

We have gifts [charismata] that differ according to the grace [charis] given to us (Romans 12:6:6a)

Like good stewards of the manifold grace [charis] of God, serve one another with whatever gift [charisma] each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).

To truly understand spiritual gifts, we have to look at the language of the early Church. The Greek word for “grace” is *charis* (kar-is). When the Apostle Paul wrote about a spiritual gift, he used the word *charisma* (kar-is-mah)—a word that flows directly out of *charis*. Its plural form, *charismata* (kar-is-mah-tah), simply means “gifts.” The striking similarity between these words is no accident; they are inextricably linked. In fact, a beautifully accurate translation of *charismata* is “grace-gifts.”

“Grace is simply God’s boundless love for us—a love we could never earn. It centers on *charis*, a divine mindset that isn’t triggered by anything we do. No matter where life takes us, God is always a step ahead, paving the way and continuously pouring out His goodness and softly ‘gracing’ our lives.”

To understand the nature of God is to understand His disposition toward generosity. His sustaining grace upholds the cosmos, granting existence to all things with every passing second. Using the Greek term *charismata* to describe spiritual gifts rightly anchors our theology in God’s initiative rather than human effort. It reminds us that every gift is, at its core, an expression of His sovereign and unmerited grace.” This foundational understanding of grace strips away our pride, placing the

emphasis exactly where it belongs—on God’s work, God’s generosity, and His free gift of favor to us.”

Not only do we need a proper view of God’s grace, but we also need a sober view of ourselves. In the book of Genesis, we learn, “***You are dust, and to dust we shall return***” (Genesis 3:19). With this understanding, we learn humility. Humility comes from the Latin word for *humus*, meaning ‘ground’ or ‘earth.’ And the root of the word *human* traces back to the same word. So, to experience humility, we must view ourselves from the ground from which we came. If we came from dust, what does that imply?

- That life is temporary and short.
- If we are dust, then only God can form us and shape us into something beautiful.
- With a spirit of humility, we need to connect with others in the Church to find our place of service.
- And most importantly, we need the breath of God to empower us.

Therefore, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul asks, “***What do you have that you did not receive?***” (2 Cor. 4:7). This question was Paul’s way of saying **everything we are and everything we have is a gift—not earned. Not self-generated. Received.** This is echoed in John’s Gospel: “***A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven***” (John 3:27). In this verse, John the Baptist reminds his disciples that all callings, ability, and fruitfulness come from God. Also in James’s epistle,

we read, “***Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...***” (*James 1:17*), which means that every blessing—material, spiritual, relational—is from God’s generosity.

Therefore, everything that we are and what we have is due to God, who bestows gifts on us.

If Genesis 3:19 reminds us we are dust, and Ephesians 1 reminds us we are chosen, beloved, and holy. How do these two truths—humility and dignity—work together to form a healthy Christian identity?

Read Philippians 2:1-9. How does this passage underscore humility and its relationship to the purpose of spiritual gifts?

In Ephesians 4, after speaking of Christ giving grace to each believer (v.7) and ascending to fill all things (vv.8–10), Paul explains how Christ distributes that grace: through people whom He gives to the Church as gifts: “***And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[c] and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ***” (*Ephesians 4:12-13*).

The five-fold ministry gifts mentioned here are the roles of those specially ordained to ministry. They are:

- Apostles — foundational witnesses of Christ’s resurrection and authoritative teachers of the gospel.
- Prophets — those who spoke God’s word to the early Church with Spirit-given insight.
- Evangelists — proclaimers of the gospel who extend the reach of the Church.

- Shepherds (pastors) — those who care for, guide, and protect the flock.
- Teachers — those who explain and apply God's Word faithfully.

Five-Finger Illustration for the Five-fold Ministry Gifts:

The thumb, which touches all the other fingers, is the Apostle

1. Governs, establishes, and strengthens foundations
2. Works with all the other gifts
3. Helps align and coordinate the Church's mission
4. Often, pioneers new work or extend the reach of the gospel. The Apostle is a stabilizing and integrating gift. This is often the role of bishops today.

The index finger is the prophet, who points to the direction the Church should take.

1. Governs, establishes, and strengthens foundations
2. Works with all the other gifts
3. Helps align and coordinate the Church's mission
4. Often pioneers new work or extends the reach of the gospel
5. The Apostle is a stabilizing and integrating gift.

The middle finger is the tallest finger, and reaches out to the unsaved

1. Reaches out to those far from God
2. Proclaims the gospel with clarity
3. Draws people into the life of the Church
4. Equips others to share their faith
5. The evangelist extends the Church's reach.

The index finger is the pastor who committed to caring and feeding

1. Cares for the flock
2. Nurtures, protects, and guides
3. Builds relationships and fosters unity
4. Helps believers grow in spiritual health

The little finger is the teacher who

1. It may be small, but it is essential for **balance and grip**.
2. Grounds the Church in sound doctrine
3. Makes truth understandable
4. Strengthens believers through instruction
5. Helps the church “grow up” into maturity

The purpose of each ministry gift is *“to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.”* Their task is not to do all the ministry themselves, but to prepare, train, and strengthen believers so that they can serve in various capacities.

This means:

- Every believer has a gift.
- Every believer is called to participate in Christ’s mission.

Simply put, God gives us spiritual gifts to contribute positively to the Church—to help it grow, improve, and thrive. They are practical endowments meant to serve others.

The equipping of the saints leads to *“building up the body of Christ.”*

The “***building up of Christ’s body***” includes:

- Spiritual maturity
- Unity in faith
- Deeper knowledge of Christ
- Growth in love (v.16)

In Summary, this means:

- Every believer is called into ministry.
You are not a spectator in the kingdom of God.
- The Church grows when everyone participates.
Maturity is a community project.
- The goal is nothing less than Christlikeness.
We grow up *into Him* (v.15), becoming a people who reflect His love, truth, and holiness; Knowing that:
 - a) Our life is received (Acts 17:25).
 - b) Our abilities are received (Deut. 8:18).
 - c) Our salvation is received (Eph. 2:8).
 - d) Our spiritual gifts are received (1 Cor. 12:4–11).
 - e) Our calling is received (2 Tim. 1:9).

These gifts have a remarkably distinct function. Together, they form a complete ministry. Their result is maturity and unity. Paul explains that “***all these are activated by the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses***” (1 Cor. 12:11). Because God is the architect behind them, no two gifts look identical. The person receiving the gift is unique; every single expression of that gift is uniquely tailored to who they are.

Therefore, next week we will discuss the role of storytelling in discovering spiritual gifts.

Questions About Grace (charis) and Gifts (charismata)

- How does understanding *charismata* as “grace-gifts” reshape the way we think about our abilities, ministries, and roles in the Church?
- In what ways does seeing gifts as *received* rather than *achieved* challenge pride, comparison, or insecurity in the Church?
- Paul asks, “What do you have that you did not receive?” How does this question confront modern ideas of self-sufficiency or personal achievement?
- How might our view of spiritual gifts change if we truly believed that God’s generosity is the starting point of all ministry?

2. Questions About Humility and Identity

- How does Philippians 2:1–9 model the kind of humility required for using spiritual gifts well?
- Why is humility essential for the proper functioning of spiritual gifts within the body of Christ?
- How does remembering our “dust-ness” protect us from misusing or over-valuing certain gifts?

3. Questions About the Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

- If spiritual gifts are given “to equip the saints for the work of ministry,” what does that say about the role of pastors and leaders versus the role of the congregation?
- How does the idea that “every believer is called into ministry” challenge the spectator mentality that often exists in churches?
- What does “building up the body of Christ” look like in practical, everyday church life?
- How do spiritual gifts contribute to unity rather than division?
- What happens to a church when certain gifts are elevated while others are ignored?

4. Questions About the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts

- How does the five-finger illustration help you understand the distinct role of each ministry gift?
- Which of the five roles (Apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) do you see most active in your Church? Which might be underdeveloped?
- How do these gifts work together to create a balanced and mature church?
- What dangers arise when one of these ministry gifts dominates without the others balancing it?
- How can we honor and support those who serve in these roles without placing them on pedestals?

5. Questions About Personal Calling and Participation

- What spiritual gifts do you believe God has entrusted to you? How have others affirmed those gifts?
- How have you seen God use your gifts to bless others—formally or informally?
- What barriers (fear, insecurity, lack of clarity, past wounds) keep believers from using their gifts?
- What is one step you can take this month to more fully participate in the “work of ministry”?
- How might your gift contribute to unity, maturity, or love within your congregation?

6. Questions About the Spirit’s Sovereignty

- 1 Corinthians 12:11 says the Spirit distributes gifts “as He chooses.” How does this truth shape our expectations, desires, or frustrations about gifting?
- Why is it important that no two expressions of a gift look identical?
- How does the Spirit’s freedom in distributing gifts protect the Church from uniformity and encourage diversity?

7. Questions for Group Reflection and Application

- What would your Church look like if every believer actively used their spiritual gifts?
- How can your congregation create a culture where gifts are discovered, developed, and deployed?
- What practices help a church discern gifts in one another?
- How can we ensure that spiritual gifts are always exercised in love, humility, and service rather than competition or self-promotion?