

# 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?

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

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

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

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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?**

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**Key Text:** *Ephesians 4:11-13*

**Teachers Aims:**

1. To emphasize the benefits of diversity within the church.
2. To explore the differences and needs of the spiritual gifts discussed in this week's lesson.

**Lesson Outline:**

**I. The Holy Spirit's Use of Diversity for the Benefit of the Whole**

(*1 Cor. 12:7-25*)

- A. Different gifts meet different needs.
- B. No one gift or person in a church is more important than another.

**II. Some Gifts of the Holy Spirit** (*1 Corinthians 12*).

- A. Wisdom and knowledge.
  1. God's wisdom is powerful.
  2. Knowledge becomes understanding only through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Miracles and Healing.
  1. Divine intervention can come in the form of miracles and healings in any area of our existence.
  2. Miracles and healings are the processes that God has designed and guided since the beginning of time.
- C. Prophecy and Administration.
  1. God calls spokespersons to speak to humanity.
  2. God organizes agencies to assist believers in accomplishing the Great Commission.
- D. Tongues.
  1. Clearly spoken human language is needed to spread the gospel.
  2. Gibberish is a counterfeit of true tongues.

**Summary:** Church bodies should value all spiritual gifts, whether they are publicly or privately expressed. Individually, we should strive for a deeper relationship and a more willing heart so that we might be open to whatever spiritual gift(s) the Holy Spirit chooses for us to use. As your faith grows, you may find that you develop new gifts, while some of your other gifts may seem to fade. Remember that the Holy Spirit's goal is to draw all people unto Christ and that will often require different gifts at different times.

**COMMENTARY**

**Introduction**

Paul wrote, "Now, concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant" (*1 Cor. 12:1*). At the heart of his presentation on spiritual gifts, he embeds the most comprehensive and sublime description of spiritual love to be found anywhere in Scripture (*see 1 Corinthians 13*). Spiritual gifts of whatever variety or combination are given as vehicles to manifest divine love in redemptive ministry and are not to exhibit spiritual status.

**I. The Church as the Body**

God has decreed that through His church on earth, He will make manifest to all the universe His wisdom, and the inexhaustible benefits and joys of Christian fellowship. (*See Eph. 3:8-10.*) Part of God's plan in distributing various gifts to each member of the church is to demonstrate that His gospel-transformed people can work in noncompetitive harmony with one another toward a common goal—the evangelizing and spiritual nurturing of the world. He varies His gifts from member to member to teach us how to work in loving, appreciative cooperation with one another, each

## 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?

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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?

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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?**

esteeming others better than ourselves. No believer stands as a complete unit, possessing the full array of gifts to render complete Christian service independently of Christ's body, the church. It is not Christ's purpose that we should become self-exalted through our gifts (as Lucifer did), but self-transcending in our service as we merge with Him and His church to fulfill its calling as God's "appointed agency for the salvation of men."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

## II. Wisdom and Knowledge

Solomon declared, "When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom" (*Prov. 11:2*; see also *Matt. 11:25*). (Note: "Shame", in Hebrew, is *kawlone*, which means confusion, dishonor, ignominy, or reproach.) The gift of wisdom places one in intimate contact with God's mind (see *Prov. 3:14-23*; *1 Cor. 1:30, 31*) and in a position to glorify Him by living and teaching in harmony with His law and purpose. Christ used His matchless wisdom to save humans, and place them on a footing of honor to serve Him with capability and distinction. Wisdom, unless it is eternally linked with a personal knowledge of God and His ways, can degenerate into self-sufficiency and scheming. (See *Ezek. 28:1-17*; *Rom. 11:33*; *1 Cor. 13:1, 2*; *Eph. 1:17, 18*; *Col. 1:9, 10*.) For Christians, constant growth in wisdom and knowledge is indispensable for us to understand how to serve God and how to recognize and repudiate Satan's deceptions—especially those that come in religious disguise. (See *2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15*; *2 Thess. 2:1-12*.) Closely allied with the gifts of wisdom and knowledge is the gift of "discerning of spirits" (*1 Cor. 12:10*), which is indispensable in these days of advanced spiritual delusion. (See *Matt. 24:24*; *2 Tim. 4:1-3*.)

## III. Miracles and Healing

The gifts of miracles and healing are not offered as a substitute for compliance with God's natural and spiritual laws. God has through all ages worked miracles to help override stupendous obstacles or compensate for the lack of critically needed resources. At the end of time, when God's people are brought into strait places through persecution and the general disintegration of society, He will work miraculously once again through His people and on their behalf as He did in the apostolic era.

"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. . . .

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from

## 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?

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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?

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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.**

heaven in the sight of men. *Revelation 13:13*. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

“The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.

## Inductive Bible Study

**Texts for Discovery:** *1 Corinthians 12:8, Ephesians 4:11-13*

❶ The New Testament view of the church champions diversity in the variety of gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the church. At the same time, however, the New Testament calls for unity. How can we make allowances for this diversity while preserving necessary unity? For example, we can observe how human society seems to gravitate between extremes of tolerance and intolerance. How can this be avoided in a church that is composed of human beings?

❷ The Bible refers to wisdom and knowledge as spiritual gifts. What is the difference between these concepts as seen in the Bible and the human concepts of wisdom and knowledge we commonly use in secular life? Does the fact that a person has a great capacity for such secular knowledge necessarily mean that he or she has the spiritual gift of knowledge if that person becomes a Christian? Or is the spiritual gift a completely separate category?

❸ The Bible teaches us that God will provide for our needs (*see Psalm 23, Matt. 6:25-34*). Does that mean He will do miracles for us? Is it a sign of weak faith to seek out common sources of help, such as modern medicine, if we are ill? Under what circumstances might God work a miracle for us in order to provide for our needs?

❹ Why are church leaders not necessarily prophets, and why are prophets not necessarily church leaders? Is it logical to say that if the church is to be guided by God, it should be led by those people who are most directly guided by God? Where is the flaw in this reasoning?

❺ While many churches—virtually all charismatic and Pentecostal—claim the gift of tongues, it seems fairly clear that their definition bears little or no relation to the gift of tongues given to the apostles in Acts 2. As such, their definition can be considered counterfeit. What are the dangers in allowing oneself to believe in things that are clearly untrue, even if they seem trivial at first glance?

## 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?**



#### IV. Prophecy and Government

Prophets are the “eyes” of the church, to guide it in the paths of righteousness through the treacherous terrain of this sin-darkened world. (See *2 Pet. 1:19-21*.) This is why Paul attributes such high value to the gift of prophecy. (See *1 Cor. 14:1, 4, 5, 32*.) This gift would have flourished unchecked among believers if the church had not departed from the law of God during the post-apostolic ages of apostasy. (See *Lam. 2:9; Mic. 3:5-7*.) The gift is restored when the law is once more honored. (See *Rev. 19:10*.)

The gift of government (administration) is essential for the maintenance of gospel order, and the most effective allocation of the church’s talents and resources. This gift sets the seal to the

## Witnessing

*Adverse selection* is a term used in the business world. It means to select only those risks that appear acceptable. Another way of looking at it is the de-selection of unacceptable risks.

*Cloning*, the act of scientifically reproducing an exact replica of the original, is another example of humanity’s fixation with producing only the best and eliminating the weak. While *adverse selection* and *cloning* eliminate what is financially unacceptable or genetically weak, history will prove in the long-run the wisdom of implementing these strategies and controversial technologies. The purpose of mentioning them here is not to argue for or against them but instead to show how the world’s thinking contrasts with the Bible’s attitude toward weakness. Instead of eliminating it, Jesus embraces our weakness, saying to us as He did to Paul, “My **grace** is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (*2 Cor. 12:9, emphasis supplied*).

In our lesson this week, Paul reminds us that although our bodies have many different parts, they all work together for a common purpose: maintaining a healthy human body. While some parts are more visible and well-known, the hidden, lesser known ones carry the same important purpose. *All* parts are essential for the body to function as intended, the strong members and the lesser, or weaker, members.

The same is true for the church body: women and men of different backgrounds, cultures, and races all working together in one common goal, which is to grow into and to nurture a healthy, vibrant, living church whose Head is Jesus Christ and whose ultimate goal is the kingdom of heaven.

No two individuals are alike. God created each as unique beings. In His great wisdom, He knows that our differences complement and strengthen the whole. Once we open our hearts completely to Him, He will help us treasure and prize one another’s contributions, and our differences become precious gifts that are shared with one another and our church!

## 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.*

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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?**

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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?**

validity of the church as God’s heaven-ordained agency organized to carry the gospel to the world. In the days of Moses, the church in the wilderness (*Acts 7:38*) was carefully administrated by men of wisdom, discernment, and integrity, and so is it in the New Testament dispensation. (*See Deut. 1:15-17, Acts 6:1-7, 15:1-35.*)

## Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** “We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (*1 Cor. 12:13, NIV*). What part of Christ’s body are you? How do your spiritual gifts bless and empower the ministry of your church? In what ways does your service for Jesus make your church more dynamic and give your life purpose, fulfillment, and joy?

### Thought Questions:

**1** Definitions of the word *wisdom* usually include such words as “knowledge,” “good judgment,” and “experience.” Proverbs defines it this way: “Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding” (*Prov. 10:13*). It also says, “The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook” (*Prov. 18:4, emphasis supplied*). As members of the church learn about and employ their spiritual gifts, why is it important that they have support and guidance? Who are you mentoring in ministry?

**2** As a class, review 1 Corinthians 12:7-25, Ephesians 4:7-13, and Romans 12:4-8. Make a list of the spiritual gifts that are mentioned. What others are implied in Scripture? For example, martyrdom is discussed in 1 Peter 4:12, 13 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Celibacy is found in 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 27. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? What happens when they are misused or counterfeited? Consider the false use of such gifts as speaking in tongues and performing miracles. What has God done to protect us from error? How does the Holy Spirit guide our understanding and the use of our spiritual gifts?

### Application Question:

Compare the best job you ever had with the worst. What made the difference? Paul encourages us to use our spiritual gifts “generously” and “cheerfully” (*see Rom. 12:6-8, NIV*). What makes the difference between passion and enthusiasm in ministry and a ministry of drudgery and discontent? How do the people in your church family affirm and support the ministry of each individual church member? Why does encouragement and support make such a difference? Consider how you can bring joy to a Sabbath School teacher, outreach worker, and others this week. How will this make their service more rewarding?

**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:

- 1 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?
- 2 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?
- 3 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?