

The disputed category in this listing is, of course, natural gifts. If spiritual gifts are capacities, abilities, or skills that enable a believer to accomplish a specific service or task for God, then can so-called natural gifts be included in this category in a larger sense? Can they be pressed into His service? Can they be viewed as characteristics with which the Spirit of God endowed believers at birth (and even before birth, in terms of their genetic makeup, transmitted through their parents)? Can natural gifts be viewed as characteristics and abilities and skills that have been developed under the superintendence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that when persons become believers, they are able to seek for and find the calling and tasks for which God has prepared them by discerning the capacities, abilities, skills, and inclinations with which God has gifted them?

If natural gifts (along with spiritual gifts and supernatural gifts) can be included in the general category of gifts God gives to human beings to enable them to accomplish a specific service or task for God, should natural gifts be included in or excluded from the category of spiritual gifts?

Charles W. Carter addresses this issue (pp. 270-271):

The New Testament makes abundantly clear the distinction between God's gift of the Spirit to believers, and the gifts which the Spirit bestows upon believers. It is the latter with which we are concerned at this juncture. However, before examining these spirit-gifts, it is well that we take brief notice of an important distinction that must be made between such gifts as the Spirit may bestow upon a believer, and those natural or constitutional gifts that may characterize an individual, but which may be realized only when awakened and developed under the influence of the Spirit who has been given to him by God.

There is frequently much confusion at this point, and admittedly the distinction is not always easy to make. Certainly when considered in a very broad sense, both the talents or abilities constitutional to an individual, and the special endowments by the Spirit are the gifts of God, perhaps in the sense that life itself is a gift of God. But when considered more definitively there is a marked difference between the two. In consideration of what may be termed natural or constitutional gifts, the gift of the person of the spirit may illumine, quicken, and nurture these potentialities in an individual to the development of greater usefulness, whereas without the presence of the spirit in the life of an individual such potentialities may remain dormant throughout life and thus never serve any useful purpose. . . .

Likewise, natural, potential gifts are present in many, and perhaps most, lives. It is the presence of the gift of the Spirit that is necessary to awaken, nurture, and develop those potentialities. Probably a far greater percentage of what are commonly called the gifts of the Spirit fall into this category than are in the class of special enduements by the Spirit. But,