# Seminar

**“My Spiritual Gifts: How They Can Be Developed, Identified, and Used”**

By Birthe Kendel

**INTRODUCTION**

Imagine that you are visiting a friend you haven't seen for many, many years. You have kept in contact with her through letters and little gifts, but this time you finally have an opportunity to visit her in her own home. The two of you meet at the airport and give each other a long hug. On the way home in the car you talk and try to catch up with all the latest news, and finally the car stops outside her house. As you walk through the front door, you look around. You have tried to imagine how her house is decorated, but now you see it for the first time. You go through to the living room and the kitchen, glance into the bedrooms, and admire her good taste. As you look around, you begin to notice that none of the little gifts you have sent her are seen anywhere: the silver frame you sent for her wedding; the pillow you embroidered for her birthday—none of the gifts you so carefully selected and sent her over the years are displayed, and you are too hurt to ask.

When you finally come into the spare bedroom to unpack your suitcases, you notice a cabinet with glass doors next to the wardrobe where you are to hang your clothes. On the shelves are all the parcels you have sent, still wrapped in brown paper. The address was right. They had all arrived safely, but your friend had not cared enough about your gifts to even open them, let alone use them. How would you feel? Hurt, disappointed, unloved? What can your friend do in this situation to convince you of her love for you and of the high value she places on your friendship?

God is the giver of many gifts. Some are designed to meet our daily needs and to make our lives happier and more fulfilling. Just think of the gifts of family, friendship, freedom, food, and clothes. Each gift reflects His deep love and concern for our happiness. They are gifts we have received, opened, enjoyed, and thanked Him for. But is it possible that God also has given us gifts that we have treated with indifference? Gifts we have stacked carelessly on the shelf of our lives—unopened? Have we received Spiritual Gifts that we have never bothered to unwrap, much less develop? Or maybe we have unwrapped them but didn't know what to do with them, and they ended up on a shelf in the spare room?

The Spiritual Gifts differ from God's other gifts to us in that we are still the receivers but no longer the benefactors. They are given to us for the purpose of our ministering to others. When the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth and mentioned the Spiritual Gifts, he mentioned them in connection with a body.

Eddie Gibbs expands on that thought and writes:

The church is more than an organization; it is an organism. Paul is fond of describing the church as the “body of Christ.” The Lord is its head, and we are the organs and limbs, linked through one another to Him. It is through His body, the church (you and me), that Christ continues His seeking, serving, saving work.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The gifts were given to the first Christians so they could nurture and build up the church rather than for personal use. They were given so the church could be strong and grow in a healthy way. It is important that we understand the wider ministry of the Holy Spirit before we study the gifts.

Roy Naden puts it this way:

To focus just on the giftedness is like looking at one facet of a diamond and missing the beauty of the gem."[[2]](#endnote-2)

**The Fourfold Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

Let's look at the fourfold ministry of the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit brings us assurance of our personal salvation.
2. He brings assurance that each one of us is special, and He allows us to develop healthy self-esteem.
3. He brings us assurance that we can bear fruit, and He motivates us in personal growth.
4. He gives us special gifts to be used in our personal ministry.
5. **The Holy Spirit brings us assurance of our personal salvation.**

This is a very important part of His ministry. It is only when we know that we have the forgiveness of sins that we can begin to experience "wholeness.” Satan will do everything he can to try to take this assurance away from us. I have found, and I am sure you have too, that when I try to put my sins behind me, Satan digs them up and brings them to me again. He doesn't want me to forget. He doesn't want me to have this assurance of forgiveness. Some time ago my husband and I visited a Christian Exhibition and saw some T-Shirts with a slogan we have never forgotten. It said: "When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.” God wants us to have the assurance of our salvation no matter what has happened in our past. So the first ministry of the Holy Spirit is to help us hold on to that assurance, and He does it by helping us to focus our complete attention on Jesus at all times.

1. **The Holy Spirit brings assurance that each one of us is special, and He allows us to develop healthy self-esteem.**

Have you ever heard Christians comparing themselves and others to worms or other less attractive things? I have. It is almost as if some Christians are unable to understand and appreciate the love of God if they don’t at the same time remind themselves of their own unworthiness. This is a misunderstanding. If we have to destroy our own self-worth in order to feel "humble" and "holy,” we are suffering from a man-made righteousness syndrome. Thesba Johnson observes that to see ourselves as of little or no value is “a psychotic twist of the gospel.” It is important that we understand that there is a great difference between understanding our sinfulness and destroying our self-worth. Our value to God is not diminished by how far we have fallen. Because we are part of His human family we are always special to Him. Our worth in God's eyes is not based on our past; it is based on our potential. It is not based on the person we are, but on the person we can become.

A director of a suicide prevention clinic once said that all people who commit suicide have feelings of "helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness.” In other words, they suffer from low self-esteem. How can we for a moment believe that this is the way God wants us to see ourselves? It ought to be the very opposite. Because of our value to God we should live with confidence, not helplessness; optimism, not hopelessness; and with a sense of value, not worthlessness. All these positive factors are the elements of a healthy self-esteem, and this is what the Holy Spirit wants to produce in our lives.

1. **The Holy Spirit brings us assurance that we can bear fruit, and He motivates us in personal growth.**

The test as to whether or not we are being responsive to the Spirit's influence is the daily growth of the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. "The connection between the fruit and root is obvious, not only in nature but also in spiritual things. The aspects of the fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul could just as easily be listed as characteristics of the nature of God. God, in his self-revelation to Moses, used many aspects of the fruit of the Spirit to describe himself. “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.[[3]](#endnote-3) Christian behavior prompted by the Spirit is similar to divine behavior, and Christian character bears marked similarities to the character of God. "[[4]](#endnote-4)

We must not confuse the Fruit of the Spirit with the Gifts of the Spirit. An easy way to keep the two apart is to remember that the Fruit of the Spirit helps define what a Christian is. The Gifts of the Spirit help define what a Christian does. When we read 1 Corinthians 13:8, we see other differences between the two. The Gifts of the Spirit are temporal. They will one day cease to exist, but the Fruit of the Spirit is eternal. The Fruit is God-oriented, the Gifts are task-oriented.

To begin to go deeper into the Fruit of the Spirit would take up too much time for this seminar. But before we leave the fruit completely I would like you to notice one thing. If you read 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14, you will see that the Corinthians were so eager to have the Spiritual Gifts, and especially the gift of speaking in tongues, that the importance of the gifts grew out of proportion and completely overshadowed the Fruit of the Spirit. That was a misunderstanding on their part, and when we read chapter 13, we see how Paul tried to get their priorities straight by reminding them that even if they had all the Spiritual Gifts, but did not have the fruit of the spirit in their lives—in other words, love—then in God's eyes it amounted to nothing. Gifts without the Fruit are like car tires without air—the ingredients are all there, but they are worthless.

So the third ministry of the Holy Spirit is to assure us that we can bear fruit. When we respond positively to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our lives, it is inevitable that our character will come to reflect the character of God. This brings us to the fourth ministry of the Holy Spirit.

1. **The Holy Spirit gives us special gifts to be used in our personal ministry.**

One afternoon, when I was reading, my oldest daughter walked into the living room. Being a bookworm herself, she looked at the title of the book in my hand and said: "*Spiritual Gifts*— Mm . . .You got any of those?" It was actually a very valid question, for quite unknowingly she had touched upon an important issue. How can we be sure that we have a Spiritual Gift and not just a natural talent? We are told that only Christians have Spiritual Gifts, and the reason for that is that only those who have the Holy Spirit in their lives can receive gifts from the Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). We are also told that every Christian receives at least one spiritual gift, and that some Christians will receive more than one. But how can we identify a Spiritual Gift and distinguish it from a natural talent?

A natural talent may be something we are born with, like the ability to sing, or it may be something we have developed through the years, such as playing a musical instrument. Our natural talents are useful, but they deal primarily with the surface of life. They do not touch on the important issue of our relationship to God. We can develop a natural talent without growing spiritually.

Spiritual Gifts differ from natural talents in two important aspects. First: in the motivation. The motivation for Spiritual Gifts is based on our love for God and our love for others. Second: they have different goals. The goal for a person with a spiritual gift is to lead others to Christ and to build up the body of Christ. We cannot develop a Spiritual Gift without growing spiritually.

Let me give an example. A person with a natural talent for teaching will be able to impart knowledge to her students and do it in an interesting way, so the knowledge is understood and applied. She will understand how the children's preferred learning styles and personalities affect the way they learn, how to vary her teaching methods, and use her knowledge to help each child grow intellectually. We say that she has a natural talent for teaching. A teacher with a Spiritual Gift of teaching, as well as a natural talent of teaching, will do the same, but with the help, and under the influence of, the Holy Spirit she will be able to take her student one step further. She will be able to help the child apply the knowledge to her life and use it to grow spiritually. Only a person with a spiritual gift of teaching will be able to help a student grow spiritually.

Rick Yohn differentiates between a natural talent and a spiritual gift this way:

"Natural talents are the abilities we receive by birth and the natural man (or woman) is dependent upon himself to discover, develop and use his talent. The spiritual gift is given the moment we accept Christ, and the Christian can call on the Holy Spirit to reveal what gift he possesses, to discipline him in developing the gift, and to empower him in using the gift.”[[5]](#endnote-5) (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7).

We can say "the natural talent is potentially a spiritual gift. At the same time, we must recognize that the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit do not necessarily relate to our natural talents. The Holy Spirit not only is active in our birth, but also works in new ways at our new birth and throughout our years of Christian service.”[[6]](#endnote-6)

Another thing we have to be able to do is to differentiate between our Spiritual Gifts and our Christian role. When we begin to study the Spiritual Gifts, it becomes obvious that many of the gifts describe activities that are expected from all Christians. Let me give you an example of the difference between a spiritual gift and a Christian role. God has asked all of us to pray. It is a privilege we have, but it is also part of our Christian role. That doesn't indicate that we all have received the spiritual gift of prayer. A woman with the spiritual gift of prayer has a special ability to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis for the specific needs of others, and she will often see that specific answers to her intercessory prayers have also been the answers to other people’s prayers.

As Christians we have also been asked to show hospitality. Again, that doesn't indicate that we all have received the spiritual gift of hospitality. Having visitors home for dinner or putting someone up for the night are all included in our Christian role. A woman with the spiritual gift of hospitality has been given a special gift that enables her in a special way to reach out to others and make friends, to provide an open home and a warm welcome for those who need food and a place to stay. She also sees that her church is a welcoming place. Her motivation is based on love for God and love for her fellow being. So as we use our Spiritual Gifts and develop them, we also have to be ready to fulfil any Christian role when there is a need.

When we read 1 Corinthians 12 we see how richly God blessed the church in Corinth with Spiritual Gifts, and for good reasons. First, we can assume that none of the first-century Christian churches had a full set of the Old Testament scrolls because they were very scarce, and they didn't have the New Testament either. Second, they didn't have very many leaders and those they had were inexperienced. Both of these were an enormous deficit to the church and God compensated with rich giftedness.

So, looking back, it is easy to understand why the first century churches needed Spiritual Gifts. But what about the churches of the twenty-first century, and the women living in the twenty-first century? Is the Holy Spirit still giving gifts, and do we need them? Are the gifts out of date or do they fit into our busy lifestyles? The answer to both questions is a resounding “Yes.” We do need them and they do fit into our lifestyles. We need them because God also has a permanent reason for giving us Spiritual Gifts. The permanent reason is to equip every church to minister to the needs of others, both within the church through nurture, and in the community through interaction. Those needs—to nurture and to evangelize—will be present until Christ returns.

Let us look at the three most relevant questions for us today concerning the Spiritual Gifts:

* What is a spiritual gift?
* When do we receive our gifts of ministry?
* How do we identify them?

**What is a Spiritual Gift?**

One of the best definitions is this: "Spiritual Gifts are supernatural abilities given to Christians by the Holy Spirit so they can minister to others both through nurture and outreach.”

Pastor John MacArthur puts it this way:

"No local congregation will be what it should be, what Jesus prayed that it should be, what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be, until it understands Spiritual Gifts." [[7]](#endnote-7)

I would like to rephrase his statement and say that:

"No woman in any church will be what she should be, what Jesus prayed that she should be, what the Holy Spirit gifted and empowered her to be, until she understands her Spiritual gift or gifts."

In Ephesians 4 we read that each one of us has received a special gift... (v.7), and that the Holy Spirit did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service in order to build up the body of Christ (v.12).

We can receive more than one gift, but all the gifts we receive are for ministering to others. The Holy Spirit does not give us Spiritual Gifts for the purpose of serving our own ego, but to serve God and one another. When we become aware of our spiritual gift or gifts, we can begin our personal ministry with confidence, because we know that we have been equipped to do something personal and special for God. It is important that we do not misunderstand the word "equipped." To be equipped does not mean that our gifts are handed over to us fully developed. It only means that we are fully equipped to begin to use our gift. We are stewards of our Spiritual Gifts and therefore responsible for their development. We will never reach a point when we can say that we have exhausted the possibilities of our development.

A favorite quotation about our personal development comes from Ellen White in the book *Education.*

"He [she] who with a sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truth, will be brought in touch with its Author and except by his [her] own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his [her] development.”[[8]](#endnote-8)

Modern research tells us that 50% of our intelligence is formed before the age of four and 80% before the age of seven. But God says something different. He says that if we stay close to Him, and depend on His guidance and wisdom, there is no limit to the possibilities of our development.

**When do we receive our gift of ministry?**

When we read Matthew 10, we see that the disciples received many gifts when they first accepted Christ—gifts of healing, gifts to drive out evil spirits, gifts to perform miracles. In other words, the disciples were gifted at the time of their new birth. But we also read in Acts 2, that they received further gifts a few years later at Pentecost—speaking in tongues. The same is true today. When we become part of the Body of Christ, when we become converted, each one of us receives at least one Spiritual Gift. There is no conversion taking place without the Holy Spirit at the same time giving that person a spiritual gift. The one cannot happen without the other. At the same time, we must be aware that the Holy Spirit can bestow additional gifts at any time to meet particular needs for His work and to His glory.

**How do we identify our gift(s)?**

Our last and maybe most important question. Pray about it. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you find and develop your gift.

1. Involve yourself in many different ministries. Hardly anyone discovers all her gifts at the beginning of her Christian experience. Sometimes it requires a special set of circumstances to bring our gifts to light. It is important that we are willing to work in new areas. Our spiritual gift can only be confirmed in the actual setting where it is put to use.

After we have had considerable experience we can ask ourselves the following questions:

* + What types of ministry did I enjoy most?
	+ In what types of ministry did I see positive results?
	+ What spiritual abilities do others see in me?
	+ Which ministry have I been asked to do again and again?
	+ What types of ministry blend with my God-given temperament?
	+ Which of my regular daily activities could have a spiritual application (e.g.,teaching, helping, administration)?[[9]](#endnote-9)
1. We can get a push in the right direction by using a Spiritual Gift Inventory. I have seen several different inventories and almost all of them are made to help us to find a specific gift(s). But all inventories have a weakness. If we do not answer the questions very carefully, we may be lead to one specific spiritual gift we may not have and miss the one we do have. I have chosen to use Roy Naden’s inventory.[[10]](#endnote-10)  By answering twenty questions we can discover in which of the five basic areas we have the greatest probability of giftedness. By using this test, we are lead to a cluster of gifts. Each cluster is made up of 2-5 different gifts that are closely related to one another and often overlap one another, and within that area we will be able to identify our specific gift.

**Spiritual Gift Inventory**

*[Presenter: Hand out inventory. Ask the participants to do the following.]*

* Read through the 20 statements and answer them as truthfully as you can. Consider your responses from two perspectives:
* The degree to which the statements have been true or false in your life.
* What you believe your responses would have been had you had the opportunity to be involved in the activities described.
	+ Try not to have too many 3's. If you have too many you will not get a true picture.
	+ After answering all the statements, write the number circled for each statement in the appropriate squares.
	+ Total the five columns.
	+ The column with the highest score represents the area of probable giftedness.

**Work Groups**

*[Presenter: Divide the participants into smaller groups according to their highest score. Everyone who has scored highest on no. 1–The Teaching Cluster–form a group. Everyone who has scored highest on no. 2–The Shepherding\Evangelizing Cluster–form a group, etc. Give each participant a Gift Description plus a Worksheet.]*

**Gift Descriptions and Worksheets: (Handouts)**

1. Teaching Cluster

2. Shepherding\Evangelizing Cluster

3. Supporter Cluster

4. Counselor Cluster

5. Leadership Cluster

**Group Work Activity (30-40 minutes)**

(*To be done within separated groups. Have each group choose a leader or have facilitators designated ahead of time. Give her all of the material for that group’s cluster*.)

* The leader should give a Spiritual Gift Description to each member of the group.
* Go through each spiritual gift. Help each member of the group to identify herself with one or more of the gifts in the cluster.
* Discuss the questions on the worksheet.
* When time is up form one group again.

**Developing our Gifts**

Once we know our gift, we should focus on it. We can ask God to open doors or show us places where we can serve and where our gift can develop. We can attend seminars relevant to our gift. We can search for mentors with whom we can work and learn. I said earlier that the Spiritual Gifts are given to us for the purpose of ministering to others, and that is true. But my personal experience has also been that we discover there are positive things that happen to us personally as a result of developing and using our gifts.

1. It gives a sense of worth and purpose to know that God has a unique contribution for us to make.
2. Because all the gifts/ministries are equally important there is no room for competition.
3. It downplays feelings of guilt.
4. We will be more enthusiastic and less frustrated and discouraged because we are serving in an area where we are gifted rather than struggling where we are not.

It gives a sense of worth and purpose to know that God has a unique contribution for us to make. Our spiritual gift can help us develop a healthy self-esteem and an assurance that we are needed—a basic human need. We all need to feel that we are important to our church family and that our contribution is necessary for the growth of the whole church.

Rick Yohn has an interesting statement. He writes:

"I don't believe that the sole reason for non-involvement is lack of commitment. Many Christians are convinced that they have nothing to offer.”[[11]](#endnote-11)

God has, through our spiritual gifts, given each one of us a personal identity. We are all gifted women with a divine mission in which we can feel confident that we have something unique to offer, not because we think so, but because God tells us that it is so. To me it is such a relief to know that I do not have to measure up to some other person's standards. All I need to concentrate on is measuring up to God's plan for my life.

Because all the gifts/ministries are equally important there is no competition.

We are all stewards of our spiritual gifts. Some of us have received a one-talent spiritual gift. Others may have received a two-talent or a five-talent spiritual gift. The size of our gift or the nature of our gift is not important. What is important is that we use it and develop it. The Holy Spirit does not give gifts to produce competition. The gifts are given for the common good of the church and to produce unity in the church.

It downplays feelings of guilt. It is so easy to look at other women in the church, noticing their hospitality, the many hours they use in visiting the sick every week, the brilliant way they arrange the flowers and teach a Sabbath school lesson, and then begin to feel guilty and inadequate because we are not like them. But God has never asked us to be like everyone else. Assume, for example, that God did not give you a Spiritual Gift that enabled you to write. You have never written any books and you never will, but you don't have to feel miserable or guilty because you haven't written a book. You can be happy that God has given that gift to other men and women and that you can benefit from their gifts. When we recognize our own gift and use it, we can be happy for the gifts we see in others without any feelings of guilt.

We will be more enthusiastic and less frustrated and discouraged because we are serving in an area where we are gifted rather than struggling where we are not. God has never asked us to do things for which we do not have the ability or spiritual gift. The following story from the Springfield, Oregon, public school’s newsletter illustrates the point.

*“Once upon a time, the animals decided they should do something meaningful to meet the problems of the new world. So they organized a school. They adopted an activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming, and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all the subjects. The duck was excellent in swimming; in fact, better than his instructor. But he made only passing grades in flying, and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to drop swimming and stay after school to practice running. This caused his web feet to be badly worn, so that he was only average in swimming. But average was quite acceptable, so nobody worried about that—except the duck.*

*“The rabbit started at the top of his class in running, but developed a nervous twitch in his leg muscles because of so much make-up work in swimming. The squirrel was excellent in climbing, but he encountered constant frustration in flying class because his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed 'Charlie horses' from overexertion, and so only got a C in climbing and a D in running. The eagle was a problem child and was severely disciplined for being a non-conformist. In climbing classes, he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there....”*

*The obvious moral of the story is a simple one—each creature has its own set of capabilities in which it will naturally excel—unless it is expected or forced to fill a mold that doesn't fit. When that happens, frustration, discouragement, and even guilt bring overall mediocrity or complete defeat. A duck is a duck—and only a duck. It is built to swim, not to run, and certainly not to climb. A squirrel is a squirrel—and only that.*

*To move it out of its forte—climbing—and then expect it to swim or fly, will drive a squirrel “nuts.” Eagles are beautiful creatures in the air, but not in a foot race. The rabbit will win every time unless, of course, the eagle gets hungry.*

*“All of us have our gifts that God has given us so that we might function in a certain way. If we do that as members of His body, we are every bit as vital as any other part. What is important is that we work harmoniously together like the member of the body for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom."[[12]](#endnote-12)*

Knowing and using our gifts makes a difference in our attitudes toward our ministry as well as the results. I am thankful to God for my spiritual gifts and I am enjoying developing them and using them. Our personalities are not unknown to the Holy Spirit, and I believe that He, in His wisdom, matches our Spiritual Gifts with our personalities because He wants us to enjoy our gifts and enjoy our ministries.

To fully understand the work of the Holy Spirit and to rightly understand Spiritual Gifts is not done in a couple of hours. I hope that this introduction has left you with a desire to go home and study this for yourselves and search for new ways you can develop your gifts and strengthen your ministry. You may forget most of the details we have discussed, but even if you do, never forget that. . .

"No woman in any church will be what she should be, what Jesus prayed that she should be, what the Holy Spirit gifted her and empowered her to be, until she understands her spiritual gifts and makes a commitment to use her gifts to build up the church of God."

1. Eddie Gibbs, *Body Building Exercises for the Local Church* (Falcon Books, 1979)*.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Roy C. Naden, *Your Spiritual Gifts: Making the great discovery* (Berrien Springs, MI: Instructional Product Development, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Exodus 34:6, 7, *NIV*. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Stuart Briscoe, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (OM Publishing, 1993), 5*.* **Also**, *The Fruit of the Spirit: Cultivating Christlike character, Fisherman Bible study guides* (Shaw Books, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Rick Yohn, *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1974). **Also** (Heritage Builders Inc., 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Gibbs, *Body Building Exercises for the Local Church*, pp. 66, 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. John D. MacArthur, *The Church, the Body of Christ* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Review & Herald), p. 125. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Carol Porter and Mike Hamel, *Women’s Ministries Handbook: A comprehensive guide to reaching, teaching, and training women in the local church* (Victor Books, 1992), p. 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Naden, *Your Spiritual Gifts, Making the great discovery.* [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Yohn, *Discover Your Spiritual Gift and Use It.* [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Sakae Kubo, *The God of Relationships: How the gospel helps us reach across barriers such as race, culture, and gender* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1993),pp. 111, 112. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)