

The Spiritual Gifts Project

Helping You Discover And Use Your Spiritual Gifts

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Spiritual Gift of Apostle

The spiritual gift of apostle is one of the foundational gifts mentioned in the New Testament, particularly in passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, and Acts 2:42. This gift is divinely given to certain individuals who are called to lead, plant, and oversee churches, as well as pioneer new movements to advance the kingdom of God.

The term “apostle” comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, meaning “one who is sent out” or “a messenger.” In the biblical context, apostles are those who are specifically called and sent by God to establish and expand the church.

“He would then need (1) to be sent with a message, (2) to be responsible to establish a church, and (3) to exercise authority in setting policies and enforcing them.” (Graham, 176)



Church Builders

These are the church builders. Like the original Apostles in the book of Acts, people with the gift of Apostle are able to plant, cultivate, and grow new church bodies. They put in place leaders and procedures that will nurture and grow the new churches in their missions. Many with this gift oversee multiple churches or even segments of different denominations with an ability to bring diverse groups together for focused missions or goals. They rely on those with the gift of evangelism to help grow the body, while others with gifts of shepherding and teaching are called upon to lead and educate the church.

A good example of this is found in the book of Acts when Phillip was sent to evangelize in Samaria. When his success in that region reached the apostles in Jerusalem, the Apostles Peter and John were sent to complete the work. While Phillip brought the Good News to Samaria, Peter and John built the community. The goal was the “preserve the unity of all believers under Apostolic direction”. (Purves, 63)

A Tremendous Responsibility

What a tremendous responsibility the one with the gift of apostle carries with them. The decisions and actions of this person(s) affect so many lives. As such, they must be devoted to prayerful consideration at all times as they subject to relentless attack from Satan. Prayers should be lifted for these people on a regular basis, especially from those with the gifts of faith and miracles.



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General Characteristics of the Gift of Apostle

Pioneering Spirit

Apostles are visionaries with a strong sense of purpose and calling. They are often drawn to uncharted territories, whether geographical (e.g., unreached nations or regions), cultural (e.g., marginalized or distinct communities), or spiritual (e.g., areas lacking sound biblical teaching or where the church is underdeveloped). Their pioneering spirit drives them to establish a foundation for the gospel where none exists. Apostles are innovative and adaptable, finding creative solutions to challenges and barriers, and they thrive in environments that require bold faith and resilience. They carry a forward-looking mindset, constantly seeking opportunities to expand God’s kingdom.

Leadership and Authority

Apostles are gifted with strong leadership abilities and a deep understanding of spiritual authority. They often serve as overseers, providing guidance and strategic direction to churches, ministries, or movements. Their leadership is rooted in servanthood and humility, reflecting Christ’s model. Apostles work to ensure that the ministries they oversee remain faithful to biblical teaching and aligned with God’s mission. They have a unique ability to inspire and mobilize others, fostering unity and purpose across diverse groups. Their authority is not about control but about building up the body of Christ and empowering others to fulfill their callings.

Church Planting

A hallmark of the apostolic gift is the ability to establish and develop new churches or ministries. Apostles are adept at identifying locations and communities in need of the gospel and taking the initiative to plant churches. They have a strategic mindset, often focusing on sustainability by equipping and mentoring local leaders to take over and shepherd the congregation. Apostles understand the importance of creating structures and systems that allow the church to thrive independently, ensuring its long-term impact. This work requires perseverance, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to foster relationships within new environments.

Teaching and Discipleship

Apostles are often deeply involved in teaching and discipleship, helping others grow in their faith and understanding of God’s Word. They have a gift for communicating biblical truths in ways that are relevant and transformative, making complex theological concepts accessible to diverse audiences.

Apostles focus on raising up and mentoring other leaders, equipping them to serve effectively within their unique callings. Through their teaching, they instill sound doctrine and encourage spiritual maturity, ensuring that the body of Christ is rooted in truth and prepared to face challenges.

Spiritual Oversight

Apostles carry a profound sense of responsibility for the health and unity of the church as a whole. They are often called to mediate conflicts, address doctrinal issues, and provide spiritual guidance in times of difficulty. Apostles have a unique ability to see the bigger picture, understanding how various ministries and churches fit together in God's overall plan. They are skilled in bringing resolution to divisions, fostering reconciliation, and maintaining doctrinal integrity. Their oversight extends beyond individual congregations, often involving collaboration with multiple leaders and churches to ensure the collective well-being of the body of Christ.

Martin Luther on the Spiritual Gift of Apostle

Martin Luther, the 16th century German reformer and theologian, wrote extensively on the topic of apostleship and spiritual gifts in his works.

In his understanding, the gift of apostleship was a special calling and commissioning by God to preach the Gospel and establish churches. He believed that this gift was given primarily to the apostles of Jesus Christ and to a few others in the early church, and that it was not a gift that could be claimed or passed down through succession.

Luther also emphasized the importance of the apostolic message, which he saw as the foundation of the Christian faith. He believed that the apostles were uniquely qualified to communicate this message, having been eyewitnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

However, Luther did not believe that the gift of apostleship was limited to the early church. He saw the ongoing work of the church as continuing the apostolic mission of proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples. He believed that all Christians were called to share the Gospel with others and to serve as witnesses to the truth of Jesus Christ.

John Wesley on the Spiritual Gift of Apostle

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, believed in the spiritual gift of apostleship. He believed that apostleship was a gift given by the Holy Spirit to certain individuals in order to establish and spread the Christian faith.

Wesley saw the role of the apostle as primarily one of planting and establishing churches. He believed that apostles were responsible for preaching the gospel, baptizing converts, and organizing local congregations. He also believed that apostles had a special anointing from God that enabled them to perform signs and wonders, such as healing the sick and casting out demons.

However, Wesley also believed that the gift of apostleship was not limited to the original apostles of Jesus, but was available to believers in all ages. He believed that anyone who had a calling and a passion for evangelism and church planting could be an apostle, regardless of their gender, social status, or education.

Wesley also cautioned that the gift of apostleship was not to be used for personal gain or power. He believed that true apostleship was marked by humility, service, and a willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

The Catholic Church on The Spiritual Gift of Apostle

The Catholic Church also recognizes the spiritual gift of apostleship, but with some distinctions from the Protestant understanding of the term.

In Catholic theology, apostleship refers primarily to the original twelve apostles chosen by Jesus Christ and later to St. Paul, who was called by Jesus to be an apostle. These apostles were chosen by Christ to be his closest disciples and witnesses to his life, teachings, death, and resurrection. They were given a special authority to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and govern the Church.

However, the Catholic Church also recognizes that the gift of apostleship is not limited to the original twelve or to St. Paul. Rather, it can be manifested in various ways among the faithful, such as in missionary work, evangelization, teaching, and leadership.

In this sense, apostleship is understood as a charism, or a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to certain individuals for the building up of the Church. These individuals are not necessarily bishops or ordained ministers, but may be laypeople or members of religious orders.

However, the Catholic Church also emphasizes that the gift of apostleship must be exercised in communion with the Church's hierarchy and teaching authority. This means that apostolic activity should not be pursued in a way that undermines the unity or orthodoxy of the Church, but rather in submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the legitimate authority of the Church's leaders.

People with this Gift:

- The Holy Spirit gives an ability to communicate to groups of all kinds in any situation
- Strong desire to pioneer and establish new ministries or churches; builds a strong foundation for growth of the Body for those with the Pastor/Shepherding gift to tend to
- Able to adapt to different surroundings by being culturally sensitive and aware
- A will to minister to unreached people in other communities or even countries
- Usually has responsibilities to oversee ministries or groups of churches and can demonstrate authority and vision for the mission of the church



We are looking for your perspective on the Spiritual Gifts and their use. [Click here to provide your insight or to participate in an interview.](#)

Bible References

Bible Reference	Notes
Luke 6:12-13	Jesus designates the 12 apostles
Acts 4:33	The apostles testify and grace is upon them
John 17:6-19	Jesus prays for his disciples; sends them into the world

John 20:19-23	Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection
Acts 8:14-18	Peter and John bless others with the Holy Spirit
1 Corinthians 12:27-31	Paul mentions the gift of apostle; gift of apostle is the greatest
2 Corinthians 8:22-24	Apostles are representatives of the church
Galatians 2:1-10	Paul selected as the apostle to the Gentiles
Ephesians 2:19-22	We are God's people with apostles as the foundation
Ephesians 4:11-12	Paul notes the gift of apostle
Colossians 2:2-5	Paul describes the goal of the apostles

References

- Zondervan, 97
- Graham, 175-176
- Bryant, 65-67
- Purves, 63-64

Other Greater Gifts

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PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS BELOW. ALL COMMENTS ARE MODERATED.

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Highlights



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🕒 10 months ago

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Spiritual Gift Descriptions

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Next Steps

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