

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

a teaching series from Praise Community Church

Teachings from Wednesday Night Renew



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Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Act 2:1-21

One of the joys of having the Holy Spirit indwelling us is He will lead us to the truth. Jesus said in John 16:13, ***“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.”*** I believe as we dwell in the Holy Spirit and He in us, we can be confident that the Holy Spirit will lead us to a unified, harmonious truth regarding our walk of faith and godliness.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came not just to indwell believers, but to permanently dwell within us. John the Baptist foretold this in Matthew 3:11, ***“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”*** Acts, chapter 2 is a fulfillment of that Scripture.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an important doctrine among many other doctrines taught in the Scriptures. The rule of thumb regarding Biblical doctrine is: If a doctrine is mentioned in the Gospels, occurs in the book of Acts, and is taught in the epistles, we can be confident that it is a proper practice for the church to engage in. Take Communion for example, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with His disciples in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It was practiced in Acts, and the Apostle Paul teaches about Communion in the Epistles. Likewise, the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in all four Gospels, occurs on at least five occasions in the book of Acts, and Paul teaches on it in the Epistles.

Let’s begin by asking and answering a few questions. First, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit a separate experience apart from the experience of salvation? I believe the answer to that is “yes” and I am basing that on Acts 19:1: ***“It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, ‘Did you receive***

the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.”

Here you find Christians who were believers but did not have the Holy Spirit. Once they were baptized, Paul then laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit, therefore making it a separate experience.

You can get saved, baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit at one time but here at PCC we treat them as three separate experiences, each requiring a different approach. So you can get saved, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit all on the same day, but we believe that they are three separate experiences.

Second, do you have to speak in tongues as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? There are a lot of differing opinions out there, some saying yes, some saying no; and each one has their Bible verses to back up their opinion. For the sake of unity, consistency, and harmony our pastoral staff discussed this and we wanted to all be on the same page in terms of how we taught on this and how we would teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We all felt that while the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift worth pursuing, it is not required as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I’ve shared my experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit where I did not receive the gift of tongues right away, but I did receive the prophetic gifting. My experience of tongues came much later. Unfortunately, I was attending a church that believed in order to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, you had to speak in tongues. Consequently I prayed numerous times to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and when I couldn’t speak in tongues, I was told I didn’t receive it and to come back later. This went on for well over a year. But during that whole time I could prophesy and did all the time.

True, there are times in the Scriptures where people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Acts 2 is evidence of that. However, when Paul received the Holy Spirit in Acts 9, it says there in verse 17: ***“After Ananias placed his hands on Saul, Ananias said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on your way to Damascus, sent me to you. He wants you to see again and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like fish scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. Then Saul stood up and was baptized. After he had something to eat, his strength came back to him.”*** There is no mention of him speaking in tongues at that point. We do know Paul had the gift of tongues because he said so in 1 Corinthians 14:18, ***“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all . . .”*** but we don’t know exactly when he received that manifestation of the Spirit, the Scriptures don’t tell us. So based on that, and the personal experience of a lot of people I’ve talked to, including our pastoral staff, we all agree that while we, like Paul, desires everyone to speak in tongues and manifest the other spiritual gifts as listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, we do not believe you have to speak in tongues as evidence that you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Third, why do we need to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Jesus answers that question in Acts 1:8, ***“But you will receive power (dunamus - GK) when the Holy Spirit comes to you. Then you will be My witnesses to testify about Me in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to empower the believer to be a witness, a testimony concerning Jesus Christ; who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do in the future.

Jesus also speaks to this in John’s gospel. Look at John 14, beginning in verse 12: ***“I can guarantee this truth: Those who believe in Me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father . . . I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper who will be with you forever. That helper is the Spirit of Truth . . . You know Him, because He lives with you and will be in you.”*** Jumping over to verse 26: ***“However, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you.”***

Everything Jesus did and said was the result of the Holy Spirit Who was alive and living in Him. When that same Holy Spirit, that lives in Jesus, dwells in us, we can do what Jesus did when He walked upon this earth. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us the power to be His witness upon the earth and testify that we can do what Jesus did because the Holy Spirit that lives in Him lives in us as well. The power that enabled Jesus to do all that He did now dwells in us, therefore we pick up in the ministry upon the earth where Jesus and His disciples left off. Every generation picking up were the previous generation of believers left off in their witness and testimony of Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit that dwelt in Him dwells in us, enabling us to do what Jesus did. We are able to do more than Jesus because He was one man upon the earth, whereas now there are multitudes of believers filled with the same Holy Spirit.

Lastly, so how do we receive the Holy Spirit? The same way we received salvation, by faith. Throughout the New Testament those who were filled with the Holy Spirit laid hands on those wishing to receive the Holy Spirit, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. We saw that earlier with Ananias and Saul in Acts 9 as well as Acts 19.

Jesus also said this in Luke 11, beginning in verse 9: ***“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will 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 will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”*** All we have to do to receive the Holy Spirit is ask, and it delights the Father’s heart to give us His good and perfect gift of the Holy Spirit. That’s why Jesus returned to the Father so He could send the gift of the Holy Spirit to us.

Pray this prayer if you sincerely desire to receive the baptism in God’s Holy Spirit:

"Heavenly Father, at this moment I come to You. I thank You that Jesus saved me. I pray that the Holy Spirit might come upon me. Lord Jesus, baptize me now in the Holy Spirit. I receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit right now by faith in Your Word. May the anointing, the glory, and the power of God come upon me and into my life now. May I be empowered for service from this day forward. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for baptizing me in Your Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Gifts of the Spirit

Introduction

There are many benefits of having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and flowing forth from us like a living stream – spiritual gifts. Every spiritual gift gives us the special ability from God enabling us to serve, build up, and strengthen both the body of Christ and to advance the kingdom of God upon the earth. Each person's role in the body of Christ is determined by their spiritual gift. William McRae, who wrote *Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts*, defined it as *"an ability to function effectively and significantly in a particular service as a member of Christ's body, the church."* In *The Holy Spirit*, Billy Graham compares spiritual gifts to tools. Each member of the body of Christ has been given tools to use in building up the body.

Through the distribution and networking of spiritual gifts, everyone who is a believer are to be using and serving one another through their unique giftedness. God has created a system ensuring that: (1) all believers have a significant role in the body of Christ; and (2) believers work together to accomplish His overall plans and purposes. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His will which is in accordance with the Father's plan for the church.

A couple of truths need to be emphasized: First, spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12, verse one says, ***"Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the spiritual gifts the Spirit gives us . . . There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all."*** Spiritual gifts are appearances of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and God's power working through us for the benefit of others and advancing the kingdom of God upon the earth. When a believer exercises their spiritual gift, it is an exhibition of the Spirit's power working through them. It is not simply a matter of doing something they are good at; spiritual gifts are an indication of the Holy Spirit.

The primary purpose of spiritual gifts is building up and strengthening the body of Christ, not the personal gratification of the individual member or as a showcase of how spiritual you are. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, ***"A spiritual gift is given to each of***

us so we can help each other.” That is the primary function of spiritual gifts, to help one another. The best way to use spiritual gifts is as a servant. When you combine your spiritual gifts with the position and attitude of a servant, you will avoid many of the pitfalls described in 1 Corinthians 13. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 20:28, ***“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”***

I see an unhealthy attitude in the church today where it’s becoming all about what you can do for me, what you have for me, how the church can serve and meet my needs. This attitude is unbiblical and counter-cultural to Jesus and the New Testament church. God equips us with spiritual gifts for the benefit of others, not ourselves. Whenever we lose sight of the purpose of our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ, the overall church is weakened.

The more we use our spiritual gifts to build up and strengthen one another, the more beneficial these gifts will be for the body of Christ. Why? Because as spiritual gifts give free rein to the Holy Spirit, He will continually lead them to exercise them for the common good of the body of Christ, the church; and that necessitates involvement and serving.

When I speak of building up the body of Christ, I’m not talking necessarily about building a bigger body numerically. Spiritual gifts were given to aid in developing a spiritually healthy body as well. Another way of looking at spiritual gifts is they are God’s way of administering or channeling His grace to others. When we exercise our gifts, we function as the hands and feet of Christ. For example, when a Christian man’s wife dies, it’s comforting for him to know that he will see her again someday in heaven. Here on earth, however, it is not nearly as comforting as having friends around to comfort and support him in his time of grief. Believers with the gift of mercy gather around him to listen. Another with the gift of administration may assist him in taking care of all the funeral arrangements. A neighbor with the gift of hospitality invites him for meals and fellowship with their family. When these things happen, Christ Himself, through His body the church, reaches down to take care of one of His own. Through the exercise of these gifts, this hurting individual is given a healthy portion of God’s grace.

The list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. A similar list appears in Ephesians 4:7-13 and Romans 12:3-8. The gifts of the Spirit are simply God enabling believers to do what He has called us to do in serving and ministering to one another.

There is some controversy as to the precise nature of each of the gifts of the Spirit, but here is a list of spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and their basic definitions, and in the following pages I will discuss more about each of these spiritual gifts in depth.

- The gift of wisdom is to be the ability to make decisions and give guidance according to God's will.
- The gift of knowledge is the ability to have an in-depth understanding of a spiritual issue or situation.
- The gift of faith is being able to trust God and encourage others to trust God, no matter what the circumstances may be.
- The gift of healing is the miraculous ability of God's healing power to restore a person who is sick, injured, or suffering.
- The gift of miracles is being able to perform signs and wonders that give authenticity to God's presence, His Word, and the Gospel message.
- The gift of prophecy is being able to proclaim an encouraging, exhorting, and comforting message from God.
- The gift of discerning of spirits is the ability to determine whether or not a message, person, or event is truly from God.
- The gift of tongues is the ability to speak in a foreign language that you do not have knowledge of, in order to communicate with someone who speaks that language.
- The gift of interpreting tongues is the ability to translate the tongues speaking and communicate it back to others in your own language.

All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit working together are needed to produce the full potential of the church. We need every one of these gifts fully and constantly functioning within the body of Christ. There will never be a time we will not need any of these gifts, until Jesus returns again. Since the gifts of the Spirit channel God's grace into the world, their use must be controlled by the pursuit of love - the greatest of all the gifts of the Spirit.

The Gift of Speaking in Tongues and Interpretation

1 Corinthians 12

We are continuing to look in more depth at the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. There are nine of these gifts of the Spirit and in the previous chapter there was a brief description of each one. Now I will go back and look at them in more detail.

Let me emphasize that God gives each believer a spiritual gift for the express purpose of helping each other. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, ***“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”*** Everything mentioned relating to the spiritual gifts is not what they do for you, but what they do for others. Your spiritual gifts are for the building up, strengthening the body of Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to manifest the kingdom of God through you.

The first manifestation gift is the gift of tongues, or more commonly referred to as speaking in tongues and along with it the ability to interpret what is spoken because these two gifts must function alongside one another in a public setting. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 10 says, ***“Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said.”***

There are two main ways speaking in tongues is used. The first way can be expressed in a public setting, like any worship setting in the midst of other believers. Whenever the speaking in tongues occurs in a public setting it must always be followed by an interpretation so everyone present can understand what was spoken. When the manifestation of tongues and an interpretation follows, it is equivalent to a prophetic word. 1 Corinthians 14, beginning in verse 27: ***“No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God***

privately.” So without an interpreter present, there is to be no public utterance in tongues, but rather we are to remain silent or speak to God privately.

One of the interesting aspects concerning the public manifestation of speaking in tongues is it is for the purpose of glorifying God. Look at the day of Pentecost there in Acts 2. As the baptism of the Holy Spirit came that day, and the gathered believers spoke in tongues, the various nationalities that witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, each heard the disciples speaking in their own native tongue. Acts 2, beginning in verse 5: **“At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers . . . And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”** Clearly one of the purposes of the public utterance of tongues is to glorify God.

One of the differences between the gifts of tongues and prophecy is that tongues is humankind speaking to God whereas the prophetic is God speaking to humankind. The public utterance of speaking in tongues should be glorifying God and focused upon God and His character.

The more common use of speaking in tongues is what many refer to as their “prayer language.” Again 1 Corinthians 14:27 would refer to this as **“speaking in tongues to God in private”** which requires no interpretation.

The personal, private use of speaking in tongues is purely between the individual believer and God. It is the believer speaking to God by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This gift of private tongues is useful in our individual or privately in corporate worship, prayer, and praise. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14, beginning in verse 14: **“For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying (the Holy Spirit is praying in and through us), but I don’t understand what I am saying. Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the Spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don’t understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don’t understand what you are saying? You will be giving thanks very well, but it won’t strengthen the**

people who hear you . . . I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.”

The benefit of praying in tongues privately to God is that it edifies and builds the faith of the believer. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says, ***“A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally . . .”*** As you pray in tongues, you are speaking directly with Almighty God, the Holy Spirit prays through you in accordance with God’s will. When you don’t know how to pray for yourself or others, as you use your prayer language, God’s Spirit is praying through you in perfect alignment with His will. Romans 8, beginning in verse 26 says, ***“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, or the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.”***

The last verse in Romans 8:28 is a verse we like to pull out of context and separate from our prayer language. It is as we engage in our prayer language and allow the Holy Spirit to pray through us that all things work together for our good. We tend to separate verse 28 from the preceding two verses and it is verses 26 and 27 that provide the conditions for everything working together for our good.

Pastor and author Kenneth Hagin had this to say in his book Gifts of the Holy Spirit in regards to speaking in tongues: ***“We need to put the emphasis on tongues where the emphasis belongs. Tongues is primarily a devotional gift. When Paul wrote the Church at Corinth, ‘I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all’” (1 Corinthians 14:18), he was giving them the purpose of tongues and explaining what speaking in tongues would do for them. Tongues is primarily a devotional gift to be used in our prayer life in the praise and worship of God. Paul was teaching that only a few believers will be used in what we would call the public ministry of tongues . . . When Paul asked in 1 Corinthians 12:29, “All are not apostles, are they? (The obvious answer here is, ‘No they are not.’) All are not prophets, are they? (Again, the obvious answer is, ‘No they are not.’) All are not teachers, are they? All are not***

workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gifts of hearing, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they?” The answer to all of these questions is no. But Paul is talking here about public ministry. We should not be too concerned about our ministering in tongues and interpreting. We should be primarily concerned with maintaining tongues in the place where they principally belong – as a devotional gift to assist us in the worship of God.”

When it comes to the gifts of tongues, whether in public use or for private use, like all the other gifts of the Spirit, we are told in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to “***desire earnestly spiritual gifts . . .***” God is not going to force this on us if we aren’t ready or open to receiving it. However, if we understand the blessings God has for us in this spiritual gift, especially in the private use of tongues through our praying and our singing, then we are encouraged to desire earnestly this gift. I believe if we will pursue it and ask God to impart it to us, He will.

The Prophetic

1 Corinthians 12

We are continuing in our teachings on the gifts of the Spirit. There are nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12, beginning in verse 7: ***“The evidence of the Spirit’s presence is given to each person for the common good of everyone. The Spirit gives one person the ability to speak with wisdom. The same Spirit gives another person the ability to speak with knowledge. To another person the same Spirit gives courageous faith. To another person the same Spirit give the ability to heal. Another can work miracles. Another can speak what God has revealed. Another can tell the difference between spirits. Another can speak in different kinds of languages. Another can interpret languages. There is only one Spirit who does all these things by giving what God wants to give to each person.”*** These are the nine gifts we are looking more deeply into.

Now I will look into the gift of prophecy. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, gives a simple definition of prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:3 says, ***“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.”*** Prophesying is speaking in order to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others. More precisely, prophecy is not just speaking human encouragement; it is speaking divine encouragement. In simple terms, prophecy is “hearing” from God and speaking what you hear in order to build, comfort, or encourage someone. To prophesy is to hear from God and speak to people.

I have always been somewhat intrigued by the Apostle Paul’s teaching on the gift of the prophetic in 1 Corinthians 14. Paul takes a whole chapter to talk about the supremacy of the prophetic over all the other spiritual gifts. He starts 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1 saying: ***“ . . . desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”*** Paul places this emphasis upon the gift of prophecy over all the other spiritual gifts mentioned. Now that’s not to say the other gifts are not important, they are, but Paul says there is something about this particular spiritual

gift that we need to excel in using. There needs to be this earnest desire on our part, an openness and surrendering of ourselves in pursuing the prophetic gift of prophecy.

One of the reasons most people are leery of this particular gift of prophecy is that they confuse it with the office of a prophet. Paul makes this distinction in Ephesians 4, beginning in verse 11: ***“And God 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 . . .”*** This reference to the prophet, is the office or position of a prophet among all of the offices Paul mentions of apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

There is a significant distinction between the spiritual gift of prophecy Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 14 and the office of the prophet referred to there in Ephesians 4. The spiritual gift of prophecy is for edification, exhortation, and comfort whereas the office of the prophet is one who may make corrections and establish directions for a ministry or nation. In 2 Samuel 11 and 12, following King David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, God sends the prophet Nathan to reveal David’s sins. Nathan is operating in the office of a prophet and that is not the same thing as the spiritual gift of prophecy. Very few people are called to and function in the office of a prophet. Sometimes people err in thinking that if someone prophesies over them that they are going to reveal sinful areas of their lives. Again, that is not what the spiritual gift of prophecy is designed to do; it is to strengthen, encourage and comfort others. The office of the prophet is limited to a few, the spiritual gift of prophecy is available to all believers.

One other factor regarding the spiritual gift of prophecy is that it is a confirmation, not new direction, but rather confirmation, to confirm something God has already told the person. The purpose of the spiritual gift of prophecy, then, is not to reveal something new; it is to confirm something God has already told them. Prophecy is not for the purpose of giving you dates or mates or babies.

There three main components that make up the gift of prophecy and how it operates. The language of the Holy Spirit, the way God chooses to manifest the prophetic through us, is by impressions or pictures which we receive by faith alongside our weaknesses and humility and not in our own strength and abilities. The

prophetic gift often begins as the still small voice of God or as a subtle, faint impression of the Holy Spirit. In fact, it can be so subtle that many do not recognize or value it, and thus, ignore it. If God is giving you a mental picture, it won't be like a blazing spotlight of a picture with Dolby surround-sound, it will just subtly appear, and often so subtly that you might be tempted to think you thought that up yourself. Part of moving in the prophetic gifting is just recognizing and getting used to the language of the Holy Spirit and how He imparts His message to us.

The first main component of prophecy is revelation. The first part, or step in the prophetic gifting is the information we receive from God without us having any prior natural understanding. Revelation is basically knowledge or information we could not have known unless God revealed it to us and it comes in varied forms and on different levels.

One way revelation can come to us is through mental pictures. These can be pictures in our mind that indicated how the Lord will speak to and touch others. Some people may see the face of a person or the name of a biblical personality which represents a ministry direction. We see this form of revelation in Jeremiah, chapter one. In verse 11, the Lord is speaking to Jeremiah and He says, ***“Jeremiah, what do you see?” Jeremiah answered, ‘I see a branch of an almond tree.’***” Jeremiah gets this mental picture of the branch of an almond tree. Again in verse 13, the Lord says to Jeremiah, ***“What do you see?” Jeremiah answered, ‘I see a boiling pot, and its top is tilted away from the north.’***” One more time Jeremiah is receiving a mental impression, a picture from the Spirit of the Lord.

All believers have the ability to receive these mental pictures from God. Right now you can get a mental picture of an apple. Describe in your mind what you see. This is the same thing that happened to Jeremiah who got a mental picture from the Holy Spirit and then describes what he sees. The revelation aspect of the prophetic is: “What did you see, hear, or receive from the Holy Spirit?”

The second component of the prophetic is interpretation. This is the understanding God gives about the revelation we have received. Interpretation is the: “What is God saying?” or “What does this mean?” portion of the prophecy. The

interpretation may be provided by the one giving the revelation or it could be by the one receiving the prophetic word.

We see this in the example in what I cited earlier from Jeremiah regarding the branch of the almond tree. In Jeremiah 1:12 the Lord provided the interpretation: ***“Right. I am watching to make sure that My words come true.”***

There are times where I ask the person I am giving the prophetic word to: “Does what I just shared with you mean anything to you?” especially if I don’t feel like I have the interpretation. I remember when I was in Kansas City participating in a conference on the prophetic. I received a picture of a room that I thought was a living room. There was a small leak in the ceiling over the room and God was going to cause the slow leak to become a steady, gushing stream. I really didn’t have any interpretation for the picture I saw in my mind.

The lady I gave the word to immediately knew what it all meant. Unbeknownst to me, she and her husband pastored a home church that met in their living room and they felt like the spiritual flow, which the leak from the ceiling represented, was not what it should be or what they wanted it to be. They had come to this conference seeking a word from God as to whether they were to continue pastoring this home church.

She took the increase in the gushing flow to be an increase in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit so she went away greatly encouraged. This again is an example of where I had the revelation, the picture, and she had the interpretation.

The third component of a prophetic word is the application. This is the understanding of how we implement or utilize the revelation and interpretation we receive. Application is the: “What do we do with this?” portion of prophecy. In most cases, the application component is not our responsibility. Rather, it is the responsibilities of the person receiving the prophetic word to decide what he or she is supposed to do in response to the word.

First Corinthians 14:31 says that we can all prophesy, which means this gift is intended to be received and used by all believers. We begin with the following three steps.

Step one: Ask the Holy Spirit, “Is there someone here You want to speak to, through me? Is there someone here You would like to exhort, edify, or comfort through me? What are You wanting to say or do through me?” Take time to ask and then just wait on Holy Spirit’s response.

Second step: Verbalize the impression: When God gives you a word, a picture, an impression for someone, be faithful to share that. Again, it may not mean a thing to you but will mean something to the one you share it with. Even if it doesn’t make sense to them at the time, just leave it with them and trust God to work out the details.

Most prophesying will be in the context of a person rather than a whole congregation. If you do not know the person you can always ask a friend to go with you while you share the word. Be faithful in sharing whatever God gives you.

Third step: Value small experiences. Be faithful in the little ways and God will increase the prophetic gifting in you. Don’t cower to fear, fear that you’re going to get it wrong or that the person won’t receive it or they’ll think you’re weird (they probably already think your weird, anyway!). You’re not responsible for whether they receive the prophetic word or not, you’re just responsible to give it. Value the small ways God is using you in this gifting and He will give the increase.

Word of Knowledge – Word of Wisdom

1 Corinthians 12

I want to look at the gift of the **word of knowledge** and the **word of wisdom**. Let me give you the basic definition and then we will look at some biblical passages where these two gifts are in operation. The **word of knowledge** is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient that is relating to people, places, or things. The **word of wisdom** is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. One difference between these two gifts - the **word of knowledge** and the **word of wisdom** - is that the revelation which the **word of knowledge** brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past; the **word of wisdom**, on the other hand, always speaks to the future.

It is not uncommon for these two gifts of the Spirit to function together much like the gift of publically speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation go together. The **word of knowledge** and the **word of wisdom**, however, are not as rigidly bound together.

Let me give you an example of these two gifts working together. In the book of Revelation we learn that the disciple John is exiled on the island of Patmos. One day while he was in the Spirit, Jesus appeared to him in a vision (this is one of the ways a **word of knowledge** can come to you). In this vision Jesus revealed to John the spiritual condition of the seven churches in Asia Minor, which is found in Revelation, chapters 1 through 3. Because of John's exile on the island of Patmos, there is no way he could have known the spiritual conditions of those churches he was told to write to. The only way he could have known this information was by way of revelation through the gift of knowledge given to him by the Holy Spirit.

Take the message to the church in Ephesus, Revelation 2, and beginning in verse 2: ***“I know all the things you do, I have seen your hard work, and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for Me without quitting. But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love Me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen!”*** That portion of John’s vision is the word of knowledge; it speaks to things that have happened in the past. Again, being exiled and kept prisoner on the island of Patmos, there is no way John would have any knowledge of what was happening in a church in Asia Minor. John is being given supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God relating to those churches. These facts would not have been known to him, concerning people, places, or things.

What follows in Revelation 2, verse 5, is considered the ***word of wisdom***: ***“Turn back to Me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.”*** This is considered a ***word of wisdom*** in that it is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. The ***word of wisdom*** will often tell you what to do with the ***word of knowledge***, and the ***word of wisdom*** will always speak to the future. Based on the ***word of knowledge***, which is based on the past, they are told what they had done, they had lost their zeal and love for the Lord and for one another. The ***word of wisdom*** indicated what they needed to do; turn back to the Lord, repent, or the Lord will come and remove their lampstand from them, which is based on the future. This would be an example of the gifts of the ***word of knowledge*** and the ***word of wisdom*** flowing together.

The Word of Knowledge

Now I will deal with each of these separately. I will repeat the definition of the ***word of knowledge***. It is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient, relating to people, places, or things. Here are a couple of examples of this gift in operation through the Scriptures.

In Acts 9 following Saul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul is struck blind and is taken to Damascus. Acts 9, beginning with verse 10: ***“Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, ‘Ananias!’ ‘Yes, Lord!’ he replied. The Lord said, ‘Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to Me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.”***

In this vision the Lord told Ananias to go to a certain house and pray for Saul. At the same time He appeared to Saul in a vision, showing Saul that Ananias was coming to pray for him ***“so he can see again.”*** Ananias could not have known through natural means or human knowledge that in a very specific house on a very specific street, a man called Saul was also praying at that very same moment. Ananias couldn't have known this any other way than by supernatural revelation from God. This is how a **word of knowledge** is manifested.

Another example occurs in Acts 10, beginning in verse 9, ***“Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. Then a voice said to him, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.’ ‘No, Lord,’ Peter declared. ‘I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.’ But the voice spoke again, ‘Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.’ The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven. Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there. Meanwhile as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, ‘Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them.’”*** Peter goes with the men and in the course of events Peter figures out that the vision from God was a **word of knowledge** regarding God's salvation for the

Gentiles. Peter also receives a **word of knowledge** concerning the men who came to find him and take him back to Cornelius's home.

The Word of Wisdom

There you see some examples in Scripture of the **word of knowledge** in operation. Now let's look at some examples of the **word of wisdom**. Again, the **word of wisdom** is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. We see this clearly operating in the life of the Old Testament character Joseph. Genesis 37, beginning in verse 5: ***“One night Joseph had a dream, and, when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. ‘Listen to this dream,’ Joseph said. ‘We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine.’ His brothers responded, ‘So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?’ And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.”*** As I stated earlier, one difference between these two gifts - the **word of knowledge** and the **word of wisdom** - is that the revelation which the **word of knowledge** brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past; the **word of wisdom**, on the other hand, always speaks to the future.

We clearly see that Joseph's dream was referring to a future event and was fulfilled many years later. If you know Joseph's story you know Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold as a slave eventually working his way up to becoming the second in command over Egypt because of his godly leadership in preparing Egypt for a coming famine by stockpiling grain. Joseph's brothers come from Canaan in search of food and eventually Joseph's father and his whole family come to Egypt to live there with Joseph. By this time Joseph had clearly risen to a position where he reigned over his brothers, just like his dream foretold.

An example of a **word of wisdom** in operation in the New Testament would be Acts 11, beginning in verse 27: ***“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 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. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” This *word of wisdom* comes to Agabus regarding an event to come in the future. Agabus must have flowed in this gift because we see in Acts 21, beginning in verse 10: *“Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul’s belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, ‘The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’”* These words are referring to a future event that did come to pass in Paul’s life. There are many, many examples of these two spiritual gifts, the *word of knowledge* and the *word of wisdom*, in operation throughout both the Old and New Testament.

There are a few distinctions regarding the *word of wisdom*. In some instances in the Old Testament, a prophet received a word from the Lord which did not come to pass. Some *words of wisdom* are conditional. For example, in the case of King Hezekiah, God told the prophet Isaiah to give Hezekiah a *word of wisdom* regarding his future - the plan and purpose of God under the present conditions. Isaiah told Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:1, *“About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. Isaiah gave the king this message: ‘This is what the Lord says, ‘Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.’ When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, ‘Remember, O Lord, how I have always been faithful to You and have served You single-mindedly, always doing what pleases You.’ Then he broke down and wept bitterly. But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to Isaiah from the Lord: ‘Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of My people. Tell him, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life...’”* Because Hezekiah repented,

the Lord changed His plans for Hezekiah and gave him fifteen more years of life. Sometimes a ***word of wisdom*** comes as a warning and we are given a chance to repent or respond in such a way so as to keep it from coming to pass.

You'll remember God also spoke to the prophet Jonah and gave him a ***word of wisdom*** that Nineveh was going to be destroyed. It was a ***word of wisdom*** because it concerned the plan and purpose of God for the future. Jonah didn't care if Nineveh was destroyed because he didn't want to warn the enemies of Israel of their own destruction. God dealt with Jonah until he was obedient to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, warning them of impending judgment if they didn't turn to the Lord. The whole city of Nineveh repented and judgment didn't fall on them in that generation (although it came eventually).

The gift of the ***word of wisdom*** is also used to reveal God's plan to those He wants to use in ministering. Remember when Ananias went to pray for Saul to receive his sight, Acts 9:15 says, ***“But the Lord said, ‘Go, for Saul is My chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.’”*** This ***word of wisdom*** was in regard to God's future plans for Saul and to set him aside for a specific ministry.

Finally, the ***word of wisdom*** can also be used to assure God's protection or coming deliverance in a time of calamity. When Paul was aboard a ship going to Rome to appeal his case to Caesar, a violent storm arose. Paul had a ***word of wisdom*** for those sailing with him before they ever left port. In Acts 27:10 Paul warns them, ***“. . . I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on - shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well. But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.”*** If they had listened to Paul, they would not have lost their ship and all their cargo. Failing to heed his warning, however, they had to throw everything overboard. Finally, all hope was gone. But in the midst of such calamity, Paul declares in verses 23-26, ***“For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, and He said, ‘Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in His goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with***

you.’ So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. But we will be shipwrecked on an island.’”

These are just a few unique examples concerning the gift of the **word of wisdom**. There are many more in the Scriptures that could be cited.

Summary

The **word of knowledge** is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient, relating to people, places, or things. The revelation which the **word of knowledge** brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past.

Biblical examples of the word of knowledge: Acts 9:10-12; Acts 10:9-20

The **word of wisdom** is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. The **word of wisdom** always speaks to the future.

Biblical examples of the **word of wisdom**: Genesis 37:5-8; Acts 11:27-30; Acts 21:10-11.

Three distinctions regarding the **word of wisdom**:

1) There are some instances in the Old Testament when the prophet received a word from the Lord which did not come to pass. Some **words of wisdom** are conditional. (2 Kings 20:1-6)

2) The gift of the **word of wisdom** is used to reveal God’s plan to those He wants to use in ministering. (Acts 9:15)

3) The **word of wisdom** can also be used to assure God’s protection or coming deliverance in a time of calamity. (Acts 27:10-11; 23-26)

It is not uncommon for these two gifts of the Spirit to function together much like the gift of publically speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation go together, though not as rigidly. (Example: Revelation 1-3, John’s messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor.) The **word of wisdom** will often tell you what to do with the word of knowledge, and the **word of wisdom** will always speak to the future.

Word of Knowledge / Wisdom

1 Corinthians 12

We have been looking more in depth at the gifts of the Spirit as given in 1 Corinthians 12. There are nine: the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits, the gift of faith, the gift of healing, the working of miracles, the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the gift of interpreting tongues. So far we've looked at the gift of speaking in tongues, and somewhat at the gift of interpretation, and last week we looked at the gift of prophecy.

Let's first look at a basic definition and then we will look at some biblical passages where these two gifts are in operation. The word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient, relating to people, places, or things. The word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. One difference between these two gifts - the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom - is that the revelation which the word of knowledge brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past; the word of wisdom, on the other hand, always speaks to the future.

Now it is not uncommon for these two gifts of the Spirit to function together much like the gift of publicly speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation go together, though not as rigidly.

So let me give you an example of these two gifts working together. In the book of Revelation we learn that the disciple John, who is exiled on the island of Patmos, and one day while he was in the Spirit, Jesus appeared to him in a vision (this is one of the ways a word of knowledge can come to you). In this vision Jesus revealed to John the spiritual condition of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and we find those in Revelation, chapters 1 through 3. Because of John's exile on the island of Patmos there is no way he could have known the spiritual conditions of those churches he as

told to write to. The only way he could have known was by way of revelation through the gift of knowledge given to him by the Holy Spirit.

Take the message to the church in Ephesus, Revelation 2, and beginning in verse 2: ***“I know all the things you do, I have seen your hard work, and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for Me without quitting. But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love Me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen!”*** That portion of John’s vision is the word of knowledge; it speaks to things that have happened in the past. Again, being exiled and kept prisoner on the island of Patmos, there is no way John would have any knowledge of what was happening in a church in Asia Minor. John is being given supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God relating to those churches, which would have been unknown to him, relating to people, places, or things.

What follows in Revelation 2, verse 5, is considered the word of wisdom: ***“Turn back to Me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lamp-stand from its place among the churches.”*** This is considered a word of wisdom in that it is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. The word of wisdom will often tell you what to do with the word of knowledge, and the word of wisdom will always speak to the future. So based on the word of knowledge, which is based on the past, they are told what they had done, they had lost their zeal and love for the Lord and for one another. The word of wisdom indicated what they needed to do, turn back to the Lord, repent, or the Lord will come and remove their lamp-stand from them, which is based on the future. So this would be an example of the gifts of knowledge and wisdom flowing together.

So let me deal with each of these separately. The word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient, relating to people, places, or things. Following are a couple examples of this gift in operation through the

Scriptures. Acts 9, following Saul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul is struck blind and is taken to Damascus. Acts 9, beginning with verse 10: ***“Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, ‘Ananias!’ ‘Yes, Lord!’ he replied. The Lord said, ‘Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to Me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.”***

In this vision the Lord told Ananias to go to a certain house and pray for Saul. At the same time He appeared to Saul in a like vision, showing Saul that Ananias was coming to pray for him ***“so he can see again.”*** Ananias could not have known through natural means or human knowledge that in a very specific house on a very specific street, a man called Saul was also praying at that very same moment. Ananias couldn't have known this any other way than by supernatural revelation from God: a word of knowledge.

Another example occurs in Acts 10, beginning in verse 9, ***“Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. Then a voice said to him, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.’ ‘No, Lord,’ Peter declared. ‘I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.’ But the voice spoke again, ‘Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.’ The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven. Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there. Meanwhile as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, ‘Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them.’”*** So Peter goes with the men and in the course of events Peter figures out that the vision from God was a word of knowledge regarding God's salvation for

the Gentiles. Peter also receives a word of knowledge concerning the men who came to find him and take him back to Cornelius's home.

So there you see some examples in Scripture of the word of knowledge in operation. So let's look at some examples of the word of wisdom. Again, the word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God. We see this clearly operating in the life of the Old Testament character named Joseph. Genesis 37, beginning in verse 5: ***“One night Joseph had a dream, and, when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. ‘Listen to this dream,’ Joseph said. ‘We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine.’ His brothers responded, ‘So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?’ And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.”*** Now as I stated earlier, one difference between these two gifts - the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom - is that the revelation which the word of knowledge brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past; the word of wisdom, on the other hand, always speaks to the future.

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An example of a word of wisdom in operation in the New Testament would be Acts 11, beginning in verse 27: ***“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 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. And in the proportion that any of***

the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” So this word of wisdom comes to Agabus regarding an event to come in the future. Agabus must have flowed in this gift because we see in Acts 21, beginning in verse 10: **“Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul’s belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, ‘The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’”** Again, this is referring to a future event and it did come to pass. There are many, many examples of these two spiritual gifts, the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom, in operation throughout both the Old and New Testament.

Now, let me give a few distinctions regarding the word of wisdom. There are some instances in the Old Testament when the prophet received a word from the Lord which did not come to pass. Some words of wisdom are conditional. For example, in the case of King Hezekiah, God told the prophet Isaiah to give Hezekiah a word of wisdom regarding his future - the plan and purpose of God under the present conditions. Isaiah told Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:1, **“About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. Isaiah gave the king this message: ‘This is what the Lord says, ‘Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.’ When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, ‘Remember, O Lord, how I have always been faithful to You and have served You single-mindedly, always doing what pleases You.’ Then he broke down and wept bitterly. But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to Isaiah from the Lord: ‘Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of My people. Tell him, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life . . .’”**

Because Hezekiah repented the Lord changed His plans for Hezekiah and gave him fifteen more years of life. Sometimes a word of wisdom comes like that as a warning

and we are given a chance to repent or respond in such a way so as to perhaps keep it from coming to pass.

You'll remember God also spoke to the prophet Jonah and gave him a word of wisdom that Ninevah was going to be destroyed. It was a word of wisdom because it concerned the plan and purpose of God for the future. Jonah didn't care if Ninevah was destroyed or not! He didn't want to go warn the enemies of Israel. God dealt with Jonah, however, until he was obedient to go and preach to the people of Ninevah, warning them of impending judgment if they didn't turn to the Lord. They repented and judgment didn't fall on them in that generation (although it came eventually).

The gift of the word of wisdom is also used to reveal God's plan to those He wants to use in ministering. Remember when Ananias went to pray for Saul to receive his sight, Acts 9:15 says, ***“But the Lord said, ‘Go, for Saul is My chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.’”*** So this word of wisdom was in regards to God's future plans for Saul and to set him aside for a specific ministry.

Finally, the word of wisdom can also be used to assure God's protection or coming deliverance in a time of calamity. When Paul was aboard a ship en route to Rome to appeal his case to Caesar, a violent storm arose. Paul had a word of wisdom for those sailing with him before they ever left port. In Acts 27:10 Paul warns them, ***“. . . I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on - shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well. But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.”***

If they had listened to Paul, they would not have lost their ship and all their cargo. Failing to heed his warning, however, they had to throw everything overboard. Finally, all hope was gone. But in the midst of such calamity, Paul steps forth in verses 23-26 and says, ***“For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, and He said, ‘Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in His goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.’ So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. But we will be shipwrecked on an island.”***

Exercising the Gifts of the Spirit - Word of Knowledge/Wisdom

summary

The word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning certain facts in the heart and mind of God, which would be unknown to the recipient, relating to people, places, or things.

The word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God.

The revelation which the word of knowledge brings is always present knowledge, or it is knowledge of something which happened in the past; the word of wisdom, on the other hand, always speaks to the future.

Now it is not uncommon for these two gifts of the Spirit to function together much like the gift of publically speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation go together, though not as rigidly. (Example: Revelation 1-3, John's messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor.)

The word of wisdom will often tell you what to do with the word of knowledge, and the word of wisdom will always speak to the future.

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Three distinctions regarding the word of wisdom:

- 1) There are some instances in the Old Testament when the prophet received a word from the Lord which did not come to pass. Some words of wisdom are conditional. (2 Kings 20:1-6)
- 2) The gift of the word of wisdom is also used to reveal God's plan to those He wants to use in ministering. (Acts 9:15)
- 3) The word of wisdom can also be used to assure God's protection or coming deliverance in a time of calamity. (Acts 27:10-11; 23-26)

The Working of Miracles

1 Corinthians 12:10

Next we'll look at the "working of miracles". A miracle is a supernatural intervention in the ordinary course of nature; a temporary suspension of the accustomed order through the Holy Spirit. The working of miracles is used to display God's power and magnificence. Another way of putting it is: A miracle is something that is humanly impossible but divinely simple.

In Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, the Greek word used for "miracles" is "powers." In other words, the working of miracles is called "the working of powers." The Greek word, according to the Greek concordance, means, "explosions of almightiness." It means impelling, staggering wonders and astonishment. So the working of miracles could be defined as, "The working of impelling, staggering wonders or astonishments, or the outworking of explosions of almightiness."

In his book, Questions & Answers on Spiritual Gifts, Howard Carter said, ". . . *the working of miracles is a very important manifestation of the Spirit. It is the might power of God flowing through a person.*" I think it would be true to say that the person who is involved in the working of miracles participates in the same power of God that was in manifestation when God created the world, because God surely worked a miracle when He created the heavens and the earth.

So let me give you a couple of biblical examples of this particular gift in operation. Interestingly, the gift of working of miracles was more prominent in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Although people were healed and gifts of healing were in operation in the Old Testament, gifts of healing were more prevalent in the New Testament.

In Cecil B. DeMille's movie, The Ten Commandments. The working of miracles was used for the miraculous deliverance of God's people from Egyptian bondage.

When Aaron threw down Moses rod and it was turned into a serpent (Exodus 7:10), that was the working of a miracle. When the Nile was turned into blood and all the other plagues that followed, this was the gift of working of miracles in operation.

Coming out of Egypt, the Israelites faced the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his hosts close behind, ready to make them slaves again. Mountains loomed on one side, the wilderness was on the other, the sea was in front of them, and the enemy was behind them - their situation seemed hopeless. But Moses looked to the Lord, and the Lord told him to stretch forth his rod. Moses obeyed, and the sea divided. That was the working of a miracle - divine intervention in the ordinary course of nature.

Another scriptural use of working of miracles was to provide for those in need. 1 Kings 17, tells one such story involving Elijah and a widow, beginning in verse 12: ***“But the widow said, ‘I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.’ But Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!’ So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.”***

So those are just a few examples from the Old Testament. Let me give you a few from the New Testament. The first recorded miracle Jesus did was turning the water into wine there is John 2. Verse 11 ends this miracle saying: ***“This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.”***

You have the miracle in Mark 4, when Jesus calms the storm. Beginning in verse 35: ***“As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.’ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up.***

High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, 'Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?' When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence! Be still!' Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm."

Of course one of the greatest miracles Jesus did in the New Testament was the feeding of the 5,000 one time, and 4,000 another time. In Matthew 14 you find the feeding of the 5,000 where Jesus blesses two fish and five loaves. Then a few verses later, in Matthew 14, beginning with verse 32, you find the same miracle with 4,000 using two fish and seven loaves. Jesus operated a lot in this gift of working miracles. You'll remember He walked upon the water, raised Lazarus from the dead, healed the nobleman's son from a distance, just to name a few. So those are just a few examples of the gift of working miracles there in the New Testament.

This gift of working miracles seems to be one of the hallmarks of being an apostle. When Paul was defending the title of apostleship in 2 Corinthians 12 he makes the following statement in verse 12: ***"When I was with you, I certainly gave you proof that I am an apostle. For I patiently did many signs and wonders and miracles among you."*** So Paul is pointing to the miracles that were being done through his ministry as part of the proof that he was called to be an apostle. So those who have the calling of an apostle may also operate fluently in the gifts of working miracles.

Let me just give a word of caution regarding the gift of the working of miracles. There is a danger and a temptation in taking personal glory unto yourself for what God has done. Because if a person sees a miracle and you seem to be the instrument through which that miracle was accomplished, people are very ready to put you on some kind of pedestal. They look up to you in awe as some kind of mighty man/woman of God, and therein lies a danger in accepting that adulation, praise, and awe of the people. They don't want anybody else to pray for them but you, only you can lay hands on them because they mistakenly think the power is yours and not God's power working through you.

There's a great example of what I am talking about here in Acts 14. Beginning in verse 8: ***“While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. So Paul called to him in a loud voice, ‘Stand up!’ And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.***

“When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, ‘These men are gods in human form!’ They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, ‘Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past He permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but He never left them without evidence of Himself and His goodness. For instance, He sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.’ But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.”

There is a danger any time God uses you as His instrument to do His work of love and grace in another person's heart and life. People tend to respond to the instrument, many times, rather than to God. They are so grateful for what God has done; they want to reward the instrument that God used. Therefore, unless a person has really come to the place in their own spiritual maturity where they do not have personal ambition or personal desires for glory, one of the worst things in the world would be for God to give to them the gift of working of miracles. It could absolutely destroy them. So it is not an easy gift to have.

Nevertheless, as with all the spiritual gifts, we are commended in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to **“yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts,”** among them the gift of the working of miracles. So you may have never been used of God in this particular way but we are called to pursue it. Amen. Let’s pray and then we’re going to worship.

Prayer: Father, we come to You and acknowledge our faith in You. We believe that You are the Creator of this whole universe and also the Sustainer. And we know, Lord, that You are God and there is nothing that is too hard for You. With Abraham we know that You are able to do that which You have promised. And we thank You, Lord, for Your promises. Lord, we desire to see Your work and Your hand working in our midst. We desire to see the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, those things that are in our lives that would hinder the flow of the Spirit or restrict the flow of the Spirit, Lord, we ask that You would work in removing them. For Lord, it is our desire that Your Spirit flow forth from our life like a torrent of living water, unrestricted. Just a full rich flow. And so, Lord, we commit now ourselves to You. We present our bodies as instruments through which You can do Your work. Fill us until we overflow with Your Spirit. And Lord, let Your love just flow forth out of our lives, touching the needs of those around us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Gift of Faith

1 Corinthians 12:9

Paul is talking about the diversities of the gifts of the Spirit and the various manifestations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:9, as he declares, ***“To another faith by the same Spirit.”*** This is the gift or the manifestation of faith.

Now there are different kinds of faith. There is what we call saving faith. In Ephesians 2, beginning with verse 8, Paul said, ***“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*** That is what we would call saving faith. The kind of faith that believes the promises of God that if we believe on Jesus Christ, we will be forgiven and cleansed of whatever sins we may have committed. This is the faith that brings us salvation and eternal life.

As John said in the opening of his Gospel, ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”*** (John 1:12-13). Then there is the Bible verse many of us have memorized at one time in our lives, John 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*** Again, these verses refer to saving faith. It is that faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. It is believing Jesus paid the price for our sins. It is believing the blood of Jesus Christ was shed as a sacrifice accepted by God-the sacrifice for our sins. As a substitute Jesus took our sins upon Himself, and died in our place that by our believing in Him we would not perish but have eternal life.

One of my favorite verses on saving faith is Romans 10:9-10, ***“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*** This refers again to saving faith.

When Paul was writing to the church in Romans 12:3, he said, ***“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”***

Many believe Paul's reference to that measure of faith was the saving faith God has dealt to every person. If anyone will exercise that measure of saving faith God has given to them, they will be saved from their sins and will have the gift of God which is eternal life.

In Hebrews 12, where it declares Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith, this also seems to be related to saving faith. And referring to that saving faith, we find it comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, according to Romans 10:17. Romans 10:14 asks: ***“For how can they believe on Him whom they have not heard?”*** So God has given to each one of us a measure of saving faith; if we exercise it we will be saved from the condemnation of our sin.

However, there is another kind of faith and it is the faith that trusts in the Word and in the promises of God. This is the faith that God's people have in God, in the Word of God that causes us to commit ourselves to the promises of God. We believe the promises of God, being assured by the promises of God and standing on the promises of God. This kind of faith the believer possess in the Word of God and the promises of God is what we have been looking at in our latest Sunday morning series in Hebrews 11, as it recalls the various things that people did who believed in God and who believed the promises of God. It lists the exploits of those men and women of faith. These are examples of the gift of faith Paul is talking about there in 1 Corinthians 12, and Hebrews 11 are great examples of what the gift of faith looks like in operation.

This is the kind of faith that is many times lacking in the followers of Jesus. You remember Mark's Gospel tells us in 16:14, that after Christ's resurrection, ***“Afterward Jesus appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.”***

They did not believe the witness of the women who said, "We have seen the Lord. We touched Him. We talked to Him. We saw Him face to face." So Jesus was rebuking and upbraiding them because of the hardness of their hearts to believe what He promised He would do and what the women declared He had done.

When Christ was walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He said to them in Luke 24:25, ***"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."*** "Here is God's Word," He says. "You have not believed or trusted the Word of God." So this is the childlike faith we are called to have as children of God to just simply trust God's Word and His promises. This is the kind of faith, I believe, that can be increased and does grow. Jude told the believers to ***"build themselves up in the most holy faith"*** (Jude 1:20). This kind of faith grows by experience through the years, as we pursue Him and as we experience the faithfulness of God in our lives as well as the lives of others. This is one reason testimonies can be so powerful because it can build and increase their faith in God and what He can do.

Acts 3 gives us a great example of the gift of faith in operation. Peter was going into the temple with John at about three o'clock in the afternoon. There was a man about forty years old who had never walked in his entire life, who was begging alms from the people going in to worship God. And Peter said to the man, "Look over here, and the man turned, expecting to receive some money. Peter responded in verse 6: ***"I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"*** ***Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them."***

So the people in the temple see all of this and say, "Is that the lame man who has been begging all these years out at the gate? It sure looks like him. What happened? How is it that he is walking?" So they followed him out to Solomon's porch and there they saw him grab hold of Peter and John and begin to hug and sort of dance up and down with them. And they suddenly related the fact that the man was talking to something Peter must have done in helping the man to walk.

When Peter saw all these people suddenly staring at him with this kind of awe and adoration, he said in verse 12: ***“People of Israel, he said, ‘what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness?’”*** But then, as he explained the miracle in Acts 3:16, he said, ***“Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes.”*** It was through the name of Jesus and faith in the name of Jesus that this man was now standing there healed of that infirmity of over forty years.

In other words, Peter is not saying it is my great faith, but he is acknowledging it was the faith that was given to him by Jesus, it was the gift of faith operating. It was the gift of faith given to Peter to say to the man, ***“What I have I give unto you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!”*** The faith given to Peter at that time was the supernatural gift of faith given to him by Jesus -- recognizing this was the gift of faith in operation that brought to pass this healing and miracle upon this lame man.

In Luke 17, Jesus was talking to His disciples one day concerning forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness. Beginning in verse 1: ***“One day Jesus said to His disciples, ‘There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. So watch yourselves! If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.’ The apostles said to the Lord, “Show us how to increase our faith.”*** In other words, they recognized that they could not forgive the way Jesus was commanding them to forgive; it was not natural. The natural bent is to get even or to have revenge. But the Lord was saying they were to forgive and they recognized they did not have that capacity on their own. And so their prayer was, ***“Show us how to increase our faith,”*** so that we can be obedient and forgive even as You tell us we are to forgive.”

And this seemed to open the door for Jesus to talk to them about this special gift of faith, when they said, “Lord, increase our faith.” For Jesus responded in Luke

17:6, ***“If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you!”*** Now that is pretty awesome. If they had faith as a grain of mustard seed-imagine what could you do if you had faith like an avocado seed?

And so Jesus seemed to talk to them about this gift of faith. The point being, it cannot be worked up. We can produce this kind of faith on our own. That is why it’s described as a gift of the Holy Spirit, we need to ask for it and then receive it. It just comes as a gift. It is just there. Suddenly you have the faith to believe and do what God says. Many times you just wonder, “What am I doing?” But the Lord just seems to give you the faith to go ahead and do it.

Another unique example of the gift of faith is found in Luke 5, beginning in verse 17: ***“One day Jesus was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, He said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’”*** Jesus responds not to the faith of the man lying on the mat in need of healing, Jesus responds to the faith of those who brought him. We can operate in the gift of faith on behalf of those who are in need of God’s intervention.

I know some people may disagree, but I do not think, in the New Testament days, the apostles had this gift of faith all the time for every situation; otherwise, we could go to the hospital and empty the place. I think that it came on special occasions, according to God's sovereign grace and work.

I don’t know of anybody who flowed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit that went around healing everyone, doing non-stop miracles, there were even times when Jesus was not able to flow in the gifts of healing because of people’s unbelief. For most of us there are unique times and circumstances that are all in God's control and He will manifest the gifting’s of the Holy Spirit according to His plans and purposes and not

our own. It is the same with a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge. It can be manifested in many different ways, according to the situations that you might be facing at certain times. So don't feel like unless you're operating in the gifting's non-stop that somehow you're failing. Those times are in God's hand as to when those gifting's are manifested.

We read in Acts 12 that Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he had James put to death. And when he saw that pleased the Jews, he put Peter in prison intending to bring him forth the next day and no doubt execute him. You'll remember an angel of the Lord came and awoke Peter commanded him to get dressed and follow him. And the doors opened of their own accord. When Peter got out in the street, the angel disappeared and suddenly he realized, "I am not dreaming! I am actually out of prison!"

And so he went to the house where the disciples were praying, knocked on the door and a little girl came to the door and said, "Who is it?" He said, "It is Peter. Let me in!" She was so excited she ran back to those who were in the prayer meeting and said, "Peter's outside." They said, "Ah, you are crazy. It must be a ghost. It cannot be Peter. He is in jail." But Peter continued to knock until they came and opened the door.

So James was beheaded and Peter was delivered by a miracle with an angel coming. Now why is that, it is not that James had less faith. Peter ultimately was crucified upside down. So the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not going to forever keep you from every kind of difficulty, trial, persecution or problem, but they will bring you through them with confidence and victory.

So as we pursue the increasing gift of faith, as we do all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, we also know God will work through us as He wills and decides when and where. We just need to be open and pursuing more and more of His power and presence in our lives, amen.

Prayer: Father, we thank You for the power of Your Holy Spirit. And You know, Lord, how our hearts long to see the power of Your Spirit manifested. And how thankful we are, Lord, that You have manifested and do manifest Your power in our midst. Lord, how thankful we are for the way that You have been working and for the

miracles and the healings that we have seen-the faith, Lord, and the gift of faith that has been at work. That kind of faith that just commits the keeping of our souls unto the faithful Creator and to Your wisdom. The faith that sees mountains moved and lives transformed. Lord, we look around and we see so many manifestations of Your love and of the power of Your Spirit. And for this, we give thanks. And now Lord, help us, as a church to move forward in faith. And Lord, when we are faced with obstacles that are too great for us to deal with, grant to us that faith that will believe and trust You to work and to remove those obstacles that Your work might go forward. Thank You, Lord, for the faith that can move sycamore trees and move mountains. May we experience that kind of faith in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Gifts of Healing

1 Corinthians 12:9

1 Corinthians 12:9 says, ***“to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.”***

Previously we looked at the gift of faith and as we discovered, in many instances in Scripture where you find the gifts of healing, the gift of faith can also be found in operation; not always, but many times you will.

The gifts of healing are given by God for the supernatural healing of sickness and disease without natural means from any other source. Every one of the nine spiritual gifts are supernatural. So any time you pray for someone and they are healed, the person receiving the healing is the one who has received the gift of healing. The Bible does not mention the gift of healers, only the gifts of healing. So the gifts of healing are manifested in those people who are healed.

Acts 10:38 says, ***“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.”*** Jesus ministered upon the earth not as the Son of God (although He was indeed the Son of God); He laid all the rights and privileges of the second person of the Trinity, and came among us in human flesh as a man. Jesus never ceased to be the Son of God but He chose to become the Son of Man, a title of His humanity. So when Jesus operated in any of the gifts of the Spirit, He did so as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. And that is really good news for us!

Jesus was just as much the Son of God when He was 25 as when He was 30 years old. Yet, at the age of 25, Jesus had not healed anyone (at least there is no biblical evidence of that). Jesus was just as much the Son of God when He was 29 as when He was 30; yet throughout His twenty-ninth year no one was healed. When Jesus was 30 - even on the day before He was baptized by John in the Jordan River and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him to anoint Him to minister - Jesus was just as

much the Son of God as He was afterwards. Yet until that happened, Jesus had never healed anyone. There was no manifestation of power operating in His life.

It was only after the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove to anoint Him to minister that these events began to happen. In fact, Jesus Himself never claimed to do the works. He said in John 14:10, ***“the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.”*** One time Jesus stood up and read in His local synagogue, ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed me . . .”*** (Luke 4:18). Although Jesus was always the Son of God, He never healed anyone until after He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power.

I say this because often times when it comes to living the Christian life or flowing in the gifts of the Spirit, I hear people say, “Oh I could never do that, I’m not Jesus.” Jesus wasn’t healing or exercising any of the gifts of the Spirit by some power which was inherent in Him as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, but rather He went about healing the sick, just as any other believer can minister healing to the sick today - by the anointing of the Holy Spirit through the manifestation of the gifts of healing. So this is something every believer can flow in as long as we have the Spirit of Christ living and flowing within us. We have that same Spirit that was in Jesus, enabling Him to do all the great works He did, therefore we can do all that Jesus did, by the same Spirit. Jesus said in John 14:12, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”*** Jesus went to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would come and indwell us and give us the same power to do all that Jesus did.

As previously mentioned, the gift of working of miracles was more prominent in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. The reverse is true when it comes to the gifts of healing. Gifts of healing were in operation in the Old Testament but are definitely more prevalent in the New Testament. I think this is because the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as exemplified in the life of Jesus, opened the door for more and greater moves of the Spirit by all believers. So as the Holy Spirit comes and indwells us as believers, it would stand to reason that we would see more manifestations of the Spirit in the realms of healing than we would in the Old Testament. There are

times in the Old Testament where people prayed for others and they were healed, (Miriam, Naaman, Abimelech).

Also, as with other gifts of the Spirit, there are times where more than one gift may be manifested. As I said earlier, there are times where when the gifts of healing are manifested you will also find the gift of faith in operation. In John 4, beginning in verse 48: ***“As Jesus traveled through Galilee, He came to Cana, where He had turned the water into wine. There was a government official in nearby Capernaum whose son was very sick. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, who was about to die. Jesus asked, ‘Will you never believe in Me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?’ The official pleaded, ‘Lord, please come now before my little boy dies.’ Then Jesus told him, ‘Go back home. Your son will live!’ And the man believed what Jesus said and started home. While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well. He asked them when the boy had begun to get better, and they replied, ‘Yesterday afternoon at one o’clock his fever suddenly disappeared!’ Then the father realized that that was the very time Jesus had told him, ‘Your son will live.’ And he and his entire household believed in Jesus. This was the second miraculous sign Jesus did in Galilee after coming from Judea.”***

So here you have at least two spiritual gifts in operation here: the gift of faith and the gifts of healing. Now one interesting dynamic with this particular healing miracle of Jesus is that the person who received the healing, the official’s son, was not even present. The official’s son is at least a day’s journey from where Jesus was and the official goes to Jesus on behalf of his son. Now this official wanted to bring Jesus back to his home, where his son was, so Jesus could heal him. For whatever reason, Jesus decides to just do it from a distance instead of going with the man. So the son, who is not even there at the time, is the one who received the gift of healing. That should be encouraging to those of us who pray for others not present here for the gift of healing to manifest within them.

Now the gift of faith here on the part of the official is truly a great example of the gift of faith in operation. This official comes to Jesus to take him with him and

instead all he gets is Jesus' word that his son is healed. There are no guarantees; no outward manifestation that the healing had actually occurred, all this man has is Jesus' word: ***“Go back home. Your son will live.”*** Now the Scriptures tell us that this boy was close to death, he's about to die. He could be so close to death that if Jesus didn't do something, he may have been dead by the time the man returned home. Now this man could have responded to Jesus saying, “Well thanks for the kind words, but could You still just come back with me, just in case?” So this man has no assurances outside of Jesus' word that his son was going to be okay. But based on the word of Jesus, this man walks away convinced that his son would live. That is the gift of faith. I believe Jesus that what you have said is true and it will happen just as you have spoken.

As a matter of fact, this man is so confident in Jesus' word that he waits until the next day to return home, that is how deep his faith was in Jesus' word. That is a strong gift of faith there. So often times you will find the gifts of healing and the gift of faith in tandem, the two working together. Again, not always, but more often than not, when the gifts of healing are being manifested, you will also find the gift of faith in operation as well.

One other interesting aspect to this particular gift of the Spirit is that both the words “gifts” and “healing” are both in the plural. This is the way it is in Greek as well. Now this is the only one of the nine gifts of the Spirit that are in the plural; all the other gifts are in the singular. So why is it “gifts of healing” rather than “gift of healing”? Some people are under the impression that the gift of healing is just given to a select few that can heal the sick. This is not what the scriptures meant nor does it conform to the biblical text in 1 Corinthians. Remember, these are gifts of the Holy Spirit, not our gifts. They are given as God wills, not according to our ability or merit. Paul said that the manifestation of spiritual gifts are given to each of us for the common good, or to meet the needs as they arise. Thus, there is not one gift given to one person to the exclusion of all the other gifts or all the other people. It is based on the needs present and the will of God. That is why Paul used a plural form of the word for gifts and for healing. There are many times where more than one healing is needed and more than one type of healing and so each healing is a separate gift, and

can be done by more than one person. So not just physical healing, but there can be emotional healing for someone who has had a traumatic experience.

I think of the leper Jesus healed in Luke 5. When you read the story there, beginning in verse 12, a leper comes to Jesus and says, **“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”** Now if you know anything about leprosy, that was unacceptable. Lepers were never allowed to approach anyone without leprosy for fear of infecting them. So they would be forced to live outside the cities, in leprosy camps, with other lepers, until they died. If by chance a leper came anywhere near a city or healthy people they were required to cry out loudly, “Unclean, unclean,” so anyone in close proximity would know to avoid them.

So as this leper approaches Jesus asking for healing, Jesus could have just spoken the word and said, “You are healed.” But Luke is very clear that Jesus touches the leper first. Verse 13: **“But Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be clean.’”** So in Jesus touching this man, who probably hasn’t been touched by anyone for a long time, because Luke says he was full of leprosy, which tells me this man has had it for a long time because leprosy usually starts in one small place on the body and then spreads. So the fact that he was full of leprosy, he has had this a long time. So for years this man has been cut off from any contact with other people, outside of those who also had leprosy.

I believe when Jesus touched this man, that touch from Jesus was an emotional healing, along with the physical healing in that he became clean. So you have really two healing happening in the same moment. That is partly what I think the plural nature of the meaning “gifts of healing” is intends to convey.

There are so more instances of Jesus healing people in the New Testament than there is time for me to cover. During the Fall Renew session I did an in-depth teaching on healing so there is a lot I have already said concerning this particular gift. However, let me mention a few healing Jesus did and why I think these are important healing.

In Mark’s gospel, Chapter 1, we see where Jesus comes from speaking in the synagogue to Peter’s house. He finds out that Peter’s mother-in-law is sick with a fever. Jesus takes her hand, lifts her up and she is made whole instantly. In fact, she

is made so much better that she starts cooking them dinner! Now how is that for healing? Now I choose this instance not because it was the most miraculous, but actually for the opposite reason. It was just a fever. It was not cancer, or leprosy, or bleeding that had lasted for years, but just a fever. To me it shows that Jesus cares about even the small things not just the big ones. He healed a fever.

The second example I want to show is found the story of the leper we just talked about in Luke's gospel. Again, a leper coming to Jesus and asking for healing. He said, "**Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean**". Here the leper is asking if the Lord is willing to heal. Jesus response should be the response that we all take to heart. He said, "**I am willing, be cleansed**". Immediately the leper was healed. From this passage we can see that God is willing for us to be healed. He is no respecter of persons, and He has not changed. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. So when it comes to the question of whether or not God is willing to heal us, the answer is in the book! "**I am willing, be cleansed**". I do not understand why some people receive healing and others don't, but I will stand by the book. You cannot find one place in the scriptures where a person came to Jesus and asked for healing and did not receive healing. It just is not there.

I believe that the proper use of the gifts of healing is both evangelistic and pastoral. Healing is supposed to be a sign that God is truly with us, that the Holy Spirit is real and powerful. When unbelieving people see sick people made well in the name of Jesus it tears down unbelief, skepticism, and cynicism. They cannot deny what they see before their very eyes as easily.

The gift of healing is also pastoral. Jesus, our good shepherd, cares about His sheep. Because of that care, He does not want his sheep to be unwell. That is why James told the people to call for the elders of the church when they are sick so that they can be prayed for and healed. (James 5:14-15). The gifts of healing is meant to both communicate the power of God to unbelievers, and the love of God to believers.

Now, after having said all that, I want you to know that I understand many people's concerns with this subject. I have and still do wrestle with certain issues like "what happens if I pray for somebody and they don't get healed?" or "why do some people get healed and others do not"? All I can say to those questions is the answers I

have come to myself. It is not my job to protect God's reputation. I do not understand why some people get healed and some people don't. It is a question I think will be fully understood when we get to heaven. Until then, we just continue to do what we are supposed to do when it comes to healing, believe and pray.

Prayer: Father, we thank You for the love of Jesus Christ towards us. And we thank You that He bore our sins and by His stripes we are healed. Lord, we come to You in our limitations. We do not fully know Your ways. We do not fully understand Your ways. Lord, we come to you as we are and we trust You and we believe in You. Lord, bring us to that place where You can do that which You are wanting to do. Give us, Lord, a greater openness to the working of Your Spirit. Take away any barrier, any restriction that might come from us that would hinder the flow of Your Spirit from our lives. Lord, help us, that we might be a witness to the world of the power and of the love of Jesus Christ. In His name, Father, we ask these things. Amen.

The Gift of Discerning Spirits

1 Corinthians 12:10

1 Corinthians 12:10 says, ***“to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits . . .”***

The ability to distinguish between spirits gives a believer insight into the spiritual realm. These nine gifts have been categorized in the following way: three of the nine spiritual gifts say something; three of the nine do something, and remaining three reveal something.

The three spiritual gifts that say something are also described as gifts of utterance. Those three spiritual gifts are: speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and prophecy.

The three spiritual gifts that do something are also described as power gifts. They are the gifts of faith, the working of miracles, and the gifts of healing. The three spiritual gifts that reveal something are also known as revelation gifts. They are the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits.

Now the most important of the three revelation gifts is the word of wisdom. Listed in the order of their importance they are: (1) the word of wisdom, (2) the word of knowledge, and (3) discerning of spirits. Everything within the realm of knowledge - facts, events, purpose, motive, origin, destiny; human, divine, or satanic; natural or supernatural; past, present, or future - all of these fall within the range of these three gifts.

The word of wisdom gives us a revelation of the mind and purpose of God. We can understand why this gift would rank first among the revelation gifts, because it is more important to have a revelation of the mind and purpose of God than anything else. One of the main distinctions between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge is the word of wisdom deals with the future; whereas the word of knowledge gives us revelation regarding things or events in the present or past.

The discerning of spirits gives believers insight into the spiritual realm. So it has a more limited range than the other two revelation gifts, because its revelation is

limited to a single class of objects - spirits. Revelations that the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge bring are broader and apply to people, places, and things, whereas the discerning of spirits gives supernatural insight into only the realms of spirits.

Scientists say there is much more space in an atom than there is in solid matter and because there is so much more space in an atom, some say it is theoretically possible for two worlds to coexist at the same time and at the same place - both of them passing through each other and both of them unconscious of the other's existence. All it would take is for them to be made up of a different molecular structure.

Now in a sense that is what the Bible teaches - that there are two worlds co-existing, passing through each other. For the most part we are not conscious of that other world. However, the Bible tells us that the other world (the spirit world) is very conscious of us. The spiritual realm is made up of a different structure. It is very probable that the resurrected body of Jesus was of a different molecular structure. Remember when the disciples were gathered in a room with the doors shut and locked, suddenly Jesus appeared in the room with them. So this world of spirits is a very real world and it has tremendous influence on all of our lives and the influence can be either for good or evil.

Let me be clear here: the discerning of spirits is not "discerning of demons" nor is it the "discerning of evil spirits." To imply that the discerning of spirits has to do only with demons or evil spirits is misleading. While it can include those, it is not just limited to those. The discerning of spirits is supernatural insight into the realm of spirits both good and bad. The discerning of evil spirits and demons is included, but too many people have discerning of evil spirits is all this gift refers to, and this is simply not true nor biblical.

So let me share with you a few biblical references where this gift of discerning spirits is used. One example is found in Exodus 33 where God let Moses look into the realm of the spirit. Beginning in verse 20: ***"But you may not look directly at My face, for no one may see Me and live." The Lord continued, 'Look, stand near Me on this rock. As My glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of***

the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove My hand and let you see Me from behind. But My face will not be seen.” This is an example of Moses seeing into the spirit realm. He was able to see the likeness of God.

Throughout the Word of God we encounter people who through visions have been able to see the likeness of God. They didn’t see God; they see His likeness. As He was revealed, they were seeing into the spirit realm world. Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:1, ***“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up . . .”*** this also was a manifestation of discerning of spirits.

The disciple John, in his vision on the Isle of Patmos, saw the Holy Spirit as seven spirits before the throne of God. That simply meant that John was seeing into the spirit realm and seeing seven aspects of the Spirit of God. All such visions would be a manifestation of the gift of discerning of spirits. A vision might bring with it a word of wisdom and/or a word of knowledge. But the vision itself would be an example of the gift of discerning of spirits in operation because that person would at that time be seeing into the spirit world. To “discern” means to “see,” so a person is discerning or seeing into the realm of spirits. And in the spirit world there are both divine spirits and evil spirits.

Discerning of spirits also means the discerning of cherubim, seraphim, archangels, the host of angels, or the discerning of Satan and his legions. It also refers to the discerning of the human spirit, with its good or evil tendencies. The gift of discerning of spirits also reveals the kind of spirit behind a supernatural manifestation - whether good or evil.

A great biblical example of this is found in 2 Kings, chapter 6, beginning in verse 8: ***“When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, ‘We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place.’ But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, ‘Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there.’ So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there. The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together***

and demanded, ‘Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?’

“It’s not us, my lord the king,’ one of the officers replied. ‘Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!’ ‘Go and find out where he is,’ the king commanded, ‘so I can send troops to seize him.’ And the report came back: ‘Elisha is at Dothan.’ So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

“When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. ‘Oh, sir, what will we do now?’ the young man cried to Elisha. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ Elisha told him. ‘For there are more on our side than on theirs!’ Then Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!’ The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

“As the Aramean army advanced toward him, Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, please make them blind.’ So the Lord struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked. Then Elisha went out and told them, ‘You have come the wrong way! This isn’t the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for.’ And he led them to the city of Samaria.

“As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, now open their eyes and let them see.’ So the Lord opened their eyes, and they discovered that they were in the middle of Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, ‘My father, should I kill them? Should I kill them?’ ‘Of course not!’ Elisha replied. ‘Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master.’

“So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their master. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.”
Elisha was able to see into the spiritual realm to know there were legions of angels upon horses and chariots of fire while his servant could not see them. Once Elisha

prayed and the Lord opened his eyes into the spiritual realm, he was able to see what Elisha saw. This is the discerning of spirits, in this case angelic spirits.

Concerning angels, the Bible teaches in Matthew 4:6, ***“He will order His angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.”*** Hebrews 1:14 states: ***“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”*** We are also aware of the Holy Spirit and His influence upon our life for good. He is convicting us of sin, drawing us nearer to Jesus, and conforming us more and more into the image of Christ.

However, there is another realm of spirit beings that are opposed to your walk in Christ. These spirit beings can be a very negative influence upon you. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** So there is a battle that goes on, a spiritual battle and we all experience this spiritual warfare. These forces or spirits of darkness can create a real problem for us as we seek to walk after the Spirit of God.

The other interesting aspect to these evil spirits is that they are able to come on as angels of light. So it is possible for a person to be deceived by these evil spirits, who, as 2 Corinthians 11 says, ***“Satan is able to transform himself as an angel of light.”*** His legions are able also to do the same and that is one reason why we need to have the gift of discerning of spirits.

A good example of this is found in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. In Acts 16, beginning in verse 16, ***“One day as we (Paul and Silas) were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.’ This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And instantly it left her.”***

By the discerning of spirits, Paul knew that this young woman who was following his group through the streets of Philippi had a spirit of divination. When the gift of discerning of spirits was in operation, Paul turned to her and spoke directly to the spirit, commanding it to come out of her. Notice that Paul dealt with the spirit involved; not the person, and after her deliverance, the girl couldn't tell fortunes anymore: that spirit of divination had left her.

Supernatural manifestations in the realm in which we live originate from one of two sources: God or the devil. Many things which seem miraculous to us actually do not come from God. We must not forget that Satan is a supernatural being also. Too often people are ready to follow anything, whether it is backed up by Scripture or not.

Sometimes the best way to find out what something is, is to find out what it is not. So let's look at some things the gift of discerning of spirits is not.

First, discerning of spirits is not "discernment." People say, "I have the gift of discernment." Actually, there is no such gift mentioned in the Bible. The Bible calls this gift the discerning of spirits. Many times what people refer to as the "gift of discernment" is really the gift of the word of knowledge in operation. People know things by the Spirit of God and mistakenly call it the gift of discernment.

Discerning of spirits is not a kind of spiritual "mind reading." Nor is it psychological insight, mental penetration, or the power to discern the faults in others; for this faultfinding. You don't even have to be converted to get this "gift." However, this "gift" is forbidden in the Scriptures. Matthew 7:1 says, "**Judge not, that you be not judged.**"

One purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to deliver us from this critical attitude and replace it with the gentle attitude of bearing one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ, as Galatians says. The gift of discernment is not a gift for faultfinding. If those who think they have this gift would just turn it on themselves for a few minutes, they would never use it that way again. The gift of discerning of spirits is not discerning of character or faults; it is not the discerning of people; it is the discerning of spirits.

The noted English Bible teacher, Howard Carter, wrote in Questions & Answers on Spiritual Gifts, “The word of knowledge gives one a revelation of anything that can be classified as existing or having existed, so the fact of a spirit possessing a body could be revealed by this gift, but the one so informed would have no vision of the spirit, he would not ‘discern’ it. By the discerning of spirits we see beyond the sphere for which we have been created, since we are natural beings. It is only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit that we can perceive the beings that live in the spirit world.”