lost hope.

"Contrary to hope, in hope he believed." – Romans 4:18

Leadership (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

What it is : Setting goals in line with the Word and drawing each one to cooperate freely, in humility.

How it shows : People follow you; you carry a vision; you gather and place each one.

Its shadow : Domineering, imposing your view, chasing results at the expense of persons. (Mark 10:42-43)

Growing it : Lead as a servant: speak little, value others, encourage the timid.

Your field : teams, projects, coordinating the mission.

"He who leads, with diligence." – Romans 12:8

Shepherd (pastor) (John 10:1-15)

What it is : Providing spiritual care for a group of believers: guiding, feeding and protecting the sheep.

How it shows : You care for a group over time; people confide in you; you watch over and feed them.

Its shadow : Possessiveness, carrying everything alone, exhaustion from tending too many. (1 Peter 5:3)

Growing it : Multiply shepherds (elders, small-group leaders); point everyone to the Chief Shepherd.

Your field : small groups, care of members, newcomers.

“The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” – John 10:11

Gifts of service

Love in action: these gifts put God's grace and mercy into deeds.

Craftsmanship (Exodus 31:1-11)

What it is : Serving the Church through practical, ingenious work of your hands.

How it shows : You repair, build, cook, maintain; your skill serves the community.

Its shadow : Making yourself indispensable, burning out, grumbling at those who don't “do.” (Philippians 2:14)

Growing it : Serve with joy and humility; train and involve others in the task.

Your field : maintenance, building, decorating, cooking.

Dorcas “made tunics and garments” for the widows. – Acts 9:39

Encouragement (Acts 4:36)

What it is : Encouraging, supporting, comforting and consoling the discouraged, with the right words and gestures.

How it shows : People confide in you; you find the words that lift; you see potential before others.

Its shadow : Flattery, avoiding the truth that disturbs, easy promises. (Proverbs 29:5)

Growing it : Encourage toward a concrete step; speak truth with kindness; root hope in God.

Your field : the discouraged, new believers, one-to-one care.

Barnabas, “Son of Encouragement,” welcomed the unwanted. – Acts 4:36

Giving (2 Corinthians 8:2-5)

What it is : Giving your material goods generously and joyfully for the cause of God.

How it shows : You share readily; you notice those in need; giving gladdens you.

Its shadow : Giving to be seen, creating dependence, neglecting your own. (Matthew 6:1)

Growing it : Give in secret; ask God where to sow; “what part of God's wealth do I keep for myself?”

Your field : the poor, families in hardship, projects short of means.

“They gave beyond their ability.” – 2 Corinthians 8:3

Helps (Luke 10:38-42)

What it is : Putting your talents at the service of other believers to make them more effective; relieving leaders.

How it shows : You quietly help a ministry; you unburden others; you can be counted on.

Its shadow : Burning out, never saying no, making yourself indispensable. (Exodus 18:18)

Growing it : Serve out of love, not duty; let yourself be helped; keep healthy limits.

Your field : support to leaders, secretarial work, logistics.

“Martha was distracted with much serving.” – Luke 10:40

Hospitality (Genesis 18:1-8)

What it is : Opening your home to welcome warmly those who need shelter or a meal.

How it shows : You welcome with joy; people feel welcome; you think to include the isolated one.

Its shadow : Exhaustion, worry about appearances, welcoming without ever speaking of God. (1 Peter 4:9)

Growing it : Open your table to those who cannot repay you; let welcome lead to Christ.

Your field : the isolated, the stranger, the missional table.

“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” – 1 Peter 4:9

Mercy (Luke 10:33-37)

What it is : Feeling real compassion for those who suffer and helping them concretely, especially the excluded.

How it shows : The wounded feel safe with you; you go to the marginalized and forgotten.

Its shadow : Being overwhelmed, absorbing suffering to exhaustion, hiding truth for fear of hurting. (Galatians 6:9)

Growing it : Love with healthy limits; entrust people to God; join truth to gentleness.

Your field : the sick, the grieving, the excluded, prisoners.

The Samaritan "had compassion." – Luke 10:33

Service (Luke 22:24-27)

What it is : Carrying out the Church's practical and priority tasks, in every material area.

How it shows : You see the concrete need and act; you do what no one wants to do.

Its shadow : Despising those who talk, forgetting yourself to exhaustion, activism. (Luke 10:41)

Growing it : Serve while keeping your communion with God; let yourself be relieved.

Your field : practical tasks, welcome, material logistics.

"I am among you as the One who serves." – Luke 22:27

Gifts of power & special gifts

Signs and special graces: these gifts display God's power, sometimes rarely.

Celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

What it is : Living happily without a spouse, free and available for the service of God.

How it shows : You are fulfilled in celibacy; your availability serves the mission; not a lack, but a choice.

Its shadow : Bitterness, mistaking imposed loneliness for a gift, judging the married. (1 Timothy 4:3)

Growing it : Receive it as a grace and a freedom; exercise it in service, not withdrawal.

Your field : mobile ministries, church planting, overseas mission.

"He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord." – 1 Corinthians 7:32

Discernment of spirits (Hebrews 5:14)

What it is : Discerning whether a behavior or teaching comes from God, from man, or from the evil one.

How it shows : You perceive hidden motives, the seeds of error, the source of a spiritual manifestation.

Its shadow : Seeing evil everywhere, suspicion, harshness, confusing illness with the demonic. (1 Corinthians 13:7)

Growing it : Test everything by the Word; discern with love; use human expertise when needed.

Your field : leadership, mentoring, protecting the Church.

“By reason of use they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” – Hebrews 5:14

Healings (James 5:14-15)

What it is : Being an intermediary through whom God heals and restores the sick – body, soul, relationships.

How it shows : God uses you to relieve and restore; you pray for the sick with faith.

Its shadow : Thinking yourself the source, promising healing, blaming the one not healed. (Acts 3:12)

Growing it : Remember God alone heals; join prayer to care; leave the outcome to God.

Your field : the sick, one-to-one care, prayer groups.

“The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” – James 5:15

Miracles (cf. Acts 19:11)

What it is : Performing, by God's will alone, acts that go beyond natural laws and are recognized as divine.

How it shows : God works extraordinary interventions through you; His hand is recognized in them.

Its shadow : Chasing the spectacular, drawing glory from the wonder, credulity. (Luke 10:20)

Growing it : Seek not the miracle but God; give Him all the glory; stay humble.

Your field : situations with no human way out, pioneer mission.

“God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul.” – Acts 19:11

Prayer / intercession (Luke 11:1-13)

What it is : Praying with remarkable perseverance and carrying the needs of others before God.

How it shows : You devote much time to prayer; you carry specific people; you see answers.

Its shadow : Praying without acting, feeling superior, giving up for lack of visible answers. (Luke 18:11)

Growing it : Pray according to the Word; keep a journal; join action to intercession.

Your field : everyone – often without anyone knowing.

“Pray without ceasing.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Voluntary poverty (Acts 4:32-37)

What it is : Willingly renouncing wealth and material security to live and serve among the poorest.

How it shows : You choose simplicity to be free to serve; you go to the marginalized and homeless.

Its shadow : Pride in poverty, judging those who have, neglecting your responsibilities. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Growing it : Live this renunciation in joy, not constraint; without despising others.

Your field : the marginalized, community life, mission among the poor.

“All things were common... nor was there anyone among them who lacked.” – Acts 4:32-34

Willingness to suffer for the faith (cf. 1 Peter 4:12-14)

What it is : Accepting suffering, and even death, for the name of Jesus, keeping a confident and victorious attitude.

How it shows : Under trial for your faith, you keep peace and love; your steadfastness strengthens others.

Its shadow : Seeking persecution, the “martyr syndrome,” harshness toward yourself. (1 Peter 4:15)

Growing it : Seek not suffering but faithfulness; keep love, even for the adversary.

Your field : times of trial, places hostile to the faith.

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you.” – 1 Peter 4:14
