

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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At the Last Supper, Jesus revealed to His disciples that His death was imminent and that a Helper would be sent to them by the Father to take His place (John 14:16). Jesus identified the Helper as the Holy Ghost (John 14:26), the Spirit of Truth who would take up His residence *in* them (John 14:17), teach them all things, and show them things to come (John 16:13). When Jesus appeared to His disciples just before ascending to the Father, He commissioned them to be His witnesses *"to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem"* (Luke 24:46-48). His last recorded words were: *"I am sending forth the promise of My Father [the Holy Spirit] upon you; but you are to stay in the city [Jerusalem] until you are clothed with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49).

The brief account of the events that transpired in Jerusalem graphically depicts the dynamic energy by which the Church was brought to birth. The sound of *"a rushing mighty wind"* came from heaven; *"cloven tongues like as of fire"* appeared over each disciple (Acts 2:2,3 KJV), and then: *"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit give them utterance"* (Acts 2:4 KJV). Devout Jews, *"out of every nation under heaven"* (Acts 2:5 KJV), heard the great noise. The scripture says, *"The multitude came together, and were bewildered [confounded], because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language,"* magnifying *"the wonderful works of God"* (Acts 2:6,11 KJV).

*"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."*

*John 14:16*

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*

*John 14:26*

*"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."*

*John 14:17*

*"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*

*John 16:13*

And He said to them, *"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."*

*Luke 24:46-48*

*"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

*Luke 24:49*

And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

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Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language . . . .  
“We hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

*Acts 2:2-6, 11*

“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

*Ezekiel 36:27*

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”

*II Corinthians 6:16*

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

*I Peter 2:5*

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

*Acts 1:8*

The inauguration of the dispensation of God the Holy Spirit ushered the Church into the realm of the miraculous as man had never witnessed in the history of his existence. God came from heaven to earth to live *in* man (Ezekiel 36:27). No longer did He choose to confine Himself to the walls of a tabernacle or temple, to a pillar of fire or a cloud of glory; He chose to live *inside* His people, a people who would be scattered throughout the earth (II Corinthians 6:16, I Peter 2:5). He chose to supernaturally manifest His presence within His people by means of supernatural gifts of grace.

The Holy Spirit came to the earth to complete the ministry of Jesus through the *Church*. He came to minister the grace, love, and mercy of God to man — *through* man. He came to equip men with a miraculous ability to live as Jesus lived on the earth — full of compassion, wisdom, understanding, power, authority, and righteousness. God the Holy Spirit came to empower the Church to be witnesses for Jesus “*unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8 KJV). The same spiritual gifts used by the early Church to shake their world are available to Christians today. They are still the only means by which the Church will be able to accomplish the will of God in their generation.

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### II. CHARISMA — MANIFESTED GRACE

The "charisma" of the New Testament varies greatly in its meaning from the popular concept of the term. In today's vernacular, the man or woman with "charisma" exudes a *natural* charm and possesses an exceptional ability to arouse enthusiasm in others. In the New Testament, the Greek word "charisma" is translated gift, spiritual gift, or free gift. Its root word, "charis," means grace — the free unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving. Unlike the current usage, the Bible emphasizes the *supernatural* nature and *free* status of the gift, and the *unworthiness* of the recipient.

To look at the nature of grace is to gain a clearer understanding of the *gifts* of grace. Gifts of grace come to man through only one channel, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:17), and so may be described as bearing God's mark of excellence and purity. Gifts of grace are manifested through the individual who recognizes his need of supernatural help, the man humble enough to receive it (James 4:6, I Peter 5:5). Gifts of grace are acquired by only one means, the "hands" of faith (Ephesians 2:8; see *Foundations for Christian Growth*, Lesson 3, page 74), and administered by only one agent, the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:29).

The law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

*John 1:17*

He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

*James 4:6*

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

*I Peter 5:5*

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

*Ephesians 2:8*

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

*Hebrews 10:29*

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To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

*I Corinthians 12:7*

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

*Acts 2:33*

And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

*I Corinthians 2:4*

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the

Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.

*Romans 5:15,16*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 6:23*

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:28*

Paul describes a gift of grace (charisma) as a "manifestation of the Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:7), which simply means an act of the invisible Holy Spirit perceptible to the natural realm, something which can be experienced by the five physical senses (Acts 2:33, I Corinthians 2:4). Thus, charisma can be defined as grace made specific, visible, or effective — **grace made manifest**. Paul uses the word charisma to describe different forms of manifested grace: the free gifts of righteousness and eternal life that are bestowed on *sinners* (Romans 5:15,16; 6:23); the ministry gifts of helps, governments, serving, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy that are bestowed on *believers* (I Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:6-8); the gifts of celibacy and miraculous intervention (I Corinthians 7:7; II Corinthians 1:10,11). By inference, the major ministry gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 can also be included as charismata (plural): apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

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In this lesson we will limit our study to the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in I Corinthians 12:8-10: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healings, workings of miracles, prophecy, discernings of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. These gifts are all manifestations of extraordinary abilities operating through believers by the power of the Holy Spirit for special service to the Body of Christ.

And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

*Romans 12:6-8*

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

*I Corinthians 7:7*

Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.

*II Corinthians 1:10,11*

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.

*Ephesians 4:11*

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:8-10*

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### A. PREREQUISITES TO RECEIVING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God requires certain standards and prerequisites be met before He will bestow spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts do not simply “happen”; you don’t accidentally stumble across them. They can in no way be earned or in any way be deserved; they are strictly *grace* gifts. But even though they are *free*, God requires us to ask for them (James 4:2); and in the asking, we must have some understanding of God’s will in the matter to ask correctly and receive (James 4:3).

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

*James 4:2,3*

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

*Acts 1:8*

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

*I Corinthians 12:1*

#### 1. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The very first qualification for receiving spiritual gifts is that the candidate must be a born-again, Spirit-filled believer. (See *Foundations for Christian Growth*, Lesson 5 for a review of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.) When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you enter the realm of the supernatural; it is your doorway to the miraculous manifestation of the power of God in and through you (Acts 1:8).

#### 2. Knowledge

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul begins his discussion of spiritual gifts with the matter of knowledge: “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant*” (I Corinthians 12:1 KJV). Ignorance will always result in failure; with reference to the spiritual gifts, ignorance will always result in an inability to receive and participate in the things of the supernatural. If we are to understand God’s plan in the earth today, we must know about the Holy Spirit and His proper place in the life of the believer and the Church. Knowledge in this area will enable us to launch out in faith — to receive God’s grace and obey God’s commands. The purpose of this study is to gain the understanding that is necessary for us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Knowledge of the nature of these gifts and their proper operation comes by studying God’s Word.

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### 3. Desire

In relation to spiritual gifts, Paul gives us vital instruction as to how to receive: "*Covet earnestly the best gifts*" (I Corinthians 12:31 KJV), and again: "*Desire spiritual gifts*" (I Corinthians 14:1), and: "*Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church*" (I Corinthians 14:12 KJV).

Earnestness denotes a determination and a seriousness of purpose. True desire is a zealous searching for, a crying out of the heart from hunger and thirst, a wholehearted seeking that places the utmost value on the object pursued. Of necessity, earnest desire requires that we separate ourselves apart to God, away from self-indulgence, the pleasures of the world, and even good and worthy pursuits. Fervent seeking requires time, effort, a denial of the flesh, and honesty before God. Above all else, we are to be motivated by a desire to demonstrate God's love — the "*more excellent way*" — to the world (I Corinthians 12:31). We are to desire the manifestations of His grace that we may serve God more effectively in demonstrating His glorious love to the world (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

Earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

*I Corinthians 12:31*

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

*I Corinthians 14:1*

Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

*I Corinthians 14:12*

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

*I Corinthians 13:1-3*



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Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.  
*Philippians 2:5-8*

Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."  
*Luke 3:21,22*

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness.  
*Luke 4:1*

This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.  
*John 2:11*

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.  
*II Corinthians 4:7*

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you."  
*Isaiah 60:1,2*

### B. THE NATURE OF THE GIFTS

The scriptures tell us that Jesus stripped Himself of all His privileges of divinity to come to earth as a *man* (Philippians 2:5-8). It is for this reason that His ministry did not begin until He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21,22; 4:1). His first miracle occurred *after* He had received the Holy Spirit (John 2:11). As our example, Jesus demonstrated the life of a man directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit; His life manifested the supernatural presence and working of God in the ultimate. This same abundance and excellence are what God desires for every member of the Body of Christ. If it was available to Jesus only through the indwelling Spirit of God, how much more should *we* seek the supernatural gifts of grace.

We must understand that the gifts of the Spirit have nothing to do with our education, intellect, natural wisdom, talents, abilities, or "goodness." They are completely *supernatural*, originating in God. We are only the channels through whom the gifts flow, the "*excellency of the power*" is always of God (II Corinthians 4:7).

The gifts of the Spirit are the greatest source of latent power in the earth today. Through ignorance and fear of the supernatural, the majority of today's Church has clung to the natural, remained ineffective, and, for the most part, silent. It is time that she be informed and called into active duty. The struggle between evil and good is escalating, and God is calling each of us: "*Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee*" (Isaiah 60:1,2 KJV).

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### 1. Diversities

Paul began his discussion of spiritual gifts in his epistle to the Corinthians by explaining that they take on a variety of forms. *"Now there are distinctive varieties and distributions of endowments [extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians, due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit] and they vary, but the (Holy) Spirit remains the same. And there are distinctive varieties of service and ministrations, but it is the same Lord [Who is served]. And there are distinctive varieties of operation — of working to accomplish things — but it is the same God Who inspires and energizes them all in all"* (I Corinthians 12:4-6 Amplified).

Although charismata are distributed and operated by the same Spirit, these gifts, ministries, and effects are *different*. Different gifts are bestowed on different people in different ways. An example of the gift of God functioning differently in different people can be seen in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit supernaturally worked miracles through the *staff* of Moses (Exodus 7:8-12,20), the *mantle* of Elijah (II Kings 2:8), and the *physique* of Samson (Judges 15:14,15; 16:17). In each case, the manifestation of the Spirit was the working of a miracle, but with each individual, the operation was different.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.  
*I Corinthians 12:4-6*

Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Work a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

So Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood.  
*Exodus 7:8-12,20*

And Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.  
*II Kings 2:8*

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it.  
*Judges 15:14,15*

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So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

*Judges 16:17*

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

*I Corinthians 14:26*

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

*James 1:17*

The creativity and greatness of God are demonstrated in His choosing variety. His purpose is to reach as many people with His salvation as are willing to receive. He offers His grace in different forms to appeal to the vastly different people in the world and in His Church. The diversities in gifts, ministries, and operations were never intended to promote division or competition; through the Holy Spirit, they are tools to unite, build, and edify (I Corinthians 14:26). Originating in the same Source, they are only good and perfect (James 1:17), designed as constructive and harmonizing agents of the grace of God. We must be careful never to despise those gifts, ministries, and operations that are different from our own.

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### 2. As the Spirit wills

God entrusted the administration and distribution of the spiritual gifts to our Helper, the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:11). It is our duty to desire the gifts, and the Holy Spirit is responsible to divide them according to the divine purpose of God. The gifts are strictly under the control and oversight of the Third Person of the Godhead, to bestow as He wills, by His power and wisdom. It is His prerogative to give the gifts that are the most suitable for every individual. This was the case with the apostles: "*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will*" (Hebrews 2:4 KJV). We are only the *channels* through whom the Spirit of God manifests the power of God; the gifts are not our possessions to do with as we wish. They are *momentary* demonstrations through us, exclusively controlled and administered by the Holy Spirit.

God places us in His Body as it pleases Him, making us what He's called us to be (I Corinthians 12:18). We are not all eyes, or hands, or feet, etc. In order to accomplish every task set before the Church, diversity and a multitude of varying talents and gifts are required. It is important to remember that we all have one source of life, one will, and one purpose. Wherever He places us, let us there be content, effective, and strong in the Lord.

*"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth much fruit, and that your fruit should remain"* (John 15:16 KJV).

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

*I Corinthians 12:11*

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

*Hebrews 2:4*

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

*I Corinthians 12:18*

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you."

*John 15:16*

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"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND: AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS: EVEN UPON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy.' "

*Acts 2:15-18*

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today."

*Acts 22:3*

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

*Acts 4:13*

### 3. The human vessel

On the day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the multitude who had gathered: "*For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day [9:00 a.m.]; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind [flesh]; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy' "* (Acts 2:15-18).

Peter revealed that the age of the Church ("*the last days*") had begun and that the Spirit of God was being poured out on **all flesh**. "*All flesh*" cuts across lines of culture, race, nationality, class, sex, and age. It includes the learned and the unlearned. In the early Church, we have an excellent example of God using a well-educated man in Paul: "*Brought up . . . at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law*" (Acts 22:3 KJV); and a common man in Peter: "*When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13 KJV).

So we see that the Holy Spirit is not limited by *our having or lacking* natural talents or abilities, an education, natural wisdom or understanding. The spiritual gifts are gifts of *grace*. **They are not learned or earned; they are supernatural and originate in God.** There is no man able to heal or perform miracles apart from the Source of all life. When we are used in any of the gifts, it is not because we are more spiritual, or more dedicated, holier or more sanctified, or one of God's "favorites." The presence of the gifts in any believer's life makes no statement about his character or spiritual maturity. It says only that this individual is exercising faith in the power of God in this particular area; he is yielded to be used in the gifts of the Spirit. God uses imperfect vessels because of His great love and desire to minister miraculously to the needs of His children.

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### 4. The gifts of the Spirit vs. the fruit of the Spirit

The fruits of the Spirit must be distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit. The fruits of the spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, 23 — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance — are results of a *regenerated life*. The gifts of the Spirit are results of a *Spirit-filled life*. The fruits are for *holiness*, and the gifts are for *power*. You can have one without the other, although God desires us to enjoy both. Fruit *grows* on a branch that is drawing its sustenance from the vine. As the born-again, recreated Christian abides in Christ, the life of Christ within him produces the fruit (John 15:4). Fruit requires *time* and attentive *care* to grow and develop. It is easy to see that a newborn Christian would not have fully developed fruit, but it is possible for babes in Christ to experience the power of God.

God desires our lives to be filled with the fruit of the Spirit “*in every form of kindly goodness, uprightness of heart and trueness of life*” (Ephesians 5:9 Amplified), that we may be recognized as children of the light. And, He also desires all believers to have “*rivers of living water*” flowing out of their innermost being, that they may be able to minister His power to those around them (John 7:38).

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

*Galatians 5:22,23*

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

*John 15:4*

For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

*Ephesians 5:9*

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’ ”

*John 7:38*

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### C. CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

By their definitions and their functions, the nine gifts of the Spirit lend themselves to three distinct groupings: gifts of revelation — the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, discernings of spirits; gifts of power — faith, workings of miracles, gifts of healings; gifts of inspiration (the vocal gifts) — tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy. These categories are distinguished by **what God does** in each classification.

revelation — God reveals

power — God does

inspiration — God inspires

The following definitions of the gifts of the Spirit were compiled from Howard Carter's book, *Questions & Answers On Spiritual Gifts*.<sup>1</sup> (At the beginning of this century, Howard Carter began a 30-year study on the gifts that resulted in his receiving revelation from God on a subject relatively unknown in his time.)

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### *Gifts of Revelation*

1. **The word of wisdom** — a supernatural revelation of the mind and purpose of God in a particular matter in the *future*.

2. **The word of knowledge** — a supernatural revelation of the existence, or nature, of a person or a thing, or the knowledge of some event (*past or present*) that cannot be naturally known.

3. **Discernings of spirits** — a supernatural ability to see into the spirit world, including good and evil spirits.

### *Gifts of Power*

4. **Faith** — a supernatural ability to sustain an unwavering trust in God for personal protection and provision of needs, without human effort; supernatural ability to *receive* a miracle.

5. **Workings of miracles** — a supernatural demonstration of the power of God by which the laws of nature are altered, suspended, or controlled.

6. **Gifts of healings** — a supernatural manifestation of the healing power of God.

### *Gifts of Inspiration*

7. **Tongues** — a supernatural utterance of a message in a public meeting, in a language that is not known by the speaker.

8. **Interpretation of tongues** — a supernatural ability to interpret a message in tongues without knowing the language that was spoken.

9. **Prophecy** — a supernatural utterance in a known tongue for edification, exhortation, or comfort.



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And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also."

*Acts 17:6*

To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

*Ephesians 1:6,12*

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages had been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

*Ephesians 3:8-10*

### D. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS

The gifts of the Spirit are given for the building up of the Church in order to make her a powerful and influential force in the world. In the early Church, the gifts were prevalent, and believers were described as "*these that have turned the world upside down*" (Acts 17:6 KJV). The day that ordinary men and women become channels of God's healing and love to their neighbors and friends is the day the world will take notice of the Church. The gifts make us effective witnesses, giving such power to the Word of God in our mouths and lives that men will believe and act on it.

Through the gifts, the Church demonstrates "*the glory of His grace*" (Ephesians 1:6,12). Unto us is this grace given, that we should preach "*the unsearchable riches of Christ; to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*" (Ephesians 3:8-10 KJV).

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### III. GIFTS OF INSPIRATION

The gifts of inspiration may be defined as divinely inspired utterances that serve to edify, exhort, or comfort the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 14:3). They include prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

Under the Old Covenant, God frequently gave inspired utterances, but it wasn't until after the day of Pentecost that we see them take the form of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. These two gifts are unique to this dispensation; they do not appear in the Old Testament or in the ministry of Jesus, but in the Church age alone.

It is obvious in the New Testament that the practice of speaking in tongues was prevalent and condoned by the apostles. It is also obvious in studying Paul's instructions to the Corinthians that it was the cause of some confusion. Paul begins his address to this troublesome subject with, "*I would not have you ignorant*" (I Corinthians 12:1 KJV). He lays out a clear-cut definition of the vocal gifts (I Corinthians 14:3,5), identifies the proper uses (I Corinthians 14:18,19,22-25), and suggests some guidelines to help them achieve order in their meetings (I Corinthians 14:26-33). It is significant to note that Paul expressly told them: "*Covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues*" (I Corinthians 14:39 KJV).

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

*I Corinthians 14:3,5*

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

*I Corinthians 12:1*

I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe. If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

*I Corinthians 14:18,19,22-25*

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself

(over)

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and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

*I Corinthians 14:26-33*

Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

*I Corinthians 14:39*

But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

*I Corinthians 13:10*

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

*I Corinthians 13:8*

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

*I Corinthians 13:9*

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

*I Corinthians 14:33*

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.

*Ephesians 4:15*

Do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

*I Thessalonians 5:20,21*

This subject is still troublesome today. Most mainline denominational churches are happy to relegate the gifts of the Spirit, and especially tongues, to the brief period required for the writing of the New Testament. They teach that the "perfect," referred to by Paul in I Corinthians 13:10, is the Bible. God briefly used the inspirational gifts to pen the New Testament, and then they ceased. But Paul seemed to imply that *knowledge* would "*vanish away*" at the same time *tongues* would cease (I Corinthians 13:8 KJV). "*We know in part, and we prophesy in part*" (I Corinthians 13:9).

God has chosen to use *imperfect* vessels. These inspirational gifts are a merging of the divine and the human, and thus, the gifts of the Spirit are only as pure as the human vessel is yielded to the Spirit of God. In addition, God *chooses* to reveal to us only in part. When the perfect is come, we will be free from all temptation, every enemy, and our finite minds and bodies. Without unbelievers, sin, sickness, and death, we will have no need of the gifts of the Spirit. We will know fully; the perfect will have come. We will be perfectly and completely edified throughout eternity in the bodily presence of the Father and our glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jesus.

Until then, these controversial gifts need to be studied and exercised in the Church to make us better and more useful Christians *now*. Knowledge and understanding dispel fear, and fear has no place in the Body of Christ. The fact that the gifts have been misused by some is no excuse for rejecting the supernatural altogether. There is a proper use and a proper place for the vocal gifts "*in all the churches of (God's people)*" (I Corinthians 14:33 Amplified). God wants the Body of Christ strong and alert, growing up into Jesus in *all* things (Ephesians 4:15).

Paul warns us to "*despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" (I Thessalonians 5:20,21 KJV).

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### A. GIFT OF PROPHECY

Prophecy is a supernatural, divinely inspired utterance in a known tongue. In Hebrew, to prophesy means “to flow forth”; in Greek, it means “to speak for another,” or to speak for God — to be His spokesman or mouthpiece.<sup>2</sup> Prophecy is God speaking to man — through man — in his native language; it originates with the Holy Spirit and “flows” out of a man’s spirit. The New Testament emphasizes the exhortational form of prophecy rather than the prophecy of revelation found in the Old Testament.

#### 1. How to identify the various forms of prophecy

Paul informs us that the gifts vary in their operations (I Corinthians 12:6). The gift of prophecy may take on more different forms and shades of meaning than any other of the gifts listed in I Corinthians 12. The term “prophecy” is used in the *general* sense to mean “prediction,” revealing something which will happen in the *future*. The definition for **the gift of prophecy** given in the New Testament, however, is quite different: “*He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*” (I Corinthians 14:3 KJV).

It is imperative that we gain scriptural insight into this gift that Paul describes as so vital to the health of the Body. He admonishes us: “*Be not children in understanding . . . in understanding be men [perfect]*” (I Corinthians 14:20 KJV). We can best cooperate with the Holy Spirit when we understand the various forms prophecy can take, in public use and in private use. God’s will is that we be informed of His supernatural provision for us individually and corporately; it is on accurate information that we can act confidently and effectively.

And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

*I Corinthians 12:6*

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

*I Corinthians 14:3*

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

*I Corinthians 14:20*

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### a. The "simple" gift of prophecy

The gift of prophecy speaks to *men*, and ministers primarily to *believers* for edification, exhortation, and comfort (I Corinthians 14:3,4). A dictionary definition of *edify* is to build up spiritually, strengthen, and make more effective. *Exhort* means to encourage, admonish, and call near to God. *Comfort* is simply to cheer up. Paul emphasizes prophecy, indicating that we should begin desiring spiritual gifts by coveting prophecy first (I Corinthians 14:1), because of the obvious benefits to the Church. Prophecy calls believers to consecration and holiness, encouraging them to separate themselves from the world. Under divine direction, it warns God's children against sin and complacency, to help ready them for Jesus' return. Prophecy helps to remove fear and uncertainty from the Church, overcoming Satan's most debilitating weapons — condemnation and discouragement. In these, and many other ways, prophecy fulfills its function in the Church: it edifies, exhorts, and comforts.

Paul describes the gift of prophecy as "greater" than the gift of tongues, unless there is an interpretation of the tongue (I Corinthians 14:5). The two together are equivalent to prophecy. All three gifts are **inspired utterance**. The gift of interpretation, however, is dependent on the gift of tongues; there is no interpretation without a message in tongues being given. Prophecy (or tongues and interpretation together) is a means whereby "*the unbeliever . . . is told of his sin . . . and convicted*" (I Corinthians 14:24 Amplified). When the secrets of his heart are laid bare (a word of knowledge), Paul tells us the unbeliever is so convinced of God's presence in the Church that he falls down on his face and worships Him (I Corinthians 14:25).

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.  
*I Corinthians 14:3,4*

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.  
*I Corinthians 14:1*

Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.  
*I Corinthians 14:5*

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.  
*I Corinthians 14:24,25*

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### b. Vehicle for other gifts

"Prophecy" may become a vehicle for other related spiritual gifts, such as a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, or discernings of spirits. In the exercise of the simple gift of prophecy, these revelation gifts may be manifested; they are separate and distinct from prophecy, but are communicated to the people in an inspired utterance. Prophecy is inspired utterance, but not all inspired utterance is prophecy. With scriptural understanding, we can distinguish "prophecy" in its various forms.

Thus, Paul makes a distinction between the simple gift of prophecy and "speaking by revelation" (the gift of a word of wisdom) in I Corinthians 14:6. The **simple gift of prophecy** contains no revelation of *future* events. The purpose of prophecy is to draw men and women to Jesus, to encourage them to believe in Him and receive His grace, whether believer or unbeliever.

### c. Prophetic office

A distinction must be made between the spiritual gift of prophecy and the ministry gift of the prophet (Ephesians 4:11,12). A man may be used in the simple gift of prophecy, and not be called or qualified to operate in the office of a prophet. Paul tells us God sets prophets in the Body (I Corinthians 12:28), and then he immediately asks us: "*All are not prophets, are they?*" (I Corinthians 12:29). The answer to his rhetorical question is, "No!" All are *not* prophets, but *all* may prophesy (I Corinthians 14:31). Thus, operating in the gift of prophecy does not make one a prophet. The ministry of a prophet is a calling of God, not a decision on our part that this is what we would like to achieve. The choice lies with God; He sets every member in the Body as it pleases Him (I Corinthians 12:18).

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

*I Corinthians 14:6*

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

*Ephesians 4:11,12*

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:28*

All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

*I Corinthians 12:29*

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.

*I Corinthians 14:31*

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

*I Corinthians 12:18*

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And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

*Acts 21:8-11*

And they continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN UPON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy.' "

(cont'd.)

The weightier spiritual significance of the prophet, in relation to one who has the simple gift of prophecy, is illustrated in the visit of Paul to the house of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8-11). Philip had four daughters who prophesied, but God sent the prophet Agabus with a revelation (word of wisdom) as to what awaited Paul in Jerusalem.

### d. Prophecy is *not* preaching

There are some who believe that the gift of prophecy refers to preaching of the Word. The Bible, however, makes a clear distinction between prophecy and preaching. Luke's account of the day of Pentecost reveals that the gifts of the Spirit arrested the people's attention; but they were saved when they heard Peter *preach the gospel* (Acts 2:12-18,21,41). The new converts were not saved by the gifts they had seen manifested. The Bible tells us men are saved by the foolishness of preaching (I Corinthians 1:21), not the foolishness of prophesying or speaking in tongues. To preach means "to proclaim, to announce, to cry, to tell" — quite distinct from the definition and purposes Paul enumerated for the gift of prophecy (i.e. to edify, to exhort, and to comfort).

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Jesus commissioned the Church to preach or proclaim the gospel (Mark 16:15). He gave no indication that we were to "prophesy" the gospel. Paul charged Timothy to "preach the word," and he also exhorted him to "**study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a **workman** that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly **dividing** the word of truth" (II Timothy 4:2; 2:15). The preacher is to preach the Word; study and meditation in the Word are necessary ingredients in the preparation of a sermon. In order to rightly divide the word of truth, a preacher must take the necessary time laboring in the scriptures.

It is true that preaching can contain prophecy. The Holy Spirit can inspire a preacher to go beyond his natural understanding, and by supernatural utterance he can say things directly from his spirit rather than his mind. **But prophecy and preaching are not one and the same.**

'AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.'

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

*Acts 2:12-18, 21, 41*

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

*I Corinthians 1:21*

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

*Mark 16:15*

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

*II Timothy 4:2*

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

*II Timothy 2:15*



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And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

*Ephesians 5:18,19*

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.

*I Corinthians 14:14,15*

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

*Colossians 3:16*

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

*I Corinthians 14:26*

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember, and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

(cont'd.)

### e. Praying

We can speak to the Lord and to ourselves under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul directs us to be filled with the Spirit, and to **speak to ourselves** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to **the Lord** (Ephesians 5:18,19). A psalm is a spiritual song or poem that can be recited or chanted; it may contain rhyme, meter, or other characteristics of poetry. Hymns and spiritual songs are inspired utterance in singing. As with David, we can come to the Lord under an anointing of the Spirit and worship Him with the understanding, in our known tongue. This singing or praying with the understanding (I Corinthians 14:14,15) is "fruitful" to us, because we are able to comprehend what the Holy Spirit is saying through our spirits and mouths to God the Father. It is edification, exhortation, and comfort flowing out of our innermost being; it is direct communication with God, inspired by God, whereby we can talk to Him, and He can talk to us. Paul associates the Word dwelling in us richly (the result of Bible study and meditation) with "*singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16 KJV). The Holy Spirit can take the Word we have planted in our hearts and inspire us to utter it — privately or publicly (I Corinthians 14:26) — in melodious song or rhyme.

### Read Psalm 42.

During times of great stress, pursued by his enemies, hiding in caves, David was able to cry out to God from the depths of his heart. David verbalized his trust in the faithfulness of God to deliver; he expressed his utter dependence in the only One able to save Him. In the Psalms, David would speak to himself for a while — reminding himself of the mercy and greatness of God, commanding his soul to bless the Lord; and then he would talk to God for a while. David's words are still alive and powerful today, inspiring millions throughout the world, because they were born of the Spirit of prophecy.

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### f. Misuse

The gifts of the Spirit become the possession of no man to use whenever and however he desires. It is misuse of the gift to correct or rebuke another brother by "prophesying" to him. The gift of prophecy is not the scriptural means for settling arguments or introducing "new" doctrine. Our source of doctrine is the Bible, the written Word and the preached Word. The ministry gifts expose error, and doctrine brings correction. Someone who has "deeper truth" and "new revelation" is often an individual who cannot submit his "prophecy" for judgment (I Corinthians 14:29), and exhibits a hard and unteachable spirit. Wisdom from above is pure, peace-loving, courteous, gentle, willing to yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is whole-hearted, straightforward, impartial, and genuine (James 3:17 Amplified). Anything spoken under the guise of prophecy out of jealousy, envy, rivalry, criticism, or selfish ambition produces confusion, unrest, disharmony, and *evil* practices (James 3:16 Amplified). The Spirit of God does not divide the Church; the gift of prophecy encourages, comforts, and *edifies* the Church. It is a gift of *grace*.

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence. O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore I remember Thee from the land of the Jordan, and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the sound of Thy waterfalls; all Thy breakers and Thy waves have rolled over me. The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; and His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life.

I will say to God my rock, "Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God.

*Psalms 42*

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

*I Corinthians 14:29*

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure (undefiled); then it is peace-loving, courteous (considerate, gentle). [It is willing to] yield to reason, full of compassion and good fruits; it is whole-hearted and straightforward, impartial and unfeigned — free from doubts, wavering and insincerity.

*James 3:17 Amplified*

For wherever there is jealousy (envy) and contention (rivalry and selfish ambition) there will also be confusion (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil and vile practices.

*James 3:16 Amplified*

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For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.

*I Corinthians 14:31*

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

*Hebrews 5:14*

So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

*I Corinthians 14:12*

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

*I Corinthians 14:1*

“And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

*1 Cor 11:9*

For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

*Luke 11:10-13*

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

*Matthew 7:11*

(cont'd.)

### 2. How to exercise the gift of prophecy

Prophecy is a gift that we can “learn” to exercise (I Corinthians 14:31) in a correct and mature manner “by reason of use” (Hebrews 5:14 KJV). Very few people begin to operate in the gifts of inspiration without making some mistakes. The important point is that we begin; it is after we begin that we seek to “excel” (I Corinthians 14:12 KJV).

#### a. Receive the gift

God's revealed will regarding prophecy is that “you can *all* prophesy” (I Corinthians 14:31). Begin by seeking to desire, if the desire isn't already present (I Corinthians 14:1; Luke 11:9). Ask the Father in Jesus' Name (Luke 11:10-13; Matthew 7:11), and receive at the time you ask (Mark 11:24; I John 5:14,15). Your desire and will are of the utmost importance in receiving from God. When we know the Holy Spirit is prompting us to step into a particular area, we must respond with obedient cooperation if we want to begin moving in the supernatural.

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### b. Order

Paul's suggestions to the Corinthians for achieving order in their meetings are described as "*commandments of the Lord*" (I Corinthians 14:37 KJV). Since the vocal gifts of the Spirit are somewhat under the believer's control, these "*commandments*" are regulations to safeguard their correct use. Paul emphasized the importance of *order* for effective ministry. When everyone prophesied at the same time, they competed with one another to be heard. He told them simply to take turns (I Corinthians 14:31). The reference in v.29 and 30: "*And let two or three **prophets** speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent,*" is a directive to **the prophets** (the ministry gifts), and not to those who were operating in the simple gift of prophecy. **Excessive use of the gift, however, in any one meeting will detract markedly from the impact prophecy can have on its listeners.** The reference in v.32, however, applies to anyone operating in a gift of the Spirit: "*The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*" You can *choose* to move in the gift of prophecy when the Holy Spirit prompts you to speak out, or you can choose to *quench* (suppress) the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19). The Holy Spirit will never *force* anyone to prophesy against his will. You have to *want* to be used.

It is proper to hold a message to the congregation until an appropriate time. Specifically, one would not interrupt a person who is speaking, especially the pastor or whoever else may be preaching or teaching from the Word. The Holy Spirit is very much in operation during the presentation of the sermon or teaching, and to think He would interrupt Himself would be very illogical. It is also inappropriate to prophesy while the congregation is singing or worshiping the Lord. The most suitable time is during a lull in the worship or after the sermon has been delivered, when the people are quiet before the Lord. There is no competition for attention at this point, and the assembly can hear and understand what is being said.

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

*Mark 11:24*

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

*I John 5:14,15*

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

*I Corinthians 14:37*

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.

*I Corinthians 14:31*

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

*I Corinthians 14:29,30*

The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

*I Corinthians 14:32*

Do not quench the Spirit.

*I Thessalonians 5:19*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go."  
*Isaiah 48:17*

Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."  
*Jeremiah 1:9*

Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.  
*I Peter 4:11*

If you are in a large gathering of believers, it is best to go forward and speak from a microphone, that all may hear and be blessed. If you are visiting a church and are unfamiliar with the order they maintain in their services, an usher may be of some assistance. Many large churches will ask that you share the essence of what you believe the Lord would have said with an elder or other appointed minister or layman before approaching the microphone. It is correct to submit yourself to such judgment. The leader in charge of the meeting is responsible for the manner in which it is conducted. We must be willing to receive correction, either to *prevent* a premature, unwise, or fleshly act, or to *learn* by our mistakes.

### c. Delivery

It is both appropriate and effective, when delivering a message in prophecy before an assembly of believers, to speak in the first person (e.g. "**I am** the source of your life."). It is not blasphemous or presumptuous to speak as though you are God. You are merely God's mouthpiece; the Holy Spirit is simply inspiring you to speak out of your spirit what God would say if He were present bodily in the meeting. In the Old Testament, Isaiah is a good example of how the prophets spoke to the people: "**I am** the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17). The Lord told Jeremiah, "**I have put my words in your mouth**" (Jeremiah 1:9).

When you prophesy, speak slowly and enunciate your words clearly so that everyone will be able to understand what is said. Be confident in the Lord, and trust the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to speak through you with all the authority and boldness the message deserves (I Peter 4:11).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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### d. According to faith

*“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith”* (Romans 12:6). The basis for all successful service in the kingdom of God is faith (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23). We can build our faith in the area of the exercise of spiritual gifts by studying God's Word on this subject: it is God's revealed will that every man be used in the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7,11; I Corinthians 14:26); it is God's will that His children receive His *“good gifts”* (Luke 11:13; James 1:16,17); it is God's will that His Church be *strong in the Holy Spirit*, full of power and godliness, as evil increases in the last days (II Timothy 3:1-5,13; I Thessalonians 3:12,13).

And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith.

*Romans 12:6*

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

*Hebrews 11:6*

Whatever is not from faith is sin.

*Romans 14:23*

To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

*I Corinthians 12:7,11*

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

*I Corinthians 14:26*

*“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”*

*Luke 11:13*

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

*James 1:16,17*

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-

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control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

*II Timothy 3:1-5,13*

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

*I Thessalonians 3:12,13*

... faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

*Romans 10:17*

And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith.

*Romans 12:6*

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

*I Peter 4:10*

Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.

*I Peter 4:11*

One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues . . . So

(*cont'd.*)

Our faith grows when we *study* the Word, which reveals God's will, and *act* on it (Romans 10:17). As we prophesy "according to the proportion of faith" (Romans 12:6) we possess, our faith is exercised, developed, and increased. We can become more proficient in hearing from God and responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit without hesitation. Our faith grows as we cooperate with God.

It is possible to overstep our measure of faith when prophesying; that happens when we continue on past the place where the Holy Spirit stopped, by speaking out of our own understanding. This is beginning in the Spirit and finishing in the flesh. Let us seek to *excel* in our use of the gifts.

Peter exhorts us to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" by ministering to one another the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows on us (I Peter 4:10). Why? "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 4:11). We are not given gifts to bury them, or to hide them away in a corner. They are to be used to edify the Church (I Corinthians 14:4,5,12,26) — to bring grace to man and glory to God.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

### 3. How to judge the gift of prophecy

There are scriptural principles that furnish us with obvious guidelines for judging prophecy. We are exhorted to test everything and retain only the good (I Thessalonians 5:19-21). This warning implies that a prophetic utterance can be both good *and* bad. We are told to "hold fast" (to embrace and take heed to) the good, that which has originated in the mind of God, and to throw out (to disregard and forget) the bad, that which has come from the mind of man. If a prophecy is not 100% pure, we are to retain whatever percentage is — whether it be 1% or 99%. We must remember that God's gifts are perfect (James 1:17), but the vessels through whom He exercises the gifts are imperfect.

- Is the prophecy true to the scriptural definition given by Paul in I Corinthians 14:3? Does it edify, exhort, or comfort?
- Is it in harmony with the Word of God? Does it agree with the letter and spirit of the scriptures? (II Timothy 3:16; Isaiah 8:19,20).
- Does it glorify Jesus Christ? (John 16:13,14; Revelation 19:10).
- Does it produce liberty and life in the meeting? (II Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:15; I Corinthians 14:33; II Corinthians 3:6).
- Does it bear witness with your spirit? (I John 2:27).

also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

*I Corinthians 14:4,5,12,26*

Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

*I Thessalonians 5:19-21*

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

*James 1:17*

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

*I Corinthians 14:3*

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

*II Timothy 3:16*

And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

*Isaiah 8:19,20*

"But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.

*John 16:13,14*

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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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And I fell at his feet to worship him.  
And he said to me, "Do not do that;  
I am a fellow servant of yours and  
your brethren who hold the  
testimony of Jesus; worship God.  
For the testimony of Jesus is the  
spirit of prophecy."

*Revelation 19:10*

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and  
where the Spirit of the Lord is, there  
is liberty.

*II Corinthians 3:17*

For you have not received a spirit of  
slavery leading to fear again, but  
you have received a spirit of adop-  
tion as sons by which we cry out,  
"Abba! Father!"

*Romans 8:15*

For God is not a God of confusion  
but of peace, as in all the churches  
of the saints.

*Corinthians 14:33*

Who also made us adequate as ser-  
vants of a new covenant, not of the  
letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter  
kills, but the Spirit gives life.

*II Corinthians 3:6*

And as for you, the anointing which  
you received from Him abides in  
you, and you have no need for  
anyone to teach you; but as His  
anointing teaches you about all  
things, and is true and is not a lie,  
and just as it has taught you, you  
abide in Him.

*I John 2:27*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

### B. GIFT OF DIVERS KINDS OF TONGUES

The gift of tongues is a supernatural utterance in a public meeting of a message in a language unknown to the speaker, and generally unknown to the hearer. Such a message is to be immediately followed by the manifestation of the gift of interpretation of tongues. This is a supernatural ability to interpret the message without knowing the language that was spoken. The message is an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit that serves to edify, exhort, and comfort the Body of Christ. It differs from prophecy in that two of the spiritual gifts are required to deliver the message.

The scriptures distinguish between *known* and *unknown* tongues (I Corinthians 13:1; 14:2,4,13,19 KJV). There are also references to *new* tongues, *other* tongues, and *angelic* tongues (Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; I Corinthians 13:1). These various tongues "of men" include languages currently spoken by the nations and tribes of the world, and the languages of antiquity that are no longer in common use. Some unknown tongues may be languages that have never been known anywhere in the earth, at any time.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

*I Corinthians 13:1*

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

*I Corinthians 14:2,4,13,19 KJV*

"And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues."

*Mark 16:17*

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

*Acts 2:4*

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

*I Corinthians 13:1*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.  
*I Corinthians 14:2,4*

What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all.  
*I Corinthians 14:15,18*

Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.  
*I Corinthians 14:5*

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?  
*I Corinthians 12:28-30*

Paul differentiates this gift of kinds of tongues from the tongue used in supernatural prayer and communion with God. The "prayer" or "devotional" tongue is received initially at the time one is baptized in the Holy Spirit (See *Foundations For Christian Growth*, Lesson 5, p. 124). It is also a supernatural linguistic ability which bypasses the mind and intellect. By it, the *spirit* of man speaks by the Holy Spirit (divinely inspired utterance) *mysteries* (things not understood) unto *God* (not man) and edifies *himself* (not the Church) (I Corinthians 14:2,4). Paul referred to *praying in the Spirit* when he said, "I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all" (I Corinthians 14:15,18). Paul reveals that it is God's will for *all* believers to speak in tongues (I Corinthians 14:5). And yet, when Paul talked about God setting apostles, prophets, and other various gifts in the Body, including diversities of tongues, he asked: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? . . . Do **all** speak with tongues?" (I Corinthians 12:28-30). Within the context of this passage, it is obvious Paul is saying that every believer is *not* used in the *public* ministry of the gift, just as every believer is not an apostle, or a prophet. It is a gift bestowed as the Spirit wills on whomever *He* chooses. Thus, one must make a distinction between *public* use of tongues which not all exercise, and the *private* use of tongues, which *all* may do.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

### 1. Purpose

On the day of Pentecost, when unknown tongues were first heard by men, the reaction was *astonishment*. This supernatural phenomenon, of men speaking in languages that they had never learned, drew a multitude of curious, perplexed spectators. Although some mocked, 3,000 responded to the Word Peter preached and were added to the Body (Acts 2:4-13,41). Paul defined the purpose of the gift as being a *sign* for the unbeliever present in the meeting (I Corinthians 14:22). It is a shockingly supernatural manifestation of the presence of God in the midst of His people; it arrests the attention of an outsider for what is to follow. The tongue, unknown to the speaker, *may be known to the hearer*, and with an interpretation that follows from another who is unfamiliar with the language, **it is a dynamic witness to the power of God.**

Paul states that prophecy is for the Church, and tongues and interpretation of tongues are for the outsiders, or unbelievers. The Holy Spirit can communicate a message just as easily, perhaps *more* easily, through the gift of prophecy, since He needs only one vessel, or individual, to cooperate with Him. In dealing with the two gifts, He frequently deals with two people and two wills (although the person who gave the tongue may *also* interpret, and Paul encourages him to do so in I Corinthians 14:13). The Holy Spirit chooses the essence of the inspired utterance, as well as the manner of delivery. The Holy Spirit is omniscient, knowing the hearts of every man and woman in every meeting, and He chooses the gifts that will best serve His work in each of their lives.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." And they continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

*Acts 2:4-13,41*

So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.

*I Corinthians 14:22*

Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

*I Corinthians 14:13*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret.

*I Corinthians 14:27*

Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

*I Corinthians 14:5*

For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

*I Corinthians 14:17*

If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

*Corinthians 14:28*

### 2. Order

Since this is a vocal gift and involves the will of the believer, Paul specifies regulations for its use in public meetings. There are to be no more than three people in any one service to deliver messages in tongues, and they should do so one by one (I Corinthians 14:27). The Corinthian church experienced confusion and disorder when several spoke out in tongues at the same time. A message in tongues is given to the Body that it may be interpreted, and *all* may be edified (I Corinthians 14:5). As with the gift of prophecy, a message in tongues should be delivered at an opportune time in the course of the meeting. It should never interrupt anything else that is transpiring (i.e. preaching, worship).

When the congregation is joined in united praying or singing in the Spirit (in tongues), this is *not* a manifestation of the gift of tongues, and therefore requires no interpretation. It is very much *in order* for a body of believers to worship God and pray *together* in the Spirit; Paul said that doing so is giving thanks "*well*" (I Corinthians 14:17). But when one person speaks out in tongues during a meeting, **drawing the congregation's attention to himself**, the tongue requires either an interpretation or an explanation by the pastor or leader. "*If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself, and to God [silently]*" (I Corinthians 14:28 KJV). The spirit of the believer is under his control; the Holy Spirit will never enslave a man's will. He is the Spirit of liberty; a spirit of bondage or compulsion is ungodly. We are free to choose, both to control the flow of the gift through us and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

### 3. Operation

For a believer to be used in the gift of tongues requires *faith* to believe and “know” it is God’s will and timing, and *courage* not to care what people think. As with prophecy, the proficient exercise of this gift requires practice and time. The more scriptural knowledge one has on the subject, the fewer mistakes will be made. There should never be any fear in the Church of the gifts, of obeying God in their operation, or of any correction which may be required to exercise them properly. God is *for* us in everything.

### C. GIFT OF INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

An interpretation of a tongue given in the Church is an intelligible rendering of an unintelligible utterance (I Corinthians 12:10). Interpretation does not denote a word-for-word translation; a translation is a rendering from one language to another in *precise* grammatical terms. Because an interpretation conveys the essence or *basic* meaning of the utterance, one interpreter may phrase the interpretation differently than another, without losing any of the impact or significance of what the Spirit is saying. Thus, a message in tongues may be short, and the interpretation long, and vice-versa, without detracting in any way from its validity. Or, the interpretation may be almost pure in every aspect in its rendering.

The inspired utterance originates in the spirit of man by the Holy Spirit, but flows out through the personality and mind of man. **The gifts are perfect, but men are imperfect.** The Holy Spirit utilizes the vocabulary of the individual man, and men without formal training may speak out a message from God without perfect grammar or eloquence. That does not make the operation of this gift any less supernatural, just as faultless speech does not insure that God has given the inspiration. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is able to bring forth from the crudest vessel the most persuasive and profound fluency of speech, that even the most skeptical are astounded. If He can cause Balaam’s donkey to speak for His purposes, we cannot confine Him to only that which we understand (Numbers 22:28,30).

To another the effecting of miracles and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:10*

And the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times? And the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?” And he said, “No.”

*Numbers 22:28,30*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.

*I Corinthians 14:13-15*

### 1. Purpose

The primary means of judging the exercise of a vocal gift in an assembly is its content. It must exalt and glorify Jesus and edify the Church. All the gifts are for the building up of the Body. The inspired utterance gifts serve to edify, exhort, and comfort believers and arrest the attention of unbelievers by the manifest presence of God in His Church. They do *not* save men; the accompaniment of **the preaching of the gospel** saves men.

**The interpretation of tongues is the most important gift for a believer's *personal use*.** When we pray in tongues, God understands everything we say, and *He* needs no interpreter. But there are times when it is profitable for *us* to know what we are praying. This again is as the Spirit wills, according to the wisdom and mind of God. Paul does encourage us to pray that we may interpret; then not only are our spirits edified, but our understanding is *fruitful* (I Corinthians 14:13-15).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson EIGHT SPIRITUAL GIFTS — VESSELS OF GOD

### 2. Order

Every utterance of tongues in a public meeting could have an interpretation, but it must be decided if it is in order, or if it is convenient to interpret every message. When a tongue is not interpreted in a meeting, it is either because there is no interpreter present; or the interpreter is refusing to yield to (cooperate with) the Holy Spirit; or the individual who spoke out in tongues was magnifying God, or praying in some other way (i.e. interceding), and should have spoken to himself and to God silently. In this instance, the pastor or whoever is leading the meeting should clarify the situation, explaining that this was not a message to the Church.

Paul emphasizes order in the use of the gifts, so that the maximum benefit to the Body may be gained. God does not author confusion; therefore, we are told *one* person is to interpret a message in tongues (I Corinthians 14:27). Competitive interpretations should never be allowed; they promote division, criticism, jealousy, and confusion in the Church, and such practices grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). If another feels he has a "better" interpretation, he should hold his peace, or if he is also used in the gift of prophecy, he may deliver the message in prophetic utterance. But this should never be directed as a form of "correction." If the questionable interpretation is unscriptural, correction comes through the individual who is leading the meeting. If a message in tongues is given and it is not interpreted, a second message in tongues should *not* be given (I Corinthians 14:28). Paul did not suggest these guidelines to impose legalism on the Church, but to insure order for the most effective use of the gifts.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret.

*I Corinthians 14:27*

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

*Ephesians 4:30*

But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

*I Corinthians 14:28*



And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

*I Corinthians 12:6*

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

*Acts 2:4*

### 3. Operation

As with the gift of prophecy, the best way to know if you are to interpret an utterance in tongues is your sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Being sensitive to the Spirit and "hearing" with your spiritual "ears" is an ability that is *learned* and *developed*. It is something that comes with practice and time. Sensitivity, yieldedness, and cooperation with the Holy Spirit result from exercising yourself in the things of the Spirit, at home in your prayer closet, while sharing with others, and in public meetings. Being sensitive to the Spirit is tuning into the flow of God; it is being "in the Spirit." It is focusing your attention on the Lord and maintaining a conscious awareness of the presence and power of God. If you have asked the Lord to use you in the gift of interpretation, and especially if you have interpreted a tongue before, you should tune in to hear and know what the Spirit is saying when a tongue is given. You should yield yourself to the Holy Spirit, ready, expectant, open, waiting for God to reveal the interpretation to you. You may "feel" the urge to speak out what the Spirit shows you, or you may simply "know" that you have the interpretation.

The gift of interpretation operates differently through different people (I Corinthians 12:6). One may be given just an introductory phrase to begin, and as he speaks that out, the remainder of the message is unfolded as he continues, with the words being fed to him by the Spirit, much as words feed onto a computer screen. Another may hear the words inside of him while the tongue is being given, or he may see them in his mind's eye written on something like a screen. Another may have the general thought and choose his own words to describe it. Another may see a vision or a mental picture that relates the utterance, and then tell what he sees.

The Holy Spirit gives the utterance, and we do the talking (Acts 2:4). The gifts of inspired utterance are a combination of the human and the divine.

# **GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE**

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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### I. INTRODUCTION

Everything that the Holy Spirit does points to Jesus as Christ and Lord. Thus, the gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest Christ's glory to draw men's attention to His grace. The gifts are tools given to the Church to convince the unbelieving and believing alike of the great salvation offered to all men in Jesus. The gifts are channels through which God's compassion and mercy flow to the needy — in the world and in the Church.

The individuals in the Body of Christ who operate in any of the spiritual gifts are *conductors* of God's blessings. All charismata originate in the omniscience and omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit, and flow *through* human beings to the individuals who receive them. Spiritual gifts are completely supernatural, endowing men with knowledge, understanding, trust, and power that far transcend human abilities. Believers moving in the gifts are not necessarily holier or more devout than those who are not. They are simply the individuals who have knowledge of the subject and who are being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Because God has called *every* member of the Body of Christ to be a co-laborer with Him in preaching the gospel to all creation, *each of us is responsible to know His Word and to obey His directions*. Every member must be equipped by the Holy Spirit, *and* co-operate with Him, to function successfully in his divinely-assigned role. As we apply ourselves to a diligent study of the spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit as our Helper, will reveal the truth of God's Word to our spirits. (This is a subject that cannot be approached intellectually; the natural mind cannot grasp or understand spiritual knowledge.) The spiritual gifts are indeed a part of **every believer's heritage** in Christ (Acts 2:39); they are among those things that have been so freely given to us of God (1 Corinthians 2:12).

"For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

*Acts 2:39*

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

*1 Corinthians 2:12*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### II.    GIFTS OF REVELATION

The gifts of revelation include the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discernings of spirits. By these, God supernaturally makes something known to man that is beyond his natural ability to know or understand. As with all the other gifts of the Spirit, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discernings of spirits are *supernatural*, having nothing to do with man's natural talents or intelligence. These gifts go beyond the natural limits of human understanding and foresight. Through them, God sovereignly reveals information related to the past, present, or future that otherwise could not have been known.

#### A.    THE WORD OF WISDOM

The gift of the word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit regarding some particular thing or person in the *future*. God, through this gift, allows men to see events before they happen, so that warning may be given, or appropriate precautions taken. These events are always in relation to the will of God; God will not reveal the future when it is irrelevant to His purpose or to the furtherance of His kingdom (e.g. He won't reveal the winner of tomorrow's horse-race!).

It is called a "word" of wisdom because it is only a segment of God's total wisdom. In other words, this gift doesn't enlighten a person to the full scope of the future, but only to a small part of it. It is God's choice as to what part is revealed, just as it is His choice as to who will receive it.

##### 1.    What it is not

The spiritual gift of the word of wisdom must not be confused with the more *general* types of wisdom.

**Natural wisdom** is a result of intellectual reasoning and experience. Academic brilliance, sound judgment, and administrative genius exemplify the development and education of natural talents and abilities. Remember, however, that the gifts of the Spirit are not "learned," as such, but bestowed. Furthermore, even the unsaved exhibit these qualities of natural wisdom. But charismata can only be manifested through those who are born again and Spirit-filled.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

**Spiritual wisdom** is gained in the study of God's Word (Joshua 1:8; Deuteronomy 4:5,6), or in the time spent with God in prayer (Psalm 119:10; I Samuel 18:14). This was the wisdom that Jesus displayed at the age of twelve; being free from sin and religious prejudice, He possessed an unadulterated understanding of the Word that astonished the teachers at the temple (Luke 2:40,46,47). But this was not a manifestation of the word of wisdom. His keen spiritual insight arose from close *communion* with the Father and *study* of the scriptures. It was a wisdom that developed and *grew* (Luke 2:52).

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

*Joshua 1:8*

"See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

*Deuteronomy 4:5,6*

With all my heart I have sought Thee; do not let me wander from Thy commandments.

*Psalm 119:10*

And David was prospering in all his ways for the Lord was with him.

*I Samuel 18:14*

And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

*Luke 2:40,46,47*

And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

*Luke 2:52*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

*James 1:5*

“Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can rule this great people of Thine?” And God said to Solomon, “Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth, or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge, that you may rule My people, over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed, nor those who will come after you.”

*II Chronicles 1:10-12*

So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

*I Kings 10:23,24*

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

*I Corinthians 12:8*

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

*I Corinthians 12:11*

Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.

*Amos 3:7*

James tells the Church that if *any* man lacks wisdom (an understanding of what is true and right, or of how to conduct oneself as a Christian), he may ask for it from God and expect to receive a liberal portion (James 1:5). Indeed, when Solomon asked for wisdom in preference to all other things (II Chronicles 1:10-12), God gave it to him in such great measure that he became the wisest king in the world (I Kings 10:23,24). But Paul distinguishes the gift of the word of wisdom from this spiritual wisdom by saying, “*To one is given the word of wisdom*” (I Corinthians 12:8) — distributed **as the Spirit wills** (I Corinthians 12:11), not as any believer asks. For spiritual wisdom, we may ask and receive bountifully; but the word of wisdom is given only as the Spirit wills.

### 2. Old Testament examples

All the prophets (seers) of the Old Testament saw into the future by the operation of this gift. According to the will of God, portions of His wisdom were imparted to disclose events that would transpire in the prophets' lifetimes, or even hundreds and thousands of years into the future (Amos 3:7).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

Isaiah and David were operating under this gift when they described the Messiah, centuries before Jesus was even born. Indeed, explicit details of Jesus' birth, life, and the manner of His death were shown to these men. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 contain even minute details in their description of the crucifixion. Jesus' silence before His accusers, the sneering Pharisees, the soldiers parting His garments, His death alongside criminals — all this was shown to the prophets through the word of wisdom long before it occurred. (Compare Isaiah 53:7 and Mark 15:4,5; Psalm 22:7,8 and Luke 23:35; Psalm 22:18 and Matthew 27:35,36; Isaiah 53:12 and Mark 15:27,28.)

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

*Isaiah 53:7*

And Pilate was questioning Him again, saying, "Do You make no answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate was amazed.

*Mark 15:4,5*

All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, "Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him."

*Psalm 22:7,8*

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

*Luke 23:35*

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

*Psalm 22:18*

And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots; and sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.

*Matthew 27:35,36*

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

*Isaiah 53:12*

(over)



# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]

*Mark 15:27,28*

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."

*Genesis 6:13*

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts, 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 'And some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall beget, shall be taken away; and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"

*Isaiah 39:5-7*

"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

*Isaiah 44:28*

And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

*Matthew 24:1,2*

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (con't.)

Many other future events were revealed to men of God under the Old Covenant through the operation of this gift. By the word of wisdom, Noah learned of the coming destruction of the world, 100 years before the flood (Genesis 6:13). Isaiah foretold Israel's captivity in Babylon over a century before it occurred (Isaiah 39:5-7). He even identified **by name** the Persian king who would liberate them and allow them to rebuild the temple (Isaiah 44:28 — This prophecy was written c. 700 B.C.; Cyrus came to power c. 550 B.C.) Through this gift, Daniel foretold the rise and fall of kingdoms which didn't yet exist. Indeed, many of his prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. In all these predictive prophecies, the events of the future foretold by the prophets were revealed to them by the Holy Spirit through the word of wisdom.

### 3. New Testament examples

The gift of the word of wisdom was evident in the earthly ministry of Jesus. When His disciples drew His attention to the magnificent buildings of the temple area, He declared that the temple would be destroyed, and specified the degree of its destruction (Matthew 24:1,2). He knew this by the word of wisdom. By operation of the same gift, He proceeded to give them details as to the events leading up to the end of the world (Matthew 24:4-14). He also knew that His leading disciple, Simon Peter, would deny Him, despite Peter's vigorous statements to the contrary (Matthew 26:34). Jesus was God in the flesh, but this was not the reason why He could see these future events. He foresaw these things because they were revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit, through this *gift* of the Spirit.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

The word of wisdom also operated in the ministry of Christ's followers after the day of Pentecost. When the prophet Agabus came to Antioch, he declared that there would be a world-wide famine in the coming years (Acts 11:27,28). This same prophet correctly foretold Paul's imprisonment at Jerusalem (Acts 21:10,11). These were not "lucky guesses," or educated conjectures; they were supernatural revelations given by the Holy Spirit concerning the future.

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

*Matthew 24:4-14*

Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times."

*Matthew 26:34*

Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

*Acts 11:27,28*

And as we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

*Acts 21:10,11*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."

*Exodus 3:4,7,8*

When the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Thy servant is listening." And the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

*I Samuel 3:10-14*

And God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

*Genesis 15:13,14*

(con't.)

### 4. Vehicles

The Holy Spirit chooses diversity in operation in every spiritual gift, as it pleases Him and best suits the situation. By studying the scriptures, we see the word of wisdom can be conveyed by a variety of different vehicles.

The word of wisdom can come in an **audible voice**. God spoke to Moses audibly out of the burning bush, telling him of His plan for Israel's future (Exodus 3:4,7,8). When the prophet Samuel was a small boy, God called his name audibly, and then told him of the coming judgment against the high priest, Eli (I Samuel 3:10-14).

The word of wisdom can come in a **vision**. Abraham learned in a vision that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years in a strange land (Egypt) and delivered (Genesis 15:13,14). Daniel received most of his revelations in visions (Daniel 10:7), as did the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

The word of wisdom can also be communicated in **dreams**. By this form of revelation, Joseph saw his family bow before him and Egypt suffering from seven years of famine (Genesis 37:7,8; 41:28-31). In dreams, God warned the wise men not to return to Herod (Matthew 2:12) and instructed Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt (Matthew 2:13).

Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.

*Daniel 10:7*

Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

*Ezekiel 1:1*

“For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.” Then his brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

*Genesis 37:7,8*

“It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.”

*Genesis 41:28-31*

And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

*Matthew 2:12*

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

*Matthew 2:13*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

The word of wisdom can be brought by **angels**. It was through an angel that God revealed the coming birth of Samson (Judges 13:3-5). The births of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself were similarly revealed through angelic visitations (Luke 1:11-13,26-28,31-33).

Then the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

*Judges 13:3-5*

And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear ripped him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John."

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

*Luke 1:11-13,26-28,31-33*

"Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be attended with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

*Acts 27:10*

In the Church today, the most common means of receiving a word of wisdom is by an inward witness (see Lesson 4, pages 90-91). When Paul the prisoner was being transported by ship to Rome, he told the men of the ship: "*I perceive that the voyage will certainly be attended with damage and great loss*" (Acts 27:10). He perceived in his spirit, through the word of wisdom, that there would be a shipwreck, and that is indeed what happened. Paul received this word of wisdom simply by perceiving in his own spirit what the Spirit of God was saying.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### 5. Counterfeits

For everything that God gives to His people to prosper and bless them, Satan attempts to contrive a counterfeit. With one exception (the agape-love of God), the devil supernaturally copies the works of God to confuse and defraud the unsuspecting, Christian and non-Christian alike. Looking into the future and catching a glimpse of the unknown have appealed to the curiosity in man throughout the ages. This false practice continues today in a variety of enticing, but deadly forms. Horoscopes appear daily in most newspapers; movies glorify the occult; magazines headline the yearly predictions of mystics and spiritualists.

Because of this, one must make a sharp distinction between the word of wisdom (by which God reveals the future **as He wills and to whom He wills**), and occult practices (by which men actively seek knowledge of the future). In the Old Testament, God often revealed the future by His Spirit, but He stated plainly that those who seek enlightenment about the future through the evil arts of the idolatrous nations must be done away with (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The Lord describes these arts as "detestable"! The distinction is easy to make. The gifts of the Spirit are distributed and manifested as God wills; what's more, they *always* glorify Jesus Christ and edify His Body, the Church. Seeking knowledge of the future through occult arts is the practice of those who are either vain or overly curious.

### 6. Purposes

The gift of the word of wisdom is a revelation of the mind and purpose of God. Through the word of wisdom, God gives **direction** both to individual believers (Acts 8:26), and to His corporate people (II Chronicles 20:14-17,20). Through it, He gives **warning** of future judgment or danger (Jonah 1:2; 3:10), and assurance of deliverance (Acts 27:22-24). The operation of this gift is a **testimony** of the greatness of God and His presence among His people. When Daniel, by the Spirit of God, was able to tell the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning future kingdoms, the ruler said: "*Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery*" (Daniel 2:47).

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you."

*Deuteronomy 18:10-12*

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza."

*Acts 8:26*

Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite of the sons of Asaph; and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel. You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the Lord is with you."

And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed."

*II Chronicles 20:14-17,20* (over)

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### B.    THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

The gift of the word of knowledge is a revelation concerning an event or situation which is presently occurring or has already occurred. Unlike the word of wisdom, which reveals the future, the word of knowledge pertains only to persons or events in **the present or past**. This revelation is completely supernatural; it doesn't come from any prior knowledge or experience. The Holy Spirit chooses to impart knowledge of a person or event which wasn't or couldn't have been previously known. It is called a "word" of knowledge, because it is only a small part of God's total knowledge. God is omniscient and knows everything. This gift is simply a revelation of a segment of that knowledge.

Its definition clearly distinguishes this gift from natural intelligence, creativity, or brilliance. It is not an exceptional ability to comprehend or interpret the Bible; knowledge of the scriptures comes from diligent *study* (II Timothy 2:15). There is also a very valuable knowledge of spiritual things that comes in *daily prayer* and a consistent *walk with the Lord*. This knowledge is gained over a period of *time* through **devotion and experience**, but it is not the gift of the word of knowledge.

The word of knowledge is communicated to man most frequently through an inward revelation, within the inspired utterance gifts (i.e. through prophecy or tongues and interpretation). It is less frequently conveyed through visions, angels, and an audible voice.

"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."

When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

*Jonah 1:2; 3:10*

"And yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'"

*Acts 27:22-24*

The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

*Daniel 2:47*

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

*II Timothy 2:15*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### 1.    Old Testament illustrations

One very remarkable example of this gift in operation is found in the ministry of Elisha (II Kings 6:8-12). Every time the king of Aram tried to lay an ambush for Israel's king, Elisha would send warning to his king, giving the Aramean's exact location. The Aramean king became convinced that there was a traitor among his men. But his servants explained: "*No, my lord, O king; but Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel **the words that you speak in your bedroom***" (II Kings 6:12). Elisha didn't sneak about the enemy camp to get this information; it was revealed to him by the Spirit through a word of knowledge.

There are many other examples of this gift working in the ministry of Old Testament prophets. Ahijah knew the identity of Jeroboam's disguised wife, even though he was *blind!* The Spirit of God told him of her true identity before she even arrived (I Kings 14:5,6). David's sin was exposed by Nathan the prophet through this gift (II Samuel 12:9). By it, Elijah was informed of the fact that seven thousand prophets hadn't forsaken God (I Kings 19:18). Elijah had thought that he was the only faithful prophet left alive. In all these cases, the men of God were informed **by the Spirit** of things they could not otherwise have known. The information was supernaturally imparted through a word of knowledge.

Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." And the man of God sent word to the king of Israel saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there." And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice. Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."

*II Kings 6:8-12*

Now the Lord had said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. You shall say thus and thus to her, for it will be when she arrives that she will pretend to be another woman." And it came about when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in the doorway, that he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you with a harsh message."

*I Kings 14:5,6*

"Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon."

*II Samuel 12:9*

"Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

*I Kings 19:18*



# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

*John 4:17,18*

And it came about that when He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village opposite you, in which as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it, and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' thus shall you speak, 'The Lord has need of it.'"

And those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord has need of it."

*Luke 19:29-34*

And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

*Acts 9:11,12*

But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While the land remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?"

(con't.)

### 2. New Testament illustrations

The word of knowledge was also evident in the earthly ministry of Jesus. One notable instance occurred near a city of Samaria. Jesus met a woman at the well; as they talked, He told her that she had had five husbands, and the one with whom she was presently living was not her husband (John 4:17,18). How could Jesus have known this about a complete stranger? He knew by a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit. By this same gift, Jesus told His disciples where and under what circumstances they would find the colt on which He would ride into Jerusalem (Luke 19:29-34). He had never seen the animal before, yet He knew exactly where it was, and that it had never before been ridden. Again, He knew these things by revelation through a word of knowledge.

This gift also was manifested in the ministry of Jesus' followers, after His resurrection. In a vision, the Lord spoke to a "disciple" (i.e. **a layman**) named Ananias: "*Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, **he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, so that he might regain his sight***" (Acts 9:11,12).

There was no other means than by this divine gift of revelation that Ananias could have known where Saul was and what he was doing at that very moment. By this gift, the apostle Peter knew that Ananias (a different person than the one mentioned above) and his wife lied about the amount of their donation (Acts 5:1-5). There was no natural way in which Peter could have known this, since they had kept it "secret." This is another example of the word of knowledge revealing something about a person or situation in the present or past which could not otherwise have been known.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### 3. Purposes

By this gift, God gives the Church supernatural enlightenment that encourages believers and startles unbelievers. It acts as a **sign of God's presence and anointing** — on a particular individual, on His Word, and His people.

Howard Carter described its importance in his book, *Questions & Answers on Spiritual Gifts*. "Whatever God gives by revelation is for a purpose. Either it is for the edification of the church or for the guidance of some specific individual, therefore, it belongs spiritually to that individual or to that community, and the one to whom it comes is responsible for its delivery. Hence we are the servants one of another." <sup>1</sup>

Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it.

Acts 5:1-5

### C. DISCERNINGS OF SPIRITS

The gift of discernings of spirits is a supernatural ability to *see* into the spiritual realm. By this gift, the presence of the spirit world is revealed in the form of an "open" vision; one can directly perceive and distinguish the images of spirit beings. This gift deals only with spirits, unlike the gifts of the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom, which deal in the broader range of the revelation of **facts** concerning people, places, and things. It goes beyond the knowing to the *literal seeing*. When this gift of revelation operates, the veil is drawn away from the human eye, allowing man to look into the supernatural dimension. By this gift an individual can discern the similitude of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God's angels (cherubim, seraphim, archangels), fallen angels, or demons. This manifestation of the Holy Spirit not only allows man to see the presence and activity of a spirit, but also enables him to recognize and distinguish its nature (i.e. good or evil, divine or angelic). It is identified in the plural (discernings) to describe each separate occurrence as a manifestation of the gift.

Again, it is important to note that this spiritual gift is completely supernatural. Man is totally incapable of seeing into the spirit world without the supernatural assistance of either the *Holy Spirit* or a *satanic* spirit. This gift is distributed in the Body **as the Spirit wills**, and is operated only **under God's control**.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.  
*Romans 8:14*

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

And to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.  
*I Corinthians 12:8,10*

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.  
*Isaiah 6:1,2*

And it came about in the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month, as I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell on me there.

Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward there was the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal.

And He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was located.  
*Ezekiel 8:1-3*

(con't.)

### 1. What it is not

The discernings of spirits must not be confused with every believer's ability to exercise spiritual "discernment" or judgment. Some equate the discernings of spirits with this ability, which they label as "the gift of discernment." There is an ability to discern between good and evil which is available to every member of the Body of Christ. "*Everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their (spiritual) senses exercised to discern both good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:13,14 KJV). When a believer knows the Word of God and is walking in the Spirit, he has an inward "knowing" equivalent to a spiritual alarm system, that warns him if an evil spirit is the force behind a supernatural manifestation (Romans 8:14). John warns us that we must all be discerning: "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*" (I John 4:1 KJV).

Spiritual discernment must not be equated with this gift of the Spirit. Discernings of spirits enables a Christian to actually see into the spiritual realm in which angels and demons move. This gift is not available to every believer, but only to those whom God chooses to give it. "*To one is given by the Spirit . . . discerning[s] of spirits*" (I Corinthians 12:8,10). But spiritual discernment is something which every believer can and should exercise every day.

### 2. Bible examples

In the Bible, many were enabled to behold angels, and even the similitude of God Himself, by the discernings of spirits. Isaiah had a vision of God upon His throne, and the angels which surrounded that throne (Isaiah 6:1,2). His vision was a manifestation of this gift, by which he was enabled to see into the "invisible" spiritual realm. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which he was transported from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8:1-3). The men sitting with him in the room saw and experienced none of the things which Ezekiel later described, because only he had the gift in manifestation. When the vision ceased, he had to relate to them all that he had seen in the Spirit, while he had been sitting among them (Ezekiel 11:24,25).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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It was through this gift that Elisha's servant was enabled to see the horses and chariots of fire which were surrounding Elisha. They had been there all the time, but the servant couldn't see them until the prophet asked God to open the servant's eyes (II Kings 6:14-17). Stephen, the martyr, was able to **see** the "*glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts 7:56 KJV). Obviously he was the only one who did, for when he described it, the crowd stoned him (Acts 6:57,58). He was enabled through the discerning of spirits to actually *see* the glory of God, which none of the other men were able to see. In these and every other instance of the discernings of spirits, the man of God could see the likeness of a spirit being, whether demon (Revelation 16:13,14), angel, or God Himself, and was able to behold what occurred in the invisible spiritual realm.

And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me. Then I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had shown me.  
*Ezekiel 11:24,25*

And he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.  
*II Kings 6:14-17*

And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."  
*Acts 7:56*

But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.  
*Acts 7:57,58*

And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.  
*Revelation 16:13,14*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

*Hebrews 1:14*

To another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:9,10*

### 3. Purposes

This gift of revelation can inform us of the presence and activity of supernatural beings. It is a source of comfort and strength to see angels ministering to the heirs of life (Hebrews 1:14). It thrills and inspires believers when those who operate in this gift see Jesus in the midst of the Church. It acts as a tool in ministry, revealing evil spirits as sources of sickness. It is a means of reminder: we are flesh and blood with spirits alive to God; there **is** a supernatural dimension with laws that supercede the natural realm in which we live. As with every other gift of the spirit, this gift of discernings of spirits glorifies Jesus and edifies His Body.

## III. GIFTS OF POWER

The gifts of power may be defined as the supernatural intervention of God in behalf of man. They include faith, workings of miracles, and healings. Each of these three gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:9,10 are different manifestations of the same power — the omnipotence of God. These gifts empower believers to overcome the forces that oppose and hinder man: the rulers of darkness, the laws of nature, the diseases of the human body. These gifts frequently operate in dangerous or extreme situations that demand far more than natural resources are able to offer. They are not manifested in "ordinary" circumstances to satisfy the curious or liven up a dull meeting. Throughout scripture, we see the gifts accompanying the men and women of God active in His service, preaching the Word and working in the ministry. They are tools to aid God's people when faced with great opposition in the work of God. These gifts afford spiritual protection and provision. They display the magnificence of an omnipotent God who loves man.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### A. FAITH

The gift of faith is an ability to sustain an unwavering trust in God for personal protection and provision of needs **without human effort**. Just as the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are only small fragments of the infinite wisdom and omniscience of God, so also the gift of faith is only a tiny portion of God's *total* faith. It is imparted to a believer for a specific need under the strict control of the Holy Spirit. By this gift, one is held unreasonably calm and steadfast in the face of dangerous or impossible situations. It is a quality and quantity of supernatural trust in the power and will of God to deliver, that far surpasses anything a human being is capable of achieving in his spiritual life in this world. This spiritual gift of faith picks up where man's faith stops. It believes and receives the miraculous.

#### 1. What it is not

There are different types of faith described in the New Testament that are **not** the "*special faith*" referred to in I Corinthians 12:9 (Amplified).

The **fruit of faith** described in Galatians 5:22 can be defined as faithfulness or dependability. It comes forth *gradually*, being cultivated with care and much hard work. As the fruit of faith grows and develops over a period of *time*, the believer's spiritual *character* matures, and he becomes more godly (i.e. God-like) in his behavior.

"**Saving faith**" gains entrance to the kingdom of God; without it, it is impossible to be born again. "*By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8). This is a trust in God (firm persuasion or conviction) based upon *hearing*. God actually gives this faith to an individual through His Word: "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Romans 10:17). God has bestowed on *every* believer a measure of this type of faith (Romans 12:3).

To another (wonder-working) faith by the same (Holy) Spirit, to another the extraordinary powers of healing by the one Spirit.

*I Corinthians 12:9 Amplified*

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

*Galatians 5:22*

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

*Ephesians 2:8*

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

*Romans 10:17*

For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

*Romans 12:3*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality — faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.

*Hebrews 11:1 Amplified*

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

*II Corinthians 4:18*

(As it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

*Romans 4:17*

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

*Colossians 2:6,7*

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

*Hebrews 11:6*

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

*Mark 11:24*

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

*James 1:25*

"Abraham faith" (a general faith) receives and rests in the promises of God as declared in His Word. It perceives as reality what is not apparent to the physical realm (Hebrews 11:1 Amplified, II Corinthians 4:18); it "*calleth those things which be not as though they were*" (Romans 4:17 KJV). This faith is a sustaining, quiet trust in the faithfulness and love of God. Just as saving faith helps an individual to begin his Christian life, this "Abraham" faith helps him to *continue* in his walk with the Lord (Colossians 2:6,7; Hebrews 11:6). This is the steadfast faith that receives answers to prayer (Mark 11:24). *Every* child of God can develop this faith by spending time consistently hearing and meditating in the Word, and then exercising that faith to receive from God (James 1:25).

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

The types of faith mentioned above are qualities which every believer can manifest and develop. By contrast, the gift of faith is given to some (not to all) as the Spirit wills (I Corinthians 12:11): "*to one is given faith*" (vs. 8,9). This faith is not developed or increased; it is supernaturally bestowed from above. It is given for a specific purpose, and the individual believer is not at liberty to exercise it according to his own will. The Holy Spirit discriminates as to how this gift is manifested, according to the mind and will of God. This certainly could not be said of the general faith which all believers possess. Jesus Himself told His disciples, and all believers, "*Have faith in God*" (Mark 11:22). If He had meant the gift of faith (a special dispensation given only to some), then His statement would be unfair and absurd. If a person lacks the general faith to which Jesus referred in this verse, he cannot attribute that lack to his not having the gift of faith.

### 2. The dead raised

**Read Acts 9:36-42.**

The gift of faith empowers believers to speak life back into lifeless bodies. When confronted with the reality of death, it requires a supernatural boldness to believe God for the greater reality — a life-giving miracle. When Peter was called to the bedside of Tabitha, he did not walk into the presence of faith: "*All the widows stood beside him weeping . . . but Peter sent them all out*" (vs. 39,40). Peter was **enabled and directed by the Holy Spirit** to call Tabitha's spirit back into her body.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

*I Corinthians 12:11*

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.

*I Corinthians 12:8,9*

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God."

*Mark 11:22*

Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, "Do not delay to come to us."

And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

*Acts 9:36-42*



# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.  
*Acts 7:59,60*

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.  
*Acts 12:1,2*

Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children, and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.  
*Daniel 6:23,24*

Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions.  
*Hebrews 11:33*

Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a kid though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.  
*Judges 14:5,6*

This gift endows the possessor with *supernatural* calm and assurance in the presence of critical and extreme circumstances, lifting the individual to a plateau of faith *far* above his own faith. This **gift** is distributed **as the Spirit wills**, not as man wills. It is strictly at *His* direction alone that the dead are brought back to life. There were many godly men and women who died in the early church, including Stephen (Acts 7:59,60) and James (Acts 12:1,2), and they were *not* raised from the dead.

### 3. Faith and miracles

The gift of faith differs from the gift of workings of miracles, although both use faith and both produce miracles. The workings of miracles operates by a faith that *actively works* a miracle, but the gift of faith operates through a faith that *passively expects* a miracle. Workings of miracles is a gift that *does*; it is an act. Faith is a gift that *receives*; it is more of a process. This can be illustrated from the experience of two men of God, Daniel and Samson.

#### Read Daniel 6 and Judges 14:5,6.

What happened to Daniel in the lion's den is a perfect example of the gift of faith receiving personal protection in a **life-threatening circumstance**. Daniel spent a night in a den full of hungry lions, the same lions that later killed his accusers (v. 24). Daniel explained to the king, "*My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me*" (v. 22). The reason an angel was dispatched to protect him from certain death was "*because he believed in his God*" (v. 23). The angel came to Daniel's assistance in response to his faith. His faith stopped the mouths of the lions — through the actions of the angel (Hebrews 11:33).

When Samson faced a roaring lion, he killed it with his bare hands (Judges 14:5,6). He was protected in a dangerous, life-threatening situation in a much different way than was Daniel. The Spirit of God came upon Samson to empower him to *work* a miracle — he killed the lion. The Spirit of God came upon Daniel to *receive* a miracle — he believed God. God manifested His power in both instances through different gifts of grace. In the natural, neither Samson nor Daniel could have saved himself. Samson received a power that was far beyond his natural strength; Daniel received a faith that was far beyond his own faith.

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### 4.    Purposes

Believers through whom this gift is in operation believe God in such a way that He honors their *word* as His own and miraculously brings it to pass (I Kings 17:1; Joshua 10:12-14). The *supernatural assurance* within their spirits empowers them to act and speak boldly; they trust God to work a miracle *for* them (Acts 20:9,10,12). The impossible made possible in the Church by the Name of Jesus glorifies Jesus. It convinces believers and unbelievers alike of the presence and power of God and His willingness to supernaturally provide for and protect His people (Acts 9:42).

Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

*I Kings 17:1*

Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "O sun, stand still at Gibeon, and O moon in the valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.

*Joshua 10:12-14*

And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."

And they took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

*Acts 20:9,10,12*

And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

*Acts 9:42*

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So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float.

*II Kings 6:4-6*

And to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

*I Corinthians 12:10*

These last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

*Hebrews 1:2,3*

"But if the Lord brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the Lord."

*Numbers 16:30*

"That 'He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.'"

*Deuteronomy 11:14*

they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

*Luke 9:43*

### B. WORKINGS OF MIRACLES

The gift of the workings of miracles is a supernatural demonstration of the power of God by which the laws of nature are altered, suspended, or otherwise controlled. (For example: under normal (or natural) circumstances, iron sinks in water; this law was temporarily reversed in a specific instance to bring a lost ax-head to the surface [II Kings 6:4-6].) When this gift is in operation, a small portion of the omnipotence of God flows through a believer to perform a *specific* act which he in no way could accomplish in the natural. The Greek word used in I Corinthians 12:10 for miracles is "dunamis" (the word from which "dynamite" is derived); its literal rendering is powers, or the gift of the workings of powers.<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Hagin describes this gift as "the working of impelling, staggering wonders or astonishments."<sup>3</sup>

#### 1. What it is not

If an object or a process is subject to the **laws of nature** and operates in accordance with those laws, it cannot be defined as supernatural; it is not the result of the spiritual gift. Natural law is the divine order that holds the universe together; it is the *ordinary* working of God's power to uphold His creation (Hebrews 1:2,3). In the *general* sense, the entire world has been supernaturally and miraculously created and is sustained by the Almighty God. In the *specific* sense, a miracle can then be described as an *extraordinary and different* manifestation of this same power in the natural world (Numbers 16:30). Because they are "special" acts of power, miracles demand the attention and recognition of man. When a harvest produces an abundant crop, it is not recognized as unusual or noteworthy. But when loaves and fish are multiplied to feed a hungry multitude, men are awestruck. The power of God is at work in both acts (Deuteronomy 11:14; Luke 9:43), in the laws of nature and in the laws of the Spirit.

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Today, the word "miracle" is used loosely to describe such things as detergents, organ transplants, television, and men walking on the moon. If a formula were discovered to cure cancer, it would be headlined as a "miracle" drug, yet that compound would be subject to the natural laws of chemistry. These are all wonders within the natural realm; God has not supernaturally interrupted the course of natural events to do any of the above.

### 2.    Miracles and healing

Workings of miracles must not be confused with the gifts of healings. Any supernatural healing, whether gradual or instantaneous, is not the working of a miracle. It is a manifestation of the gifts of healings, a separate and distinct gift also listed in I Corinthians 12. In a *general* sense, every gift of the Spirit is *miraculous*. But *specifically*, every spiritual gift is not the working of miracles.

### 3.    Old Testament miracle workers

Moses, the prophet who most resembled Jesus (Deuteronomy 18:15), performed the greatest number of recorded miracles in the Old Testament. God sent him to Pharaoh equipped with this gift to back up his demands for the release of the Israelites (Exodus 3:20). Not only did the signs and wonders display the presence and power of God, but they were a graphic demonstration of the authority and approval God had bestowed on His chosen deliverer.

#### Read Exodus 14:9-31.

When the children of Israel came to the Red Sea, they discovered the Egyptians had followed them. With wilderness on one side, mountains on the other, the enemy behind, and the sea before, the impossible was made reality. In the face of unbelief and fear, Moses spoke: "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*" (Exodus 14:13 KJV). Moses parted the Red Sea with his staff, and the children of Israel walked on dry ground to the other side (Exodus 14:21,22). Safely on the other side, the three million Israelites watched the Red Sea close over the pursuing Egyptian army (Exodus 14:26-28). God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt "*with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm*" (Deuteronomy 26:8 KJV), that is, with full manifestation of His power.

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him."

*Deuteronomy 18:15*

"So I will stretch out My hand, and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go."

*Exodus 3:20*

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever."

*Exodus 14:13*

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

*Exodus 14:21,22*

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

*Exodus 14:26-28*

And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders.

*Deuteronomy 26:8*

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Read I Kings 18:17-40.

Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him. And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now." This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.  
*John 2:6-11*

And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."  
*Matthew 14:22-27*

Centuries later, the prophet Elijah worked a miracle of similar magnitude. He challenged the existence of Baal: "*Call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God*" (I Kings 18:24). King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had slain most of the prophets of Jehovah, expelled the Levites, and instituted the false Phoenician religion with great numbers of false priests and prophets. The children of Israel were worshiping Baal, a false god who presumably presided over fire. Elijah proposed that the true God would honor His servants and consume His sacrifice with fire.

After the 450 prophets of Baal had prepared their sacrifice, they called to Baal, cried, danced, and cut their bodies, until their own blood fell upon the blood of the sacrifice. From morning to evening, the Israelites watched their vain ravings. "*But there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention*" (I Kings 18:29).

Then Elijah instructed water to be poured repeatedly over his sacrifice, drenching it thoroughly and filling the trench around the altar. He prayed: "*O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word*" (v. 36). The fire fell from heaven, consuming everything — the sacrifice, altar, stones, dust, licking the water up out of the trench. The people fell on their faces and worshiped the true God, the God of the miraculous.

### 4. New Testament miracles

Jesus' first attesting sign was the working of a miracle. When a wedding feast to which Jesus had been invited ran out of wine, Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:6-11). This was not a natural, but a supernatural process. It superceded the established laws of nature. When Jesus came to His disciples walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-27), this also was the working of a miracle. It goes without saying that under the existing laws of nature, water will not support a man's weight. But in the working of a miracle, natural laws are temporarily suspended or superceded.

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Twice during His ministry, Jesus fed a multitude of people with just a few loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39). In both these instances, there were thousands of people and only a handful of food. Yet both times, Jesus, through this gift of the Spirit, caused that "handful" to be supernaturally multiplied. There was enough to feed all.

Now when Jesus heard it, He withdrew from there in a boat, to a lonely place by Himself; and when the multitudes heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick. And when it was evening, the disciples came to Him, saying, "The place is desolate, and the time is already past; so send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." And He said, "Bring them here to Me."

And ordering the multitudes to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitudes, and they all ate, and were satisfied. And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. And there were about five thousand men who ate, aside from women and children.

*Matthew 14:13-21*

And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." And the disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in a desolate place to satisfy such a great multitude?" And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving

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thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn, to the multitudes.

And they all ate, and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And sending away the multitudes, He got into the boat, and came to the region of Magadan.

*Matthew 15:32-39*

Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.

*Acts 14:3*

God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

*Hebrews 2:4*

Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.

*John 11:45*

And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

*Acts 8:5,6*

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

*John 20:29*

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

*Romans 10:17*

### 5. Purposes

Jesus gives testimony to the Word of His grace by granting signs and wonders at the hands of His people (Acts 14:3; Hebrews 2:4). Many do believe the gospel when they see a miracle accompanying it (John 11:45; Acts 8:5,6). Miracles are hard proof of the existence of the supernatural, but without the preaching of the gospel, men cannot be saved. Miracles are not the highest evidence of truth; they do not guarantee faith. Jesus told Thomas, "*Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed*" (John 20:29). Faith comes and grows from hearing the Word of God, not seeing a miracle (Romans 10:17).

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But their importance must not be underrated. When the children of Israel provoked God in the wilderness, they lost their inheritance through unbelief. God told Moses: *"Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers"* (Numbers 14:22,23).

God desires the people of the earth to know His Name and see Him glorious in power (Exodus 9:16; 15:6). By means of the gifts of the Spirit, the Church is empowered to fill the earth with the glory of the Lord (Exodus 14:21).

### C.    GIFTS OF HEALINGS

The gifts of healings are supernatural manifestations of the healing power of God, administered by the Holy Spirit, through one individual to another. It is a specific anointing for a specific need at a specific time. More than any other gift, the gifts of healings reveal the nature of God and His desire toward man; He is a God of love, full of mercy and compassion, concerned with the sufferings of men and women. While miracles occurred more frequently under the Old Covenant ministries of the prophets, healings characterized the New Covenant ministries of Jesus and the Church. Miracles served as a sign of the *power* of God available to Israel; healing demonstrated the redemptive *love* of God available to all men.

The original Greek places both "gifts" and "healings" in the plural, implying that this manifestation of the Spirit has *several* divine operations. Howard Carter describes it as "a gift of gifts," each gift having a counteractive effect on a **specific class of disease**<sup>4</sup> (i.e. cancer, back injuries, neurological disease). Thus, one individual may be used in the gifts of healings with a special anointing to minister healing to the blind, while another may minister effectively on a consistent basis to the deaf. The plural rendering seems to imply this gift is *not* a generalized power to heal, but specific abilities distributed to different members.

*"Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it."*  
*Numbers 14:22,23*

*"But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth."*  
*Exodus 9:16*

*"Thy right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy."*  
*Exodus 15:6*

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.*  
*Exodus 14:21*



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“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.”

*John 3:34*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

*Luke 4:18,19*

In the ministry of Jesus, there was no disease that He was unable to heal. This full manifestation of power to heal did not result from His being the second Person of the Godhead, but can be explained by His having the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Jesus Himself identified the Holy Spirit as the source of His anointing (Luke 4:18,19). He also described healing as one of the objectives of His ministry — the ministry He left His Church to finish. No one individual, including Peter or Paul, was directed or empowered to take up where Jesus left off; He has ordained *His Body* to carry out His mission on the earth. For that reason, the Body of Christ — in total — can expect to have the Holy Spirit without measure, and *all* the gifts of healings, just as Jesus did. But the scriptures imply that no *one* individual will again experience the fullness of the Spirit in this life to the same degree that Jesus did.

### 1.    What it is not

With every gift of the Spirit, it is important to distinguish the natural from the supernatural, to ascribe the proper glory to the proper source. Natural talents and understanding are clearly delineated from the spiritual gifts.

Medical science does not constitute the gifts of healings. Medical advances during this century have enabled all men and women to live free from many diseases which used to plague mankind. This is indeed a wonderful fact, and these advances were no doubt initiated indirectly by the Holy Spirit. But medicine is a natural means of combating sickness. It operates strictly within the realm of natural laws. The gifts of healings, by contrast, are completely supernatural, and supercede natural laws. Thus, diseases labeled as “incurable” and “terminal” by medical science, can be cured by the supernatural power of God. (For further information on the relationship between supernatural healing and medicine, please see *Foundations for Christian Growth*, Lesson Twelve, pages 306-307.)

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There is a difference between healing received by an individual's faith, and healing received through the gifts of the Spirit. Faith can be engaged by *anyone* at *any time*; healing through an individual's faith is *always* available. The same, however, cannot be said of gifts of healings. The gifts of the Spirit are administered as the Spirit wills; they operate according to the sovereign will of God. None can dictate how, when, or where the gifts will be manifested. Thus, when a person receives healing by standing in faith, and remaining steadfast on the promises of the scriptures, this is *not* a manifestation of the gifts of healings. That individual has received through his own faith. All believers can experience healing in this way, but not all have the gifts of healings, nor do all receive healing through that gift. The gifts of healings are specific supernatural abilities to heal specific diseases in other people.

### 2.    Vehicles

The gifts of healings can be manifested through a variety of avenues: laying on of hands (Mark 6:5), the spoken word (Matthew 8:8), anointed cloths (Acts 19:11,12), even the shadow or clothing of the possessor of this gift (Acts 5:16; Mark 5:27-30). There is no prescribed ritual or formula which, if strictly followed, will guarantee subsequent success. When Jesus spit on the ground, formed clay, spread it on a blind man's eyes, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, He was not revealing *the* cure for blindness (John 9:6,7). He ministered in the gifts of healings as **the Holy Spirit directed Him**. In Matthew 20:34, we find that Jesus ministered the gifts of healings to two blind men by laying hands on them.

Simply copying the actions of a man of God will not release the power of God. God may lead a person with the gifts of healings to do unconventional things at times; but this in no way gives one license to do the same. For example, just because Jesus rubbed mud into a blind man's eyes to heal him, doesn't mean that we can cure all blind people with mud. God has different ways of manifesting this gift, and we must remain sensitive and open-minded to God's specific leadings.

And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.  
*Mark 6:5*

But the centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed."  
*Matthew 8:8*

And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.  
*Acts 19:11,12*

And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed.  
*Acts 5:16*

After hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well." And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"  
*Mark 5:27-30*

When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing.  
*John 9:6,7*

(con't.)

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### 3.    Elisha and Naaman

Although there are fewer examples of the gifts of healings in the Old Testament than in the New, it very definitely operated through the prophet Elisha.

**Read II Kings 5:1-14.**

The little servant girl knew that Elisha could cure leprosy, an incurable disease. There is no doubt that it was common knowledge in Israel that the prophet had the power of God working through him to heal others. When he learned of Elisha's ability, the king of Aram sent Naaman to the king of Israel with this note: "*I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy*" (v.6). Elisha's response showed that the prophet had confidence in God's ability to heal through him. "*Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel*" (v.8). Naaman had only to obey the prophet's directions to receive his healing.

And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

*Matthew 20:34*

Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. Now the Arameans had gone out in bands, and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy." And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel."

Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy."

And it came about when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me." And it happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

*(con't.)*

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### 4. Peter and the Name of Jesus

Read Acts 3:1-10.

Peter and John encountered a hopeless cripple, lame from birth, who begged daily at the gate of the temple. He was a familiar sight to all the religious Jews who passed him to enter the temple to pray. What a dramatic scene for a man to be made whole in an instant before many unbelieving observers. He immediately entered the temple, *“walking and leaping and praising God”* (v.8). His presence arrested the attention of everyone: *“They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him”* (v.10). People ran to Peter and John, *“full of amazement”* (v.11). Once his audience had gathered, Peter identified the power by which the man was made to walk — the Name of Jesus (vs. 12,16). There were about 5,000 who were saved as a result of the manifestation of this gift and the preaching of the Word.

### 5. Purposes

Under the New Covenant, the gifts of healings is used more than any other of the spiritual gifts to help spread the gospel. It is very solid and meaningful evidence of the existence of a caring God to the individual who receives healing from a God he does not serve. Healing is grace made manifest, a gift of love. It glorifies Jesus as Lord, and blesses believer and unbeliever alike.

So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean.” But Naaman was furious and went away and said, “Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.’ Are not Abanah and Parpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.

Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, “My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

*II Kings 5:1-14*

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, “Look at us!” And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to

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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

### IV. SUMMARY — GLORIFYING GOD AND EDIFYING HIS CHURCH

you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up, and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

*Acts 3:1-10*

And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?

“And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

*Acts 3:11,12,16*

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

*I Corinthians 14:1*

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

*Hebrews 2:3,4*

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, instructing them to *desire* the spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 14:1), he was addressing the entire body of believers in Corinth. Paul did not indicate that each individual Corinthian should desire the gifts for his own personal possession; he was telling them to desire the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in their midst **as a church**. The individual believer would then be asking and believing God to divide the gifts among the Body as it pleased Him; he would not be desiring the particular gift that appealed to him.

As men and women in the Church today begin to earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit, we will begin to see them in greater operation. God responds to those who seek His grace, who care more for the things of the Spirit than the things of the world. As the Body of Christ, we must set ourselves apart in prayer to cry out to God for demonstrations of His power. Fervency requires dedication and determination, a whole heart and a single eye. God honors the people who are serious about His Word, who pursue love and desire to see the Body of Christ built up and encouraged.

God desires to confirm His Word through His people with manifestations of His power. The Bible tells us that He endorses the gospel by imparting spiritual gifts to believers. *“How shall we escape [appropriate retribution] if we neglect and refuse to pay attention to such a great salvation [as is now offered to us, letting it drift past us forever]? For it was declared at first by the Lord [Himself], and it was confirmed to us and proved to be real and genuine by those who personally heard [Him speak]. [Besides these evidences] it was also established and plainly endorsed by God, Who showed His approval of it by signs and wonders and various miraculous manifestations of [His] power and by imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit [to the believers] according to His own will”* (Hebrews 2:3,4 Amplified). As long as there is a need to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, there will be a need for the gifts of the Spirit!

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson NINE    SPIRITUAL GIFTS — EMPOWERED BY GOD

As His people begin to operate on higher levels of faith, learn to be led by His Spirit and depend on Him as their Source, the intensity of the spiritual condition of the Body will produce greater displays of spiritual power. Men and women will be drawn into the kingdom of God in ever greater numbers. Let us seek to abound in glorifying God and edifying His Church (I Corinthians 14:12).

So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.  
*I Corinthians 14:12*