

The Prophetic Gift

1. 2 Chronicles 20: 20
2. 2 Peter 1:21
3. Amos 3:7
4. Hebrews 1:1

Since 1980, the Seventh-day Adventist church has include a declaration about spiritual gifts in its statement of fundamental beliefs:

“God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit or functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love.”
Fundamental Belief, No. 17.

The continuing application of the gift of prophecy in the person of Ellen White has always been part of the Seventh-day Adventist belief system. The rest of the spiritual gifts mentioned or alluded to in the New Testament have not had as high a profile until recently.

William McRae tells about an advertisement of a job offer for a pastor. It read in part:

**“WANTED: Minister for a Growing Church.
A Real Challenge for the Right Man!**

“Applicant must offer experience as a shop worker, office manager, educator (all levels, including college, artist, salesman,

diplomat, writer, theologian, politician, children's worker, psychologist, funeral director, missionary, wedding consultant. Must know all about problems of birth, marriage, and death. Must be forthright but flexible, returns criticism and backbiting with Christian love and forgiveness.

"Should have outgoing, friendly disposition at all times. Should be captivating speaker and intent listener. Education must be beyond Ph.D. requirements, but always concealed in homespun modesty and folksy talk. Must be willing to work long hours, subject to call any time day or night, adaptable to sudden interruption. Will spend at least 25 hours preparing sermon. Additional 10 hours reading books and magazines.

"Applicant's wife must be both stunning and plain, smartly attired but conservative in appearance, gracious and able to get along with everyone. Must be willing to work in church kitchen, teach Sunday School, babysit, run the copier, wait table, never listen to gossip, never become discouraged.

"Opportunity for applicant to live close to work. Furnished home provided; open-door hospitality enforced. Must be ever mindful the house does not belong to him. Directly responsible for views and conduct to all church members and visitors, not confined to direction or support from any one person. Salary not commensurate with experience or need; no overtime pay. All replies kept confidential. Anyone applying will undergo full investigation to determine sanity." Wow!

Is that the way it works? Is the church really suppose to be managed by a few superpersons trying to meet expectations far beyond reality? What is the Lord's plan for the organization and management of church life?

What is a spiritual gift?

Scripture doesn't define exactly what a spiritual gift is. It names many gifts, describes their role in the overall organizational pattern of the church, and illustrates them in action. Many definitions of gifts have been cited: a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the church, supernatural gifts of grace given as a stewardship to members; abilities to function in a particular service; divine endowments; unique capacities; and special attributes. Here is a working definition: ***"A spiritual gifts is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the body."***