

Spiritual Gifts

...expressing the character and power of God

Spiritual Gifts Analysis — Explanatory Notes



Background information

God has created each of us for a purpose and He gifts us in various ways to help us outwork that purpose. One of the ways He gifts us is through assigning a ministry (a calling) to each of us and assigning certain spiritual gifts to us, in greater measure initially, that will help us outwork our ministry/calling.

An important question that follows is how might we recognise which spiritual gifts God has assigned to us, in greater measure initially, for the outworking of His purpose for our life...and how might that help us understand what assignments He has planned for us.

The study series "Why Am I Here?" is designed to help us recognise God's purpose for our life through six major life-mapping exercises...one of which is spiritual gifts. And one of the Application exercises provided in that study series is a "Spiritual Gifts Analysis".

There are many tools like this available, both in book form and on-line. Typically, such analyses present a list of statements, each of which is intended to describe a particular spiritual gift, and you are invited to rate to what extent each of these statements is true of your life. I have followed that approach in concept. However, after analysing many of these tools, my assessment is that their quality and usefulness varies enormously—to the point of being very misleading in some cases—when you consider the list of spiritual gifts they recognise, how those gifts are seen to function, how the questionnaires are constructed, and the conclusions someone might draw from such exercises.

Spiritual gifts analysis

Based on my understanding of individual spiritual gifts, as covered in a 45-Part series on "Spiritual Gifts", I have developed a Spiritual Gifts Analysis, using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, as a tool to help you get some measurable perspective on your current expression of spiritual gifts. Here are some of the features of this analysis tool:

1. The statements to be rated

In Step 1 of this exercise, you are asked to consider 130 statements—five statements for each of the 26 spiritual gifts in the final list—and rate to what extent each of these statements is true of your life.

I applied a systematic approach to designing these statements so that each spiritual gift is linked to statements that come from five different perspectives...and the same five perspectives are applied to each gift. This way, the main facets of each gift are covered consistently, so comparative results should be more reliable.

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These five perspectives are:

- (1) One statement that attempts to describe the essential nature of the gift.
- (2) One statement that describes something we might have done in the past if we were exercising the gift.
- (3) One statement that describes something we might do if we have a greater measure of commitment toward exercising the gift, perhaps reflecting a greater measure of initial faith to exercise this as a primary gift.
- (4) One statement that describes an extra measure of capacity we might have because of the gift, especially considering the supernatural dimension that is an integral component of every true spiritual gift.
- (5) One statement that describes how we might seek to help others increase the measure of that gift in their life, describing the training aspect that should be in evidence where we have a greater measure of a gift.

2. The rating system

When it comes to rating each statement, some spiritual gifts analyses use a simple "Yes/No" approach—effectively giving you a choice of only two ratings. Others offer a slightly larger number of choices—maybe three or four—but may attach descriptions, such as "Not at all", "Little", "Some" or "Much", that I find difficult, at times, to separate in my own thinking.

I prefer to use a rating system that offers a wider choice—11 ratings (between zero and 10)—and has no descriptions that could confuse responses...except for the end points:

- zero, meaning "Not true at all", and
- 10, meaning "Very true".

This wider rating range helps differentiate between ratings for individual statements and should give a clearer picture, at the end, of the variance between the final aggregate ratings for each spiritual gift.

Accessing the spreadsheet

I have attached the Spiritual Gifts Analysis spreadsheet, in Microsoft Excel format. If you don't have access to that program, I could provide this exercise to you in a version that can be used in a program, called "OpenOffice", that functions like Microsoft Excel and can be downloaded free of charge from the developer's website at the following link: www.openoffice.org/download/. The "OpenOffice" version also seems to work well in the Apple environment. If you still have a problem, please get in touch, as there could be other electronic options and, if necessary, I can provide this to you in manual form.

Using the spreadsheet

When you open the spreadsheet, you should see a tab (at the bottom of the page) labelled "Step 1". In this step, rate yourself, for the 130 statements listed, to indicate to what extent each of these statements is true of your life, currently, by typing in a (whole) number between zero (meaning "Not true at all") and 10 (meaning "Very true"), in the cell to the right of each statement.

Next, press Ctrl-PageDown, or click on the tab labelled "Step 2", and you will see two summary tables. The first table will show your ratings for each statement, now identified with a particular spiritual gift, and with a total score already calculated for each gift. The second table will show you which statements, in Step 1, correspond to those ratings and, therefore, which statements relate to each spiritual gift.

Next, press Ctrl-PageDown again, or click on the tab labelled "Step 3", and you will see a table with a ranked listing of spiritual gifts, in descending order based on your final scores, together with a corresponding chart.

This spreadsheet also has preset formats to help you print any of these three sections of the spreadsheet. For example, if you are viewing your results in "Step 3", you should be able to click "File" "Print" (or the equivalent) and get a printout of this results page.

Interpreting your results

Analyses such as this are subjective and are not intended to be scientifically accurate. And there are many factors that should be considered when trying to interpret your results. In particular:

1. Your results will be influenced both by the 'quality' of the statements you are rating and the 'accuracy' of your ratings as to how true each statement is of your life.
2. Some statements are oriented toward what you have experienced in the past. There could be many reasons why what you have experienced in the past is NOT a clear guide to your current expression of spiritual gifts (or your future potential). For example:
 - Over time, spiritual gifts should blend increasingly with our motivations, experiences of life, and other factors that God is weaving together for the outworking of His purposes, so this type of exercise is probably a reflection of a combination of factors and not just the influence of spiritual gifts in isolation...and that is not a problem.
 - Over time, we might see changes in gifting because of changes in the needs around us, development in our capacities, or development in our call.
 - We may have come from a background where there was limited understanding of spiritual gifts and, perhaps, limited encouragement, or opportunity, to express them.
 - We are commanded to earnestly desire spiritual gifts (for example, 1 Cor 14:1). If we take that command seriously—which we should—we have a divine injunction to step out and develop spiritual gifts that may not have been assigned to us in greater measure initially.
3. Your results could prompt you to wonder what certain spiritual gifts entail—for example, gifts where you end up with a higher (or lower) rating, especially if you didn't expect that result.
 - I suggest that you don't assume what a spiritual gift involves, based on its name only. There is a separate series available on "Spiritual Gifts" where you can study each of these spiritual gifts in some detail.
 - In the meantime, to get some further understanding, you might look at the right hand table in Step 2 that will show you which statements relate to each gift. You could note the five statement numbers that relate to a certain gift, then go back to Step 1 to read those particular statements again. That should give you a very basic understanding of what that gift involves (as I understand it).
 - For example, if you wonder what the spiritual gift of "Sexual integrity" involves, the right hand table in Step 2 will show you that the statements that contributed to your score for that gift are 21, 47, 73, 99 and 125. Now you could go back to Step 1 and read those statements again. Or, consider the gift of "Craftsmanship". This doesn't, necessarily, have anything to do with sewing clothes or making furniture—it describes a spirit of excellence in everything we do...and the statement numbers for this gift are 25, 51, 77, 103 and 129. I have given these two examples to help you interpret your results, but it's best to complete Step 1 before knowing which gift relates to which statement.
4. Don't be concerned if you end up with some low ratings. It doesn't matter what your scores might be now—it only matters where you go from here. If you were to regard a low score as an incentive to grow in that gifting, the exercise will have been of value.

I trust that you will find this Analysis tool helpful in your journey to become all that God has designed you to become.

Ray Graetz