

Gifts of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-25; Eph. 4:11.*

Memory Text: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (*1 Corinthians 12:1, 4*).

The New Testament introduces spiritual gifts as an endowment from Christ and imparted by the Holy Spirit. Though the Spirit is one, the gifts, or the manifestations of the Spirit, are many and diverse. These gifts of grace (*charismata*) are presented primarily in three different passages: Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12 through 14, and Ephesians 4:7-13. Probably even these examples, taken together, are not exhaustive but rather illustrative of spiritual endowments. These gifts were promised to the church when Jesus ascended to heaven (*Eph. 4:8, 11*).

No one individual in the church should expect to receive all the gifts of the Spirit. Neither should all the members expect to receive the same and identical gift or gifts. The New Testament likens the church, in which the manifestations of the Spirit appear, to the human body: different parts, doing different functions, yet all working together for a common goal.

This week we'll take a look at some of these gifts and how they are manifested in the church.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 13.*

The Church as the Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-25 and then answer the following questions:

1. For what reason is the Spirit given to the church?

2. What seems to be Paul's main concern here?

3. What is the role of the Spirit as depicted by Paul?

4. What point was Paul making through his use of the human body as an analogy for work of the Spirit in the church?

Through the Spirit we have been born again and become members of the body of Christ. Through the rite of baptism by immersion we then joined a local church. However, the members of the body of Christ, or of the church, are no more alike than are the different organs of the body. It's very important not to try to make each one a carbon copy of another. We should rejoice in our diversity of gifts.

Nevertheless, just as all the organs are part of the same body and serve a very definite purpose in it, the church we have joined will not be complete or constitute a body without all its different members. That's because, like a human body, we need these different parts; we need different people who can do different things.

At the same time, too, diversity is not the same as disunity. As Paul's analogy shows, though the parts of the body are different, look different, and work differently, they are all working in unity for a common purpose. All the work done for the Master by different people with different gifts is to be connected with the great whole.

In your own experience, what's the greatest cause of disunity among us? Is it because we are all different and have different gifts, or is it because of something else? If so, what?

Wisdom and Knowledge

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8, 9).

How interesting that in the above text, the “word of wisdom” and the “word of knowledge” are seen as gifts of the Spirit. We often tend to think of those as acquired, what we learn through study and/or through the toils and lessons of life. Yet, the two ideas are not in contradiction. Some people can read and study and go through life and come away with no real “knowledge” or “wisdom,” at least as the Bible defines those things (*Prov. 1:7, 9:10*). Thus, we need the Holy Spirit to give us knowledge and wisdom, as the Bible defines those words.

How does 2 Timothy 3:7 help us understand the need of the Spirit for biblical wisdom and knowledge?

It’s sad, but true, that through history some of the “greatest” Bible scholars didn’t believe the truths of the Bible. They might have been world-renowned experts in the original languages and maybe even have been unsurpassed in their knowledge of biblical history. But the spiritual wisdom and knowledge about God found in those texts was completely lost on them. What a waste!

Read 1 Corinthians 2:5-7. What is the wisdom referred to here? Why do we need the Spirit to know it?

Look at the contrast Paul puts between different kinds of knowledge and wisdom. Notice, too, how he contrasts the wisdom of the world with the “power” of God. That’s important, because the wisdom of God is life-changing. It brings power and change in our lives; it’s not just facts and propositions. It’s a life-changing power that comes only from the Holy Spirit working in us. This is something all worldly knowledge and wisdom can never perform.

What kind of knowledge has changed your life? What kind hasn’t? What can you learn from your answers?

Miracles and Healings

The gifts of the Spirit will remain in the church until Jesus returns. This includes the gift of healing, as well as the gift of working miracles (*1 Cor. 12:8-10*). Yet, we do not regard it appropriate for a Christian to refuse medical help, expecting God to heal a person's disease by a miracle without his or her having done anything to remedy the condition. God does not use miracles extravagantly or uselessly. "What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 535.

1 Corinthians 12:10 talks about "the working of miracles." How are we to understand what this means?

Miracles, someone once said, are deemed miracles only because of their infrequency. If, for instance, the sun rose only once every thousand years, those who saw it would believe they had witnessed a miracle. Because we see it rise all the time, we deem it just an ordinary occurrence—despite how "miraculous" it really is. Imagine someone who never before saw a cell phone in his or her life: How miraculous it would seem to that person to actually hear a voice come through this little box!

What are some other "common" things that, under other circumstances, might be deemed "miraculous"? What can we learn from these that can help us better understand the nature of miracles?

While "miracles," no doubt, can strengthen our faith, a faith that depends upon them is no real faith at all (*Luke 16:31*). Perhaps some of us have seen what could be deemed "miracles"; maybe for others, the greatest "miracle" is the change in their life brought about by the power of God working in them. Though the Holy Spirit can, in His divine wisdom, perform miracles (*see Matt. 12:28*) whenever He chooses, the manifestation of "miracles" is no proof God is working any more than the lack of "miracles" is proof God is not present with us.

What miracles has God wrought in your life? Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

Prophecy and Government

Read Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; and Ephesians 4:11. What one gift is mentioned in each of these sections?

A prophet is a spokesperson for God. Even after ancient Israel became a monarchy, it was the prophet who received messages and instruction from God. These he or she was to convey to the king. The prophet, consequently, is God's spokesperson to the people as the minister is humanity's spokesperson to God. The content of the message is not primarily predictive but may be any message that God desires to give His people at any particular time, whether it pertains to the past, the present, or the future. The church of God today, as in days of old, needs instruction from God. The principal agent by which this instruction is given is the prophet.

In addition to prophets who receive instruction from God, what is needed in the church to execute the relayed divine plans in efficient administration? *1 Cor. 12:28.*

The Revised Standard Version translates "administrators" instead of "governments." Although the gospel work is God's, some human agent must direct it under God's guidance.

What instances in the apostolic church indicate that God works through appointed agencies in His organized church? *Acts 9:10-17, 13:1-3.*

"The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church. Years before, when the divine purpose concerning Paul was first revealed to him by the Saviour Himself, Paul was immediately afterward brought into contact with members of the newly organized church at Damascus. . . . And now, when the divine commission given at that time was to be more fully carried out, the Holy Spirit, again bearing witness concerning Paul as a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, laid upon the church the work of ordaining him and his fellow laborer."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 162, 163.

Why has God committed the direction of His work on earth to His church rather than primarily laying the burden on solitary individuals?

Tongues (Revisited)

“The gift of tongues, as prophecy and miracles, has a counterfeit. The original gift on the day of Pentecost consisted of perfectly spoken human languages. Uttering sounds that cannot be identified with any human language is not a perversion of but a counterfeit of the genuine.”—*Handbook of SDA Theology*, vol. 12, p. 619.

As we saw in an earlier lesson, it seems clear that “tongues” mentioned here denotes foreign languages, because that was clearly the way the gift was manifested at Pentecost and on subsequent recorded occasions (see *Acts 2, 10:44-46, 11:15, 19:6*).

Why should the gift of tongues be so important to the early church?

Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:8.

In the early church there was a need for the gift of tongues, or a mastery of foreign languages. The gospel had to be communicated to the world, and most of the postascension Christians did not possess a command of foreign languages.

Who spoke more often in tongues than anyone else? *1 Cor. 14:18.*

What do you think he meant by this statement?

In his evangelization among the heathen, Paul constantly had to use a tongue other than his native Aramaic—the common language of the Jews in the day of Jesus and the apostles. Corinth was a large seaport and commercial city with people from many parts of the Roman Empire. It seems that some in the Corinthian church boastfully used languages that some other members could not readily understand. Paul admonished them not to do so, unless they had an interpreter, since no one in the congregation, other than the speaker, could be edified by it (see *1 Cor. 14:4*).

What are some types of counterfeits you have encountered or known about? What can you learn from them that can help protect you from other spiritual counterfeits you might face?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 33–35; vol. 5, pp. 236–238; *Christ's Object Lessons*, “Hidden Treasure,” pp. 112–114; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 624, 625; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 160–165; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 243–245.

“Paul taught that the gifts—including prophecy, teaching, apostleship, evangelism, speaking in tongues, and working of miracles—were to be exercised by Christians from all walks of life. From his letter to the Corinthians it is evident that some misused them, especially that of speaking in tongues.

“While in some quarters great significance is attached to speaking in tongues, the NT makes it clear that other gifts are more important to the well-being of the church. Paul recommends the gift of prophecy as the most desirable. Therefore, a major portion of this article is given to a discussion of this gift.”—*Handbook of SDA Theology*, vol. 12, p. 610.

“The Jews had been scattered to almost every nation, and spoke various languages. . . . This diversity of languages was a great obstacle to the labors of God’s servants in publishing the doctrine of Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. That God should supply the deficiency of the apostles in a miraculous manner was to the people the most perfect confirmation of the testimony of these witnesses for Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 242, 243.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, talk about your answers to Tuesday’s final question. What is your understanding of just what a “miracle” is? What does the reality of miracles do for your faith? What danger is there in relying on miracles for faith?
- ❷ As a class, talk about the role and ministry of Ellen White and the gift of prophecy. How does the manifestation of this gift help us understand what the purpose of spiritual gifts in general should be for the church?
- ❸ Talk about the spiritual gifts of the members of the class. What can you do to help affirm one another in those gifts, as well as help one another put them to good use?

The Students Wouldn't Quit

Rosa Marten

The Adventist seminary in Cuba stands near a poor barrio (neighborhood) outside of Havana. A high crime rate in the area has left the people suspicious of strangers. So when some young people arrived in the barrio, people told them to get out and not come back.

The visitors were seminary students who had come to share God's love, and they were not willing to let the neighbors' comments discourage them. They prayed fervently for God's leading and tried again. They invited the children to sing songs and hear stories about Jesus. And the children came.

The parents were amazed at the changes they saw in their children, and they invited the seminary students to return.

The students met a woman named Anita, who was willing to study the Bible with them. A group of students began visiting her regularly. When her husband became sick, the students prayed with him.

Anita's relatives warned her that reading the Bible was bad luck, and when her husband became sick they said, "We told you so." But he accepted Jesus as his Savior and urged Anita to be faithful. When he died, the students comforted Anita with Bible promises and cried and prayed with her.

Anita wanted to keep the Sabbath, but she feared losing her job in a factory. Finally she decided to keep the Sabbath and be baptized. She says that the love of the seminary students had drawn her to Christ. Anita has filled her once-empty life with activities in the church, including helping with children's ministries and outreach to her neighbors. When she met a family who wanted to know more about Jesus, she introduced them to the seminary students and opened the way for the family to come to church.

Anita has opened her home as a *casa culto*, or house church, for neighborhood worships. Her friends say that Anita sought Christ in the darkest time of her life, and now she shines as a light to those around her.

Your generous mission offerings each week support a wide variety of outreach around the world.

Rosa Marten (not her real name) has completed her studies at the Adventist seminary and is working as a Bible worker in Cuba.