

Position Paper: The Holy Spirit & Spiritual Gifts

Continuationist

At Resonate, we are continuationist in regard to our pneumatology (The doctrine of the Holy Spirit). We believe that all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit outlined in Scripture are still in operation today. We believe that the presence of these gifts are not only available, but vital for the universal church to accomplish the mission of God. We affirm that God sovereignly distributes these gifts to local congregations as he sees fit (Ephesians 4:11-14). The Church needs the empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit just as much as the early church did in order to carry out the great commission.

Open, Pursuant, Expectant

As continuationists, our posture toward spiritual gifts is: open, pursuant, and expectant. The reality of spiritual gifts is not necessarily a sign of maturity (In Scripture the church in Corinth was both notorious for their spiritual gifts and their lack of maturity). While it is true that in recent history, spiritual gifts have been mishandled and misapplied – resulting in confusion and pain for believers and not-yet-believers alike – Scripture nevertheless commands us to “earnestly desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1). We can have confidence that all spiritual gifts are good for the church because we have a good Father who promises to give good gifts to His children (Luke 11:1-13). Spiritual gifts, when used under the guidelines of Scripture, result in the edification of believers and evangelistic testimony to not-yet-believers. God’s power is displayed through the gifts and demonstrates that God is truly present among His people.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We narrowly define the biblical term “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as synonymous with conversion under the new covenant (1 Corinthians 12:13). This baptism is a fulfillment of God’s old covenant promises in Joel 2, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 37. Conversion is the greatest and most powerful gift of the Holy Spirit.

Filling of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament is that the followers of Jesus need a continual filling in / with / by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This filling is needed for guidance and empowering as we seek to be Jesus witnesses in all of life. Although believers are indwelt with the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, God himself can expand our capacity for filling in / with / by the Holy Spirit as we ask, seek, and knock. This filling is similar to how a ballon is filled with air. A ballon filled with air is filled, and yet it can be further filled by adding more air. Similarly, believers have the Holy Spirit inside of them from conversion onward (in one sense they are filled), and yet the can be further filled.

Spiritual Gifts

A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church. This definition includes both gifts that are related to natural abilities (teaching, serving, showing mercy, administration) and gifts that are more miraculous (prophecy, gifts of healings, tongues, etc.). Scripture is clear that all spiritual gifts are empowered “by one and the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:11), are given “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7), and are to be used for “the building up of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

We find it helpful to categorize spiritual gifts into 3 major categories:

- People Gifts
- Service Gifts
- Manifestation Gifts.

People Gifts (Ephesians 4)

- Apostle - Apostles extend the gospel. As “sent ones” (Apostle means sent) they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. Apostles are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, and networking trans-locally.

- Prophet - Prophets understand God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his how his truth applies today. Prophets bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions of the culture. They insist that the church obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo.
- Evangelist - Evangelists recruit. These infectious communicators of the gospel recruit others to the cause. They call not-yet-believers to make a personal decision to receive the salvation offered by Jesus. Evangelists also encourage believers to engage in the wider mission of growing the church.
- Shepherd - Shepherds nurture and protect. As caregivers of the community, they focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock. Shepherds cultivate a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships as they make and develop disciples.
- Teacher - Teachers understand and explain. They are communicators of God's truth and wisdom. Teachers help others remain biblically grounded and able to better discern God's will. They guide the church toward wisdom, helping them remain faithful to Christ's word, and constructing a transferable doctrine.

Service Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 7:7)

- Serving - The ability to identify and care for the physical needs of the body through a variety of means.
- Teaching - The ability to explain Scripture and apply it to the lives of others.
- Encouraging - The ability to motivate others to respond to truth by providing timely words of counsel, encouragement, and consolation. When this gift is exercised, believers are challenged to put God's truth to the test in their lives.
- Contributing - The ability to contribute material resources with generosity and cheerfulness for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Christians with this spiritual gift need not be wealthy.

- Leadership - The ability to discern God's purpose for a group, set and communicate appropriate goals, and motivate others to work together in order to fulfill these goals. A person with this gift is effective at delegating tasks to followers without manipulation or coercion.
- Mercy - The ability to deeply empathize and engage in compassionate acts of service on behalf of people who are suffering physical, mental, or emotional distress. Those with this gift manifest concern and kindness to people who are often overlooked.
- Celibacy - The ability to enjoy singleness and maintain sexual self-control in singleness.
- Administration - This word, like “helps,” appears only one time in the New Testament. It is used outside of Scripture of a helmsman who steers a ship to its destination. This suggests that the spiritual gift of administration is the ability to steer a church or christian organization toward the fulfillment of its goals by managing its affairs and implementing necessary plans. A person may have the gift of leadership without necessarily having the gift of administration and vice versa.
- Helps - The ability to enhance the effectiveness of the ministries of other members of the body. Some suggest that while the gift of service is more group-oriented, the gift of helps is more person-oriented.

Manifestation Gifts . . . Utterance (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

- Prophecy - Proclaiming something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.
- Word of Wisdom - A spontaneous word from God in regard to how someone should act or respond in a particular situation.
- Word of Knowledge - A spontaneous word from God in regard to facts about a situation that you would have no other way of knowing if God had not revealed it to you.
- Distinguishing Between Spirits - The ability to distinguish between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of another (demonic) spirit.

- Tongues - Tongues can be a known language or a special prayer language and should only be used publicly when there is an interpreter present (1 Corinthians 14:5). Tongues are God-ward in their orientation.
- Interpretation of Tongues - The Spirit-empowered ability to translate a public utterance of tongues to the congregation.

Manifestation Gifts . . . Miraculous (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

- Gifts of Healings - A sovereign and supernatural distribution of healing power for a particular occasion.
- Faith - A mysterious surge of supernatural confidence that God is going to act in a particular situation.
- Working of Miracles - A sovereign and supernatural distribution of power for a particular occasion not pertaining to healing. (i.e. - All works of healing are miracles, but not all miracles are works of healing).

Closing remarks

1. These lists are not exhaustive. For example, many people are gifted and empowered by God in intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is not listed in the New Testament as a gift per se, and yet it is a powerful and effective gift in defeating spiritual strongholds. It is important not to limit God where He has not limited himself. Nowhere in Scripture does God restrict his empowering work to only the gifts mentioned in the lists above.
2. All gifts are divinely empowered. One type of gift is not superior to another type of gift (e.g. - natural gifts vs supernatural gifts). Even though one gift may operate outwardly through more ordinary or natural means and another through more supernatural or abnormal means, the Spirit is nevertheless empowering the person with the gift in both situations. A non-

miraculous gift is just as Spirit-empowered as a miraculous gift. In this sense, every aspect of the christian life is supernaturally empowered (1 Corinthians 12:13–31).

3. Giftedness is not a sign of spiritual maturity. Gifts are divine empowerments for ministry, and God distributes them as He wills. The Corinthians were highly gifted people (1 Corinthians 1:7), but were immature in character, as evidenced by their divisive and jealous attitudes (1 Corinthians 3:1–23; 12–14).

** Position papers are not infallible. Search the Scriptures and verify that what we say is true. If you have questions, we would love to chat!*

** Portions of this document have been influence by Sam Storms, Gordon Fee, & Wayne Grudem.*

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