

CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS BODY
(A Study of Spiritual Gifts)
Dennis McBride - 1993-94
Revised 7/97

Note: Click on the Navigation Plane icon in the Adobe Acrobat Reader tool bar, then click on a bookmark to proceed to the corresponding section of this study.

I. WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

- A. They are Christ's gifts to His Body**
- B. They are given by the Holy Spirit**
- C. They are given to every Christian**
- D. They enable Christians to render spiritual service within the Body of Christ**
- E. Their primary purpose is to edify the Body of Christ**
- F. They are not natural abilities**
- G. They are a stewardship responsibility**
- H. They are not necessarily indicators of spiritual maturity**

II. WHY ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS IMPORTANT?

- A. They bring health and maturity to the Body of Christ**
- B. They provide examples for other Christians to follow**
- C. They provide practical expressions of Christian love**

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- D. They should not be valued over Christian love**

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CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS BODY

(A Study of Spiritual Gifts)

Selected Scriptures - Dennis McBride

(1994 - Updated 7/97)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Spiritual gifts are taught throughout the New Testament. The primary texts are:

- a. ***Rom. 12:3-8*** - "Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

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

- b. ***1 Cor. 12:1-14*** - "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether

Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”

- c. **Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16** - “To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men’ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

NOTE: Paul is referring to gifted men given to the church for the maturing of the saints and the overall edification of Christ’s Body.

- d. **1 Pet. 4:10-11** - “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

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

NOTE: “A special gift” does not necessarily mean that each believer receives only one spiritual gift. More likely it refers to a blend of giftedness that is individually suited to each believer. It is similar to saying everyone has “a personality.” One’s personality is a blend of many character traits.

2. *The key questions we will address in this study:*

- a. What are spiritual gifts?
- b. Why are spiritual gifts important?
- c. How do spiritual gifts operate?
- d. What is the duration of spiritual gifts?
- e. What are the categories of spiritual gifts?
- f. What is the role of gifted leaders?

- g. How are individual spiritual gifts defined and applied?

I. WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

A. THEY ARE CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS BODY (The Church)

1. **Rom. 12:4-6** - "Just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly."
2. **Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16** - "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift . . . [and] we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

B. THEY ARE GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Cor. 12:4-7, 11 - "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . . But one and *the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*"

C. THEY ARE GIVEN TO EVERY CHRISTIAN

1. **Rom. 12:6** - "Since *we have gifts* that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each* exercise them accordingly."
2. **1 Cor. 12:7, 11** - "*To each one* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . . One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing [spiritual gifts] *to each one individually* just as He wills."
3. **Eph. 4:7** - "*To each one of us* grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."
4. **1 Pet. 4:10-11** - "*As each one has received a special gift*, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

D. THEY ENABLE CHRISTIANS TO RENDER SPIRITUAL SERVICE WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

1. **1 Cor. 12:4-7** - “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good.*”
2. **1 Pet. 4:10** - As each one has received a special gift, *employ it in serving one another*, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

E. THEIR PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO EDIFY (BUILD UP) THE BODY OF CHRIST

1. **1 Cor. 14:12** - “Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, *seek to abound for the edification of the church.*”
2. **1 Cor. 14:26** - “What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. *Let all things be done for edification.*”
3. **Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16** - “To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift . . . [and] we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to *the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*”

F. THEY ARE NOT NATURAL ABILITIES

Natural abilities (e.g., intelligence, singing, physical prowess) are God-given and can be sanctified and used by the Holy Spirit. However, they are present in believers and non-believers alike, whereas spiritual gifts are present in believers only.

G. THEY ARE A STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITY

1. **In 1 Pet. 4:10** Peter exhorts his readers to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
2. **A steward is someone who cares for and dispenses the goods and/or property of another.**

- a. Every Christian is a steward of the spiritual gifts God has given to him.
- b. Stewardship implies that a Christian can neglect his gifts and let them languish.
 - 1) That is the implication of 2 Tim. 1:1-7, wherein Paul exhorts Timothy to stir up the gift that is within him.
 - 2) It is also implied in the character of the Corinthian Christians who misused their gifts.
- c. Because we are stewards of our spiritual gifts, we should never be prideful or boastful about them. Our attitude should always be one of humility and thanksgiving for the privilege of ministering our gifts in service to our Lord.
- d. Each Christian should strive to maximize their gifts.

H. *THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY INDICATORS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY*

- 1. *Spiritual gifts are given to every believer regardless of his or her spiritual maturity. Therefore, the mere presence of spiritual gifts does not indicate maturity.*
- 2. *For example, the Corinthian believers lacked no gift, yet Paul had to correct many sins within that congregation because they were spiritually immature.*

1 Cor. 1:4-9 - "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

- 3. *Spiritual maturity is evident in how the believer ministers his or her spiritual gifts.*

II. WHY ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS IMPORTANT?

A. THEY BRING HEALTH AND MATURITY TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

Every gift is important and every Christian is a vital part of Christ's overall plan for His church. To the degree that believers faithfully minister their gifts, the Body of Christ is strong and effective.

Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16 - "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift . . . [and] we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to *the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*"

B. THEY PROVIDE EXAMPLES FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS TO FOLLOW

- 1. Christ is the supreme role model of all spiritual gifts, in that they find their fullest expression in Him.*
- 2. Similarly, we are to be role models of our own specific gifts so that other Christians are encouraged and instructed by our example.*

Not every Christian has the same gifts, therefore we learn how to serve the Lord more effectively as we observe one another's gifts at work.

C. THEY PROVIDE PRACTICAL EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

- 1. The most significant thing you can do to edify others is to minister your spiritual gifts in love. That's why the Holy Spirit gave them to you.*
- 2. Note the apostles' priorities in Acts 6:1-7*

"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, '*It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.*' But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we

may put in charge of this task. *But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*'

“And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

“And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

Note: The apostles would not permit their primary ministries to be diluted--even by otherwise good things.

III. HOW SHOULD SPIRITUAL GIFTS OPERATE?

A. THEY SHOULD OPERATE IN HUMILITY AND LOVE

1. *Spiritual gifts, humility, and love are blended in Rom. 12:3-11 (especially verses 3, 9-11):*

“Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. . . . Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

2. *The emphasis of 1 Cor. 12-14 is the permanence and primacy of love over spiritual gifts.*
3. *Eph. 4:15 - Speaking the truth in love edifies and matures Christ's Body.*

B. THEY SHOULD NOT BE MINISTERED IN THE FLESH

Paul commended the Corinthians for “not lacking in any gift” (1 Cor. 1:7), but rebuked them for acting “fleshy” rather than spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Their ministries were motivated by pride rather than Christian love, and were therefore characterized by jealousy and strife rather than edification.

C. *THEY SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED OR NEGLECTED*

The implication of 2 Tim. 1:6 (“Kindle afresh the gift that is in you”) is that Christians can neglect their gifts. That is also born out in Christian experience. Therefore we must be diligent to cultivate and use our gifts at every opportunity.

D. *THEY SHOULD NOT TO BE VALUED OVER CHRISTIAN LOVE*

1. *Where the Holy Spirit is at work, Christian love will be evident. Therefore, as highly as we may value spiritual gifts, Christian love must always be our primary focus.*

2. *The Corinthians, like many Christians today, sought certain spiritual gifts to the neglect of Christian love.*

They also valued certain gifts over others, thereby crippling the Body of Christ. Paul dedicated much of 1 Corinthians to correcting that error.

3. *It isn't wrong to value spiritual gifts, but they must be kept in proper balance.*

a. *1 Cor. 12:11* - The Holy Spirit takes the initiative in distributing gifts as He sees fit.

b. *1 Cor. 12:31* - Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to “earnestly desire the greater gifts,” can be translated either as indicative (i.e., “You are earnestly desiring the greater [more showy] gifts”), or as imperative (i.e., “You should eagerly desire the greater gifts”).

1) It would be inconsistent for him, after having given instruction on the importance of every gift (1 Cor. 12:1ff) to then tell them to seek the greater gifts. Therefore, it is likely that he was rebuking them for desiring certain gifts over others (i.e., giving a disproportionate amount of attention to tongues, and expressing the gift in inappropriate ways). Apparently the many were envious of what the few had to offer, to the neglect of other gifts. That's why he had to clarify the purpose and practice of tongues within the local assembly.

- 2) Another possibility is that Paul was instructing them to seek the manifestation of the foremost gifts when the church assembled for corporate worship (e.g., for the ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers - 1 Cor. 12:28).
 - a) **1 Cor. 14:1** - Refers to the priority of love and prophecy when the church gathers for corporate worship.
 - b) The manifestation of certain gifts should be sought in the context of the local assembly, but not on an individual level.

IV. WHAT IS THE DURATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

A. THERE ARE THREE PROMINENT VIEWS

1. All spiritual gifts are still operative today.
2. No spiritual gifts are operative today.
3. Some spiritual gifts are operative today.

B. THE PREFERRED VIEW

This study presents biblical support for the view that *some* spiritual gifts are operative today.

C. THE BIBLICAL RATIONALE

Understanding the discontinuation of some spiritual gifts requires understanding their role in accompanying and affirming biblical revelation.

1. The progression of divine revelation

- a. God spoke uniquely through unique individuals (What He said is called “divine revelation”)
 - 1) **Heb. 1:1-2** - “God, after He spoke long ago to *the fathers in the prophets* in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in *His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

- 2) **2 Pet. 1:20-21** - “Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation [origin], for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*”
- 3) **2 Pet. 3:15-16** - “Regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, *as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*, to their own destruction.”

b. But divine revelation has never been ongoing.

- 1) Old Testament revelation came to an end.

There were four hundred years of silence between the Old and New Testaments.

- 2) New Testament revelation came to an end.

Rev. 22:18-19 - “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

John specifically states that no prophetic additions are to be tolerated.

c. As it pleased Him, God confirmed new revelation with miraculous signs.

For example:

- 1) **Through Moses - Exodus 3-4**
- 2) **Through the apostles - Mark 16:20** - “They [the disciples] went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and *confirmed the word by the signs that followed.*”

Heb. 2:3-4 - “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, *it was confirmed to us by those who heard*, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

2. ***The uniqueness of the Apostolic Era***

- a. The church was in its infancy.
- b. The New Testament scriptures were being revealed.
- c. The apostles and prophets were foundational to the revelatory process and to the church.

- 1) ***Eph. 2:19-20*** - “You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.”

(It is likely that “prophets” here refers to the New Testament prophets. However, it could also include the Old Testament prophets, through whom came Old Testament revelation. Their writings, coupled with those of the New Testament apostles and prophets, constituted biblical revelation.)

- 2) ***Eph. 4:11-12*** - Jesus “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.”

- 3) ***1 Cor. 12:28*** - “God has appointed in the church, *first apostles*, *second prophets*, third teachers.”

- d. The apostles and their close associates were uniquely gifted men.

- 1) ***Acts 2:41-43*** - The 3,000 who had been saved on the Day of Pentecost “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many *wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.*” (Not through every believer, but through the apostles.)

2) **Acts 14:3** - During their First Missionary Journey, Paul and Barnabas “spent a long time [in Iconium] speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was *bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.*”

3) **Acts 8:4-8** - “Those who had been scattered [from Jerusalem because of persecution from Saul of Tarsus] went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, *as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.*”

“For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was much rejoicing in that city.”

4) **Rom. 15:18-19** - Paul said, “I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, *in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit;* so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum [modern Yugoslavia] I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”

5) **Mark 16:14-20** - Following His resurrection, and after He had appeared to Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, Jesus “appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table. . . . And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

“And these *signs* will *accompany* those who have believed [*lit. “the believing ones”*]: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’

“So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them [the disciples], He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

“And they [the disciples] went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that *followed*.”

- a) Question: Does this passage apply to all believers or to the apostolic community only?

I believe it refers to the apostolic community--primarily the apostles themselves.
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- b) If we maintain that it refers to *all* believers, we contradict Paul’s clear teaching that all believers are *not* apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, tongues speakers, or interpreters of tongues (1 Cor. 12:29-30).

- c) Note that Mark 16:20 is written in the *past tense*:

“And they [the disciples] *went out* and *preached* everywhere, while the Lord *worked* with them, and *confirmed* the word by the signs that *followed*.”

Apparently those miraculous sign gifts had faded from the scene even by the time Mark wrote somewhere in the mid to late 60’s (First Corinthians being dated somewhere in the mid to late 50’s).

- A sign is intended to authenticate or attest to something.

- Tongues is one of the signs that affirmed the apostles and their doctrine.
 - “Accompany” in Mark 16:16, and “Followed” in 16:20, are from the same Greek root word and mean “to follow or attend closely, accompany, attend, characterize” (Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 304). Apostolic ministries were accompanied by, and characterized by, miraculous signs.
 - The sign of tongues was given to the apostles at Pentecost, and apparently transferred by them to select others as the Holy Spirit willed (e.g., Paul laid hands on the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19:6, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying).
- 6) As in Mark 16:20, the *past tense* is used in Hebrews 2:3-4 with reference to the miraculous confirmation of the apostle’s message (Hebrews was written approximately AD 68).
- “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first *spoken* through the Lord, it *was confirmed* to us by those who *heard*, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”
- 7) **2 Cor. 12:11-12** - While defending his apostolic authority, Paul reminded the Corinthians that “*the signs of a true apostle* were performed among [them] with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles” (2 Cor. 12:12). Such sign gifts were unique to the apostles and their close associates.
- e. As the Apostolic Era came to an end, and the New Testament revelation was completed, the need for certain spiritual gifts ceased.

1) Benjamin B. Warfield notes:

“The Apostolic Church was characteristically a miracle-working church. How long did this state of things continue? It was the characterizing peculiarity of specifically the Apostolic Church, and it belonged therefore exclusively to the Apostolic age. . . .

“These gifts were . . . part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it. Of this we may make sure on the ground both of principle and of fact; that is to say both under the guidance of the New Testament teaching as to their origin and nature, and on the credit of the testimony of later ages as to their cessation. . . .

“This, then, is the theory; that, miracles having been given for the purpose of founding the church, they continued so long as they were needed for that purpose; growing gradually fewer as they were less needed, and ceasing altogether when the church having, so to speak, been firmly put upon its feet, was able to stand on its own legs” (*Counterfeit Miracles*, pp. 5-6, 9).

2) Dr. Norman Geisler adds (*Signs and Wonders*, p. 136):

a) Regarding the early period of New Testament revelation (AD 33-60):

The period recorded in the Book of Acts:

- Tongues mentioned often
- Healings occurred
- Exorcisms occurred
- Raising of the dead occurred

b) Regarding the later period of New Testament Revelation (AD 60-67):

The period of Paul’s writing of Ephesians through 2 Timothy:

- Tongues are never mentioned

- No healings took place
- No exorcisms took place
- No raising of the dead took place

3) Dr. Charles Smith notes (*Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, pp. 67-71):

- a) Mark knew that the sign purpose of tongues was past when he wrote in AD 68.
- b) Even Peter and Paul, who had previously enjoyed miraculous protection (Acts 12 [angelic intervention when Peter was in prison] & 28 [Paul bitten by a viper]), had now been executed.
- c) The author of Hebrews in approximately AD 68 likewise considered the signs as past.
- d) The last miracles recorded in the New Testament took place about AD 58 (Acts 28:3-9 - At Malta Paul bitten by viper; Publius and others were healed).
- e) Around AD 60, Paul's associate Epaphroditus, while visiting Paul, became sick almost unto death, but was not healed miraculously (Phil. 2:25-30).
- f) About AD 62, Timothy, Paul's own "true child in the faith," apparently had a stomach ailment that remained uncured (1 Tim. 5:23).
- g) Around AD 64, Trophimus, one of Paul's associates, was so seriously ill that Paul had to leave him behind at Miletus, uncured (2 Tim. 4:20).
- h) Yet earlier, Paul had been instrumental even in restoring life to the dead!

4) Dr. Geisler summarizes:

"There were certain gifts that were 'signs of an apostle' (2 Corinthians 12:12). . . . These included tongues (1 Corinthians 14:22), exorcisms

(Matthew 10:8), raising the dead (Matthew 10:8), and healing ‘every disease and sickness’ (Matthew 10:1). During the time of ‘the Acts of the Apostles’ these were all done freely (Acts 2-6, 8-10, 16, 19, 28). Indeed, Paul was still exercising his gifts in the last chapter of Acts (28:9) around A.D. 58. Likewise, these same gifts are mentioned in the Epistles (1 Corinthians 12, 14) referring to events that happened during this period (A.D. 33-60).

“However, as soon as we arrive at the time of Paul’s imprisonments (around A.D. 60-67) there is not only a complete absence of reference to any of these special apostolic gifts . . . there is strong evidence that they no longer possessed these abilities. For example, the same apostle who could heal everyone on a whole island (Acts 28:9) could no longer even heal his coworkers in the ministry.

“The apostles could heal a person born lame (Acts 3), but Paul could not give Timothy miraculous relief from a simple stomach ailment and had to recommend that he take medicine for it (1 Timothy 5:23). The same apostle who exorcised a demon on command (Acts 15) could only hope for repentance that Hymenaeus and Philetus would ‘escape from the trap of the devil’ (2 Timothy 2:26). And the same apostle who once had the power to raise the dead (Acts 20) now cannot even raise his needed friend Trophimus from a sick bed (2 Timothy 4:20). And when we reach Hebrews (A.D. 68-69) the sign gifts are referred to as a past event (2:3-4). . . .

“Even a casual observer can see that there is a marked contrast between the free exercise of sign gifts in the earlier period with their stark absence in the later period. Indeed, the gifts that distinguished an apostle, such as raising the dead, healing incurable diseases, exorcising demons on command, and speaking in unknown foreign languages, are no longer expressed in the later period. They have ceased.” (*Signs and Wonders*, pp. 136-37).

- 5) In addition to Scripture indicating their cessation, history itself attests that the miraculous sign gifts ceased:

John Chrysostom (c347-407) writes in his commentary on spiritual gifts: “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place” (*Homilies on First Corinthians*, Vol. XII, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Hom. 29:2).

Chrysostom is joined by:

- Augustine (354-430)
- Thomas Watson (1660)
- John Owen (1679)
- Matthew Henry (1712)
- Jonathan Edwards (1738)
- George Whitefield (1825)
- James Buchanan (1843)
- Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1881)
- Robert L. Dabney (1876)
- Abraham Kuyper (1888)
- Shedd (1888)
- Benjamin B. Warfield (1918)

(Documented in Walter Chantry’s *Signs of the Apostles*, pp. 140-46).

V. WHAT ARE THE CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Note: Quite possibly not all spiritual gifts are listed in Scripture. The various lists that are given are incomplete in themselves.

A. GIFTED LEADERS

1. *Apostles*
2. *Prophets*
3. *Evangelists*
4. *Pastor-Teachers*
5. *Teachers*

B. TEMPORARY REVELATORY GIFTS

(Through which came direct revelation from God)

1. *Word of Wisdom*
2. *Word of Knowledge*
3. **Prophecy*
4. **Distinguishing of spirits*
5. **Various kinds of tongues*
6. **Interpretation of tongues*

* Some of the gifts have a dual aspect: revelation and sign.

C. TEMPORARY SIGN GIFTS

(By which God confirmed the revelations He gave)

1. *Prophecy (It's predictive element made it self-authenticating.)*
2. *Distinguishing of spirits*
3. *Various kinds of tongues*
4. *Interpretation of tongues*
5. *Faith*
6. *Gifts of healing*
7. *Effecting of miracles*

D. PERMANENT EDIFYING GIFTS

(Gifts given for the ongoing edification of the church)

1. *Speaking Gifts*
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Exhortation

2. *Serving Gifts*
 - a. Helps
 - b. Administrations
 - c. Service
 - d. Giving
 - e. Leadership
 - f. Showing mercy

VI. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GIFTED LEADERS?

The apostle Paul teaches that Jesus gave gifted men to the church to lead it, protect it, and bring it to spiritual maturity:

- *Cor. 12:28* - “God has appointed in the church, first *apostles*, second *prophets*, third *teachers*.”
- *Eph. 4:11-12* - “He gave some as *apostles*, and some as *prophets*, and some as *evangelists*, and some as *pastors and teachers*, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ.”

We will now study the roles and responsibilities of those gifted leaders.

A. APOSTLES (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

1. *Apostles = (apostolos) = “sent one” or “one sent out.”*
2. *Qualifications of the original apostles*
 - a. They are called “*the apostles*” in Acts 8:1 and elsewhere.

“A great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles.*”
 - b. They were chosen by Christ Himself
 - 1) The original twelve

Mark 3:13-15 - Jesus “went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted,
Christ’s Gifts to His Body - Page 20

and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.”

- 2) Matthias, who replaced Judas

Acts 1:24-26 - They prayed to the Lord for *His* choice to replace Judas.

- 3) James, the Lord’s brother

James held an apostolic position in the early church. He was called an apostle by Paul in Gal 1:19, and apparently he presided over the Counsel at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13, see also Gal. 2:9).

- 4) Barnabas

Acts 14:4, 14 calls both Paul and Barnabas “apostles” (see also 1 Cor. 9:1-6).

- 5) Paul

Paul was commissioned by Christ Himself on the Damascus Road, and introduces himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (*Eph. 1:1* and elsewhere). He vigorously defends his apostleship in Galatians and 2 Corinthians.

- d. They were witnesses of Christ’s resurrection (the resurrected Christ - *Acts 1:22*).

- 1) *1 Cor. 9:1* - Paul said, “Am I not an apostle? *Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?* Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?” (See also Acts 22:6-10, 17-21)

- 2) Paul was the last to witness the resurrected Lord and was thereby the last apostle to be appointed.

In 1 Cor. 15:8 Paul says that Jesus “appeared to Cephas . . . the twelve . . . 500 brethren at one time . . . James . . . all the apostles . . . and *last of all*, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also” (vv. 5-12).

- e. They were authenticated by signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12).
- f. They had great spiritual authority, which is evident throughout the New Testament.

For example:

- 1) Christ's revelation through them was not to be disregarded.

1 Cor. 14:37-38 - "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored" (see also 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

- 2) New Testament Prophets and prophetic utterances were subject to their authority.

Gal. 1:8 - "Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

- e. They spoke infallibly

- 1) "Infallible" means sure, certain, will not fail.

"As men the apostles could fall. As men they could sometimes clash with each other. Yet when they stood up as spokesmen for the Lord they were infallible" (Budgen, p. 95).

- 2) They knew that what they proclaimed in the name of the Lord was His Word.

1 Thess. 2:13 - "We constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for *what it really is, the word of God*, which also performs its work in you who believe."

- 3) Paul and the other apostles received their message from Christ Himself--either while Christ was on earth, or by special revelation following His ascension:

1 Cor. 15:3 - "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received."

Gal. 1:11-12 - "I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it [by a man], but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

- 4) Their teachings were the authoritative doctrinal foundation of the New Testament church.

Acts 2:41-43 - The 3,000 who had been saved on the Day of Pentecost "were continually devoting themselves *to the apostles' teaching* and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles."

3. *Apostles of the churches*

- a. Those referred to as "apostles of the churches" (better, "messengers of the churches" - e.g., Titus, Silas, and Timothy - 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; Rom. 16:7), did not function in the unique role of apostle as outlined above.
- b. *Note:* Romans 16:7, which refers Andronicus and Junias being "outstanding among the apostles" is better translated "well-known among the apostles."

4. *There are no apostles today. The office of apostle ceased with the death of the apostle John, and with the completion of the New Testament.*

B. *PROPHETS* (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

1. *We are referring to the office of a prophet, not to the gift of prophecy.*
2. *A contrast*
 - a. Apostles were more general in their ministry, which included multiple churches, whereas prophets seemed to be associated with specific churches.

- b. Apparently the apostles' teaching was largely doctrinal, whereas the prophets' was more applicational as they spoke to men for edification, exhortation, and consolation (1 Cor. 14:3).

3. *A comparison*

- a. Old Testament and New Testament prophets were specially gifted men and women who spoke new revelation from God or reiterated previous revelations.
- b. When functioning in their prophetic role, and whether they were giving new revelation or reiterating previous revelations, they *always* spoke under divine prompting (i.e., the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak - 2 Pet. 1:21).

4. *Because they were prompted by the Holy Spirit, true prophets always prophesied:*

- a. ***With authority*** - There was no “perhaps” or “maybe” in their oracles. They spoke with divine authority: “Thus saith the Lord.” For example, Jeremiah’s commonly introduced his oracles with “The word of the Lord came to me, saying . . .” That was the tone of all genuine prophecy.

- b. ***With accuracy*** - Because the Holy Spirit never makes a mistake! God’s Word never changes and cannot be in error.

1) Old Testament tests of a true prophet

Deut. 13:1-3 - Even if a prophet performed signs and wonders, if he led God’s people after a false gods, he was to be put to death.

Deut. 18:20 - If a prophet prophesied of the future in the name of the Lord, but his prophecy didn’t come true, he was to be put to death.

2) New Testament tests of a true prophet

- ***1 Cor. 14:29*** - “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.”

The phrase “let the others pass judgment” could mean that the congregation in general was to *weigh the prophecy with a view to implementation* (as with the famine relief after the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 11:29ff), or it could mean that those with the gift of discernment were to determine whether or not the prophecy was from God. In either case, false prophecy was to be rejected and the false prophet dealt with.

- **1 Thess. 5:20-22** - “Do not despise prophetic utterances. But *examine everything carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”

In that passage the phrase “every form of evil” refers to false prophecy. False (inaccurate) prophecy is evil and is to be avoided by God’s people.

- First Thessalonians was Paul’s first epistle, so he established early on that the apostles’ doctrine was the standard by which all prophetic utterances were to be tested.

- c. **With urgency** - There was a sense of urgency in their words. They were compelled to speak, even when, like Jonah, they would prefer not to speak.
- d. **With prediction** - Not everything a New Testament prophet said while functioning in his or her prophetic role was predictive in nature (i.e., predicting future events). Sometimes the Holy Spirit prompted them to reiterate and/or apply prior revelation. However, every New Testament prophet had a predictive element to his or her ministry.

For example:

- 1) Agabus predicted (“indicated by the Spirit”) a great famine (Acts 11:28), and Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11).
- 2) Ananias disclosed the future ministry of Paul (Acts 22:12-15).

- 3) Luke, Mark, and other New Testament writers who were not apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recorded past, present, and future elements of God's redemptive plan.
- 4) New Testament writers who were apostles wrote of prophetic events such as the return of Christ.
- 5) Paul referred to Scripture as "the Scriptures of the prophets" (i.e., prophetic writings):

Rom. 16:25 - "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and *by the Scriptures of the prophets* [prophetic writings], according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith." (See also 2 Pet. 1:20-21 - "No prophecy of Scripture")

The revelatory and predictive elements of prophecy are the primary distinctions between prophets and teachers. Teachers do not receive direct revelation from God; they reiterate what has already been revealed.

In the Pastoral Epistles great emphasis is placed on Elders knowing, teaching, and guarding the "faithful Word which is in accordance with the teaching" (Titus 1:9).

Nothing, however, is said of sign gifts, prophecy, or additional revelations.

In 1 Pet. 4:10-11, Peter says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God."

"Utterances of God" = Scripture (Rom. 3:2; Acts 7:38).

We are nowhere instructed to expect, seek, or teach new revelations.

5. *There are no prophets or the gift of prophecy today.*

See Norman Geisler's *Signs and Wonders*, Appendix 3, for an excellent treatment of supposed modern-day prophecy.

6. *So-called prophets and prophecy today clearly fall short of the biblical standards for true prophecy.*

a. Representative arguments for modern-day prophets:

1) J. Rodman Williams

“The Bible truly has become a fellow witness to God’s present activity. What happens today in the fellowship and in individual lives also happened then, and there is the joy of knowing that our world was also their world.

“If someone today perhaps has a vision of God, of Christ, it is good to know that it has happened before; if one has a revelation from God, to know that for the early Christians revelation also occurred in the community; if one speaks a “Thus says the Lord,” and dares to address the fellowship in the first person - *even going beyond the words of Scripture* - that this was happening long ago. How strange and remarkable it is!

“If one speaks in the fellowship of the Spirit the Word of truth, it is neither his own thoughts and reflections (e.g., on some topic of the day) nor *simply some exposition of Scripture*, for the Spirit transcends personal observations, however interesting or profound they may be.

“The Spirit of the living God moves *through and beyond* the records of past witness, however valuable such records are *as a model* for what happens today. For in the Spirit the present fellowship is as much the arena of God’s vital presence as anything in the Biblical account. Indeed, in the light of what we may learn from this past witness, and take to heart, we may expect new things to occur in our day and in days to come. . . .

“[With regard to prophecy,] it may happen that those least qualified (according to ordinary

judgment) in terms of wisdom and knowledge--and who accordingly have little to boast about--are the very ones through whom the Spirit brings forth truth. They speak, perchance in halting manner, sometimes improper English, *even inaccurate quotation from Scripture*, the Spirit may be heard in the fellowship. . . .

“In prophecy God speaks. It is as simple, and profound, and startling as that! What happens in the fellowship is that the word may suddenly be spoken by anyone present, and so, variously, a ‘Thus says the Lord’ breaks forth in the fellowship. It is usually in the first person (through not always), such as ‘I am with you to bless you . . .’ and has the directness of an ‘I-Thou’ encounter . . . All of this--to repeat--is quite surprising and startling. Most of us, of course, were familiar with prophetic utterances as recorded in the Bible, and willing to accept it as the Word of God. Isaiah’s or Jeremiah’s ‘Thus says the Lord’ we were accustomed to, but to hear a Tom or a Mary today, in the twentieth century, speak the same way!

“Many of us also had convinced ourselves that prophecy ended with the New Testament period (despite all the New Testament evidence to the contrary), until suddenly through the dynamic thrust of the Holy Spirit prophecy comes alive again. Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long!” (*Era of the Spirit*, Logos, pp. 16-28, emphasis added).

2) Arnold Bittlinger

“The wonderful and yet mysterious thing about prophecy is that the Holy Spirit, in all his perfection, combines with the human spirit in all its imperfection. One consequence of this, in our era and due to our weakness, is the fact that our prophesying is imperfect (“in part” 1 Cor. 13:9). It is also obvious that the value and purity of our prophecy is conditioned by the state of the human channel (cf. Rom. 12:6)” (*Gifts and Graces - a Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12-14*, Hodder, 1973, p. 111).

b. Observations from those quotes:

- 1) Scripture is reduced to a mere “witness” or “model” of the Spirit’s activities today, rather than the authoritative voice that governs what is or isn’t of the Spirit.
- 2) Exposition of Scripture is supplanted by these supposed revelations of the Spirit.
- 3) The roles of pastors and teachers are subservient to the modern “prophets.”
- 4) The prophecies of “Tom and Mary” today are on par with Isaiah or Jeremiah’s Old Testament prophecies.
- 5) Prophecies may even misquote Scripture (implying that the Holy Spirit erred in the prophetic message He conveyed).
- 6) Prophecies may be “imperfect” or a mixed phenomenon (i.e. a mixture of divine revelation and human error--or, as another writer put it, “When we begin to prophesy there is nearly always a mixture of God’s Spirit and our own thinking.”), because the human channel is impure.

Note: True prophecy is *always* accurate, *never* corrupted by the channel. God conveyed His message through godly prophets, reluctant prophets, and even an evil High Priest (cf. Caiaphas - John 11:49-52).

c. Some contemporary attempts to “train” fledgling prophets:

- 1) “Expect to prophesy, ask Jesus to edify His Body on earth through you. As you have fellowship with the Lord and with your brothers and sisters in the Lord, you may find thoughts and words of inspiration coming into your mind that you have not heard, and did not compose. If they are according to Scripture, then share them with the Church. As with interpretation, you may just receive a few words, and as you start to speak,

more may come. You may see a picture in your ‘mind’s eye’, and as you start to talk about that picture the words will come.”

“It may well start through some mental picture coming to a member during a time of worship and silent adoration. . . . Love will be welcoming towards embryonic prophecy. *Love will be forgiving when mistakes are made.* . . . If love flows, it mistakes are expected and understood, if the tests outlined above are applied, the dangers inherent in this sensitive gift will be largely avoided, and its real blessing will become a very positive boon to the congregation” (cited in Budgen, pp. 34-35, emphasis added).

Response: Budgen then comments: “But is it really loving to get someone thinking they are a mouthpiece of God when they are not? After all it does say in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians that ‘Love . . . rejoices with the truth’ (v. 6).” His point is well taken and should be considered carefully by any would-be prophet.

Please note that Scripture refers to false prophets as “angels of light” and false “servants of righteousness.” - 2 Cor. 11:13-15.
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Also, the Old Testament penalty for inaccuracy was <i>death</i> , not loving toleration. Those who disregard God’s standards for true prophecy open the door to false prophecy and great confusion in the church.

- 2) A woman who fancies herself as a modern “prophetess” offers this counsel:

“How then can we know if a prophecy is from God or not? Someone might start off with ‘thus says the Lord’ or ‘the Lord says’ (incidentally it is not necessary to start off like this but sometimes it helps the beginner to get going) and it sounds so authoritative as to be beyond contradiction.”

Response: That approach shifts the focus from what God actually says to what merely sounds authoritative. The mere *claim* to divine revelation

becomes the test of authenticity rather than Scripture itself. However, *every* false prophet claims to have a message from God, and most speak with great authority, but their authority is not from God. Therefore, claiming to have a message from God and sounding authoritative are not the way to determine if a prophet is really from God.

- 3) An advertisement in the December, 1990, edition of *Charisma Magazine*, (a leading Pentecostal publication), reads:

Bernard Jordan Presents the Monthly School of the Prophet

“Perhaps you feel that you have been called to be an oracle of the Lord and have had difficulty explaining your experiences or finding someone that you could relate to and learn from. The School of the Prophets is designed to help bring *grounding and clarity* to the myriad of dreams and visions that are the hallmark of the prophet and seer ministries and to assist in the restoration of the prophetic ministry within the Body of Christ.

“There are many that have become disillusioned and disenchanted with the prophetic ministry because of abuses and ignorant usage of the gifting. Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water, for if you’ve had the bitter experience of the counterfeit, know that there is a reality to discover.

“Abuses and misrepresentations occur simply because of the abomination of ignorance. Come and be trained at the School of the Prophets so that you will be properly prepared to fulfill the destiny that God has chosen for you!” (emphasis added).

Response:

- a) That approach to prophecy fails the test of Scripture because true prophets were never ignorant of their role or of the message God wanted to communicate through them. Also, education, grounding, and clarity were never the biblical answers to false prophecy.

In the Old Testament *death* was the answer and 100% accuracy was the test (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20). In the New Testament false prophecy was evil and was to be avoided by God's people (1 Thess. 5:20-22).

- b) God's view of those who speak falsely in His name: ***Ezek. 13:9*** - "My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God."
- c) Those who believe that God is still giving revelations through modern-day prophets fail to test those supposed revelations by biblical standards. That is a serious error that has led to great confusion in the church and encouraged many Christians to sin by prophesying falsely.

C. *EVANGELISTS* (Eph. 4:11)

1. ***To evangelize is to proclaim the good news of salvation through faith in Christ.***
2. ***New Testament evangelists, in the stricter application of the word, were missionaries and church planters.***
 - a. They would start a church, build the believers up in the faith, then move on to a new work.
 - b. Their work was to preach and explain the gospel to those who hadn't yet believed.
3. ***Examples***
 - a. Philip was an evangelist whom the Lord specially gifted to proclaim the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-8; 21:8).
 - b. Timothy is instructed by Paul to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5).

D. PASTOR-TEACHERS (Eph. 4:11)

1. *“Pastors and teachers”* literally means “teaching shepherds” (shepherds who teach).
2. *“Pastor”* emphasizes the care, protection, and leadership these men give to the flock.
3. *“Teachers”* emphasizes their primary function.

1 Tim. 5:17 - “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”

4. **NOTE:** Ideally a church should be led by a combination of evangelists and teaching shepherds: people gifted to bring the lost to Christ, and people gifted to lead and feed them in the Word.

E. TEACHERS (1 Cor. 12:28)

1. *This is perhaps a broader term than pastor-teacher, and refers to all who possess the gift of teaching, and who edify the church thereby.*
2. *By God’s design all pastors are teachers, but not all teachers are pastors.*
3. *The ministry of the church fell to the evangelists, pastors, and teachers as Scripture was completed and the apostles and prophets faded from the scene.*

VII. HOW ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS DEFINED AND APPLIED?

We will divide spiritual gifts into three broad categories: temporary revelatory gifts, temporary sign gifts, and permanent edifying gifts.

A. TEMPORARY REVELATORY GIFTS

These are the gifts through which God gave direct revelation.

This category includes the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

1. *The Word of Wisdom*

“*To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:8).

a. What the word of wisdom *isn't*

1) It is not simply a wise statement or counsel.

The Living Bible incorrectly translates it: “the ability to give wise advice.”

2) It is not to be confused with the godly wisdom that is available to, and to be cultivated by, *every* Christian.

James 1:5 - “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

b. What the word of wisdom *is*

1) “Word of wisdom” literally means an utterance full of, or characterized by wisdom.

2) It involves divine revelation.

“Because of the strong sense of revelation or insight implied in the phrase, perhaps this gift was akin to a revelational utterance by the Christian prophet” (Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 1045).

First Cor. 2:6-13 speaks of wisdom in this unique and restricted sense.

“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not

entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’

“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

- 3) Paul and other apostolic and missionary teachers spoke “God’s wisdom in a *mystery*, the *hidden* wisdom” (*1 Cor. 2:7*).

“Mystery” and “hidden” point to divine revelation received by these early Christian leaders, which they communicated to others and which were eventually recorded in Scripture.

- 4) Paul adds in *Col. 1:24-29*

“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.

“Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, *the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints*, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

“And we proclaim Him; admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And

for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

- 5) It is in connection with the word of wisdom that Paul refers to the gifts of prophecy and understanding of all mysteries in *1 Cor. 13:2*.

“If I have the gift of **prophecy**, and know all **mysteries** and all **knowledge**; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

- 6) Peter directly relates this quality of wisdom with Paul and his writing of Scripture itself:

2 Pet. 3:15-16 - “Regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, *according to the wisdom given him*, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also *the rest of the Scriptures*, to their own destruction.”

“Wisdom” there is a synonym with revelation.

2. *The Word of Knowledge*

“To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another **the word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit.”
(*1 Cor. 12:8*).

- a. What the word of knowledge *isn't*

- 1) It is not general knowledge of Christ.

2 Pet. 3:18 - “Grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Every believer is to pursue that kind of knowledge, whereas the word of knowledge is a gift given to only some believers.

- 2) It is not Bible study or exposition.

As with the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge comes “through” or “by” or “according to” the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis is on its *reception*, not its interpretation (Elwell, p. 1045).

That means that the knowledge expressed in the word of knowledge is in perfect accord with the Spirit’s will.

It is not biblical exegesis (Bible study and teaching), as important as that is. Exegesis can be faulty, sermons can be faulty, but the word of knowledge was precise, because it was given by the Holy Spirit.

- b. What the word of knowledge *is*
- 1) “Word of knowledge literally means an utterance *full of*, or *characterized by* knowledge.
 - 2) It is placed between revelation and prophecy in **1 Cor. 14:6** - “If I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of *knowledge* or of prophecy or of teaching?”
 - 3) It will cease along with prophecy and tongues when the “perfect thing” (Scripture) comes:
1 Cor. 13:8 - “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is *knowledge*, it will be done away.”
 - 4) In **1 Cor. 13:2** Paul groups it with the revelation of *prophecy and mysteries*:
“If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all *knowledge*; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”
 - 5) In **Col. 2:1-4** it is linked with “God’s mystery,” “hidden,” and “wisdom,” thereby showing its revelatory nature.

“I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a *true knowledge of God’s mystery*, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of *wisdom and knowledge*. I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument.”

6) It’s precise nature is not easy to determine.

How its content differs from “revelation” or “wisdom” perhaps cannot be known precisely. However, it probably has to do with *the application of Old Testament prophecies to new circumstances*.

7) Representative statements:

- **Gordon Fee** - “A spiritual utterance of some revelatory kind . . . clearly akin to the word of wisdom” (*NICNT*, p. 593).
- **John Wesley** - “It is perhaps an extraordinary ability to understand and explain the Old Testament types and prophecies” (cited by Budgen, p. 75).
- **Dr. Robert Thomas** - “Whereas the word of wisdom brought direct revelation, the word of knowledge was the ability to grasp that objective revelatory data and apply it in various connections” (under the inspiration of the Spirit) (Dr. Robert Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, p. 37).

c. Some examples of the word of knowledge:

1) **Acts 15:12-17** - James applies the prophecy from Amos 9 to the admission of Gentiles into the church.

“All the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, ‘Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, “After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name.”’”

- 2) **Acts 1:20** - Peter applies Psalm 69:25 & 109:8 to Judas’ death.

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it’; and, ‘His office let another man take.’”

- 3) **1 Pet. 1:10-12** - Peter applies previous prophecies to his present day.

“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.”

Please Note: Prophecy was the work of the Holy Spirit within the prophet. That’s why true prophets were always 100% accurate.

- 4) **2 Pet. 3:2** - Peter applies the earlier revelations of “the holy prophets” and “your apostles” to a new set of circumstances in the late sixties re: “mockers.”

“[I am reminding you to] remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.”

- 5) **Jude 17-19** - Jude did the same thing.

“You, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, ‘In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.’ These are the ones . . .”

Summary

- Both the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are revelatory gifts.
- The word of wisdom revealed the “mysteries” of Christ and His gospel.
- The word of knowledge emphasized application of prophecies (primarily Old Testament) to New Testament circumstances.
- Neither gift exists today because their purpose ceased when all revealed mysteries and prophecies were complete in Scripture.

3. ***The Gift of Prophecy***

1 Cor. 13:1-2 - “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have **the gift of prophecy**, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

a. Its definition

- 1) The Greek word is *prophemi*, which literally means “forth” (*pro*) to speak (*phemi*), or “to speak forth.”

- 2) It contained a predictive element (to speak forth in relation to time--prior to an event)
- 3) It also contained an element of proclamation (to speak forth to a group of people, to preach, etc.).
- 4) It was God speaking through individuals for the purpose of edification, exhortation, and consolation (1 Cor. 14:3).

b. Its distinction

- 1) It is closely akin to the other revelatory gifts:

1 Cor. 14:29-33 - “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

- 2) Yet there is a distinction:

- *The Word of Wisdom* was direct revelation from God of things previously hidden. Perhaps uniquely given to those through whom Scripture came.
- *The Word of Knowledge* was perhaps revelation specifically related to the application of Old Testament prophecies to New Testament circumstances.
- *Whereas prophecy* perhaps emphasized the predictive element of revelation.

“It was this ability to prophesy future happenings accurately that provided this gift with its own authenticating value” (Dr. Robert Thomas, p. 43).

- Additionally, in prophecy God communicated directly through individuals, but not necessarily revealing new biblical truth. Often it was the application of truth to a situation, or revealing future circumstances.

4) Examples:

- a) *Acts 11:27-28* - “Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.”
- b) *Acts 21:10-11* - “As we were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: “In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”’”

c. Its deficiency

- 1) *1 Cor. 13:8-10* - “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.”
- 2) The “perfect thing” = Scripture (For a thorough discussion see Dr. Robert Thomas’ notes on 1 Cor. 12-14; and his article in *The Master’s Seminary Journal* [4/2 Fall 1993], and Victor Budgen, *The Charismatics and the Word of God*, pp. 73-89).

d. Its deletion

- 1) Prophecy was replaced by Scripture.
- 2) Dr. Robert Thomas comments:

“[The Book of] Revelation gives notice of the termination of prophecy. It specifically states that no prophetic additions are to be tolerated (Rev. 22:18).

“It is quite evident in this prohibition that God incorporated in this one, great, final prophecy all the predictive elements that would be needed by the church in coming generations, until such time as these find their fulfillment in connection with Christ’s second advent.

“Any attempt on man’s part to add to the contents of the Apocalypse subsequent to its completion would constitute an attempt to add to ‘the words of the prophecy of this book,’ and hence would incur from God additional plagues over and above those described in the book itself.

“For this reason, the wise approach is to limit prophecy to the period before John concluded the writing of Revelation at the end of the first century A.D.” (Thomas, p. 44).

4. *The Distinguishing of Spirits*

Note: this is listed as a dual purpose gift (revelatory and sign) because it is linked specifically to prophecy, which is both.

*“To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit . . . to another prophecy, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**” (1 Cor. 12:8, 10).*

- a. What distinguishing of spirits *isn’t*
 - 1) Distinguishing of spirits isn’t spiritual discernment in its general sense (i.e., the ability to distinguish truth from error or righteousness from unrighteousness), which *every* believer is to develop.
 - 2) *Examples:*
 - a) **Heb. 5:11-14** - “We have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food [deep truths of God’s Word] is for the mature, who *because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*”

- b) **1 John 4:1-3** (written about 35-40 years after 1 Corinthians) - “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but *test the spirits* to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the anti-christ, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”

How were they to test the spirits? By evaluating all teachings against what they had already “heard from the beginning” (i.e., apostolic teaching, cf. 2:24).

- c) **1 Thess. 5:20-21** - “Do not despise prophetic utterances. But *examine* everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.”

- “Examine” here is the same Greek word translated “test” in 1 John 4:1, but not the same word translated “distinguishing” in 1 Cor. 12:10.
- One is a spiritual gift given to *some*, the other is a mandate for *all* believers to test any supposed revelation or Bible teaching by that which God has already revealed.
- The Bereans in Acts 17:11 are a classic example of discernment in its general sense:

“Now [the Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.*”

b. What distinguishing of spirits is

1) A lexical definition:

a) “Distinguishing” = *Diakrisis*

Its root word is *Krino* = Its adjectival form is *kritikos*, from which we get our English words “critic, crisis, and criterion.”

i) It means a distinguishing, a clear discrimination, discerning, judging, judging between things, separating out so as to investigate (*Vines*, p. 171; *Rienecker/Rogers*, p. 429).

ii) *Dia* = A preposition, which intensifies the word it modifies.

b) “*Spirits*” = The same Greek root word used in 1 Cor. 12:1 and 14:12, where it is translated “spiritual gifts.”

The sense is “spirit-manifestations” (Thomas).

2) A working definition:

Distinguishing of spirits was the special ability to discriminate between false and true spirits, especially as manifested in prophecy.

- *Elwell* - “Believers had to be able to discriminate between the false and the true spirits, when an itinerant prophet claimed to be inspired to speak by revelation (1 Cor. 14:29)” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 1044).

- **Ryrie** - “The ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation when it was being given in oral form. It was a very necessary gift before the Word was written, for there were those who claimed to bring revelation from God who were not true prophets” (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 90).
- **Barnes** - “This must refer to some power of searching into the secrets of the heart; of knowing what were a man’s purposes, views, and feelings.

“It may relate either to the power of determining by what spirit a man spoke who pretended to be inspired, whether he was truly inspired or whether he was an impostor; or it may refer to the power of seeing whether a man was sincere or not in his Christian profession.

“That the apostles had this power, is apparent from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts v. 1-10), and from the case of Elymas, (Acts xiii. 9-11).

“It is evident that where the gift of prophecy and inspiration was possessed, and where it would confer such advantages on those who possessed it, there would be many pretenders to it; and that it would be of vast importance to the infant church, in order to prevent imposition, that there should be a power in the church of detecting the imposture” (p. 231).

c. How the distinguishing of spirits worked:

1) **Ananias and Sapphira** - Acts 5:1-10

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

control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.’

“And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

“Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, ‘Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?’ And she said, ‘Yes, that was the price.’ Then Peter said to her, ‘Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well.’

“And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.”

- 2) *Elymas (Bar-Jesus)* - Acts 13:9-11 (perhaps a more overtly satanic situation due to his obvious opposition to the gospel).

“Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, and said, ‘You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.’ And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.”

- 3) *Philippian slave-girl* - Acts 16:16-18 (perhaps this, too, was an overtly satanic situation rather than distinguishing of spirits in its strictest sense).

“It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of

divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, ‘These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.’

“And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!’ And it came out at that very moment.”

- 4) **1 Cor. 14:29-33** - “Let two or three prophets speak, and **let the others pass judgment**. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

5. *Various Kinds of Tongues*

Note: Like prophecy, tongues is a dual purpose gift: revelatory (God moves upon and through the tongues-speaker) and sign (Jesus and Paul called it a “sign” [Mark 16; 1 Cor. 14]).

1 Cor. 12:10, 30 - “To another [the Spirit gave] **various kinds of tongues**, and to another the interpretation of tongues. . . . All do not **speak with tongues**, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”

- a. Some introductory comments about the gift of tongues:

Tongues is a challenging area of study because:

- 1) There has been so much confusion for so many decades about this gift.
- 2) Many Christians today are practicing something they *think* is the biblical gift of speaking in tongues.
- 3) Most earnest Christians never want to speak against what the Holy Spirit might be doing, even though they may suspect that all is not right. Therefore they are reluctant to question the practice of so many “tongues speakers.”

Unfortunately, some Charismatics play on that fear by accusing their critics of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. But is it any less evil to attribute to the Holy Spirit what *isn't* from Him, than to deny what *is* from Him? It is wise to test the spirits. In fact, we are commanded to do so (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

- 4) Many Christians today are hungry for a deeper spiritual expression, and a supposed tongues experience makes them feel directly in touch with God. Also, by contrast it may make their former Christian experience seem dull and lifeless. However, we must be careful not to confuse mere emotionalism with true spirituality.
- 5) Some Christians who disagree with the tongues doctrine may themselves be experiencing spiritual lethargy and are perhaps secretly envious of the apparent zeal and passion of many tongues-speaking Charismatics and Pentecostals.
- 6) Experience often takes precedence over Scripture as the judge of religious truth.

Therefore if someone has an experience they attribute to God, it is difficult to convince them otherwise, especially if that experience has heightened their sense of religious fulfillment and emotional attachment to the Lord.

Incidentally, it isn't our responsibility to explain or refute every religious experience someone claims to have. We must understand what Scripture teaches, then test subjective religious experiences by that standard.

- 7) Many people equate numerical growth with success and doctrinal accuracy.

The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements are so large and powerful that many Christians simply assume they can't be wrong doctrinally. To them it seems as if the Lord is blessing those movements far beyond most other churches.

Can thousands of devout people be wrong? Yes. For example, there are approximately 700 million Catholics in the world, but that doesn't make them right. Biblical truth is never determined by statistics or majority rule. God's Word alone determines it.

8) Many Christians simply don't have the desire or ability to test Charismatic/Pentecostal experiences and claims by God's Word. They ask: *Why cause friction in the family? Why be unloving?* But is it divisive or unloving to speak the truth in love?

9) Tongues advocates are trying to squeeze a contemporary non-biblical phenomenon into a biblical framework--but it doesn't fit because the true gift of tongues ceased two thousand years ago (for details please refer back to the section of this study entitled "What Is the Duration of Spiritual Gifts?").

a) Tongues ceased, yet in 1901 Agnes Ozman, a student at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, supposedly received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit with its accompanying sign of tongues, and modern Pentecostalism was born (for details see appendix on Pentecostalism).

b) Some Pentecostals agree that tongues did cease, but that the Lord restored it in these latter days. There is no sound biblical basis for that position (see MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, pp. 235-37 for Charismatics' misinterpretation of Joel 2:23-28).

10) Now let's look at the gift of tongues itself.

b. The central passages

- 1) Mark 16:17-20
- 2) Acts 2:1-13
- 3) 1 Cor. 12-14

c. Two common errors

1) One common error is the belief that a tongues experience is a spiritual cure-all and the pinnacle of true spirituality.

a) Few tongues advocates would say it that bluntly, but the teaching is evident in their positional statements and personal testimonies.

b) Two typical testimonies:

i) The testimony of Larry Christenson

“As a young teenager I accepted Christ’s forgiveness, received salvation, and was baptized. This experience did not give me the ability to completely rely on God.

“I sought security elsewhere, but there remained an empty incompleteness, finally a despair. I turned to God in helplessness. He met me by increasing my faith and hope slowly.

“I attended a prayer group obediently for a year and a half, longing for a closer walk that would enable me to experience the things which the Bible says a Christian should experience. Again God answered my prayers: through the testimonies of others and searching God’s Word.

“His Spirit convicted me to humble myself to ask for prayer to be baptized with His Spirit, and take that step of faith necessary to receive Him. I did, with the Lord’s help, and He granted me a tongue with which I could praise Him continually.

“I have experienced a super abundance of joy and peace and comfort that no one can take away

from me. . . . He also makes me painfully aware of ‘myself’ that offends and hinders His growth in me. How blessed to confess these things, be cleansed, and granted more strength to stand.

“The enemy is more real, too, but through God’s Word, which has come alive, Christ sets me free from Satan’s power. . . .

“He is my Comforter, as His language of prayer and praise flow through my mind silently at any time, anywhere, in any situation; or aloud, through my lips and voice, when alone . . .

“God speaks to me everywhere: in the liturgy, hymns, sermons, Scripture. His Spirit witnesses to the truth I feel in my heart. I long that all may share this blessed oneness in Christ Jesus who sustains us in His power” (Larry Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 13-14).

aa) According to Christenson, his tongues experience alone accomplished what Christ’s forgiveness, salvation, the obedience of baptism, prayer, and Bible study couldn’t. That’s a bold and unbiblical claim that, when followed by others, leads them away from the biblical disciplines that lead to true spiritual maturity into a quest for a subjective emotional experience.

bb) He says that he wanted to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and take that step of faith ***necessary to receive Him*** .

That position contradicts:

- Rom. 8:9, which says that if you don't have the Spirit, you are not a child of God.
 - Rom. 8:14, which says that *all* believers are led by the Holy Spirit.
 - 1 Cor. 6:19, which says that all believers are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in us, whom we have from God.
 - 1 Cor. 12:13, which teaches that all Christians are already Spirit-baptized (see the section on Spirit Baptism earlier in this study).
- cc) The essence of Christenson's testimony is self-edification, which isn't the purpose of spiritual gifts, and which Paul prohibits (1 Cor. 14:12).
- dd) Spiritual gifts are given for the common good of the Body of Christ, not for individual edification (1 Cor. 12:7).

ii) The testimony of John Sherrill

“What's the use of speaking in tongues?” The only way I can answer that is to say, ‘What's the use of a bluebird? What is the use of a sunset?’ Just sheer, unmitigated uplift, just joy unspeakable and with it health and peace and rest and release from burdens and tensions.

“When I started praying in tongues I felt, and people told me I looked, twenty years younger. . . . I am built up, am given joy, courage, peace, the

sense of God's presence; and I happen to be a weak personality who needs this" (John Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, p. 83).

aa) According to Sherrill, a tongues experience allegedly brings:

- Sheer, unmitigated uplift
- Joy unspeakable
- Courage
- Health and peace and rest
- Release from burdens and tensions
- The sense of God's presence
- And will cause you to look and feel twenty years younger

bb) Is it any wonder that so many people are seeking it?

But nowhere in Scripture are believers admonished, exhorted, instructed, or expected to seek a tongues experience for any of those benefits.

cc) Tongues isn't a universal spiritual cure-all, nor is it the pinnacle of spirituality.

Every theological camp has those who default morally, so I don't want to sound unkind, but "tongues" as practiced today obviously doesn't bring a higher or deeper level of spirituality if the examples of some of its most prominent proponents are considered.

But behind such moral disqualifications is a theological system that creates toleration for *many* excesses

such as the health, wealth, and prosperity; teaching; emotionalism; and shallow exegesis.

2) Another common error is that tongues is mindless communion with God (that the tongues-speaker's "spirit" is communing with God while his "understanding" is bypassed).

a) That error is so prominent that some even attempt to teach it to their children. But tongues was a spiritual gift, and *nowhere in Scripture is anyone trained to receive a spiritual gift*. On the contrary, the Spirit distributes them sovereignly and individually just as *He* wills - 1 Cor. 12:11).

b) ***Dr. John MacArthur reports:*** "Someone sent me a sample of some charismatic Sunday School literature designed to teach kindergarten children to speak in tongues. It is titled 'I've Been Filled with the Holy Spirit!!!' and is an eight-page coloring book. One page has a caricature of a smiling weight-lifter with a T-shirt that says 'Spirit-Man.' Under him is printed 1 Corinthians 14:4: 'He that speaks in an unknown tongue builds himself up.'

"Another page features a boy who looks like Howdy Doody with his hands lifted up. A dotted outline pictures where his lungs would be, (this evidently represents his spirit.) Inside the lung-shaped diagram is printed 'BAH-LE ODOMA TA LAH-SE-TA NO-MO.' A cartoon-style balloon coming from his mouth repeats the words, 'BAH-LE ODOMA TA LAH-SE-TA NO-MO.' Under the boy 1 Corinthians 14:14 is printed: 'For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.'"

"That expresses the typical charismatic perspective. The gift of tongues is viewed as a wholly mystical ability that somehow

operates in a person's spirit but utterly bypasses the mind. Many Charismatics are even told that they must purposefully switch off their minds to enable the gift to function" (*Charismatic Chaos*, p. 220).

- c) Later in this study we will see the proper interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:4, 14. But for now be reminded that God *never* requires us to bypass our minds when worshiping Him.

On the contrary, we're to worship Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (cf. Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

- d) But how do we deal with a phenomenon that has spread even to the kindergartens of the movement? Let's begin by discussing a crucial principle that will stand us in good stead throughout this study:

d. A crucial principle

- 1) Though many people view tongues as unintelligible ecstatic utterances, *biblical tongues were always known languages that were understood by one or more of their hearers, and probably understood by the speaker as well* (at least in part).

- 2) Dr. Robert Thomas comments: "The special enabling resulting from the tongues gift meant *unusual capabilities with foreign languages*. It was a person receiving immediate ability to speak languages that he had never acquired by natural means" (p. 46, emphasis added).

- 3) Tongues were known languages in Acts 2:1-14.

- v. 1 *When the day of Pentecost had come, they [the twelve disciples, not the 120, cf. 1:26] were all together in one place.*

"Pentecost" means "fiftieth." It is was the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated seven weeks (50 days)

after the Passover. The Pentecostal Movement derives its name from this passage.

- v. 2 *And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

Perhaps they were gathered in the temple area rather than a private house--although the language of the text allows for either (Bruce).

Note Luke 24:53 - The disciples were continually in the temple after Jesus' departure. Additionally, it was the disciples whom Jesus said would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

- v. 3 *And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.*
- v. 4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other **tongues** [glossais] as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

"Other" = Tongues other than their native languages; unlearned languages.

- v. 5 *Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven.*
- v. 6 *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own **language** [dialecto: dialect].*
- v. 7 *And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"*

Their reaction indicates that only the disciples spoke in tongues, because they were Galileans (cf. 1:11 - “Men of Galilee”), and others in the Upper Room were from Jerusalem and Judea (i.e., Jesus’ mother and brothers).

- v. 8 *And how is it that we each hear them **in our own language** [dialecto: dialect] to which we were born?*
- v. 9 *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*
- v. 10 *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,*
- v. 11 *Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own **tongues** [glossais] speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”*

People from 15 geographical areas heard the tongues-speaking of the disciples.

How could twelve men communicate in that many languages? The people hearing them speak probably represented no more than twelve language groups, or the disciples may have spoken more than one language under the Spirit’s guidance.

- v. 12 *And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”*
- v. 13 *But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”*

Hearing so many different languages spoken at one time caused some hearers to mock the disciples, accusing them of drunkenness.

Note 1 Cor. 14:23 - “If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all

“speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?”

People who don't understand the languages gain no benefit from them. That's Paul's point in 1 Cor. 14, as we will see.

- v. 14 *But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them . . .*”

As with verse 7, this verse also indicates that the 12 disciples were the ones speaking in tongues.

- a) Conclusions from Acts 2:1-14:

Note that the “‘tongues’ of verses 4 and 11 were one and the same phenomenon as the ‘language’ in verses 6 and 8” (Thomas, p. 46). They were *known* languages.

- b) Incidentally, some teach that the real Pentecostal miracle was one of hearing, not speaking (“We heard them in our own languages”).

But the text also says, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and ***began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.***”

Clearly it was a miracle of ***the mouth, not the ears!***

- e. The consistent pattern

We have shown that in Acts 2 tongues were known languages. The following extended study will show that they were known languages throughout the New Testament.

WERE BIBLICAL TONGUES KNOWN LANGUAGES?

Did tongues-speakers in Scripture speak in known foreign languages, unknown ecstatic speech, or both? Those are the questions this portion of our study will address. They are important questions because most modern tongues practitioners admit that they are not speaking in known languages when exercising their “gift of tongues.” They believe they are speaking in ecstatic utterances that are understood only by God and by believers who have the gift of interpretation.

Therefore, if we can show that tongues in Scripture were always known languages, we will gain a clear understanding of the passages that speak of this phenomenon, and will also have a biblical yardstick by which to measure the contemporary tongues movement. Any experience that fails the test of Scripture is not of God, and Christians should never be encouraged to seek it.

What follows are the primary arguments in support of the view that tongues in Scripture were always known languages.

1. THE CONTINUITY OF TERMINOLOGY

- a. We have already shown that tongues in the Acts 2 were known languages.
 - 1) The “tongues” of Acts 2:4 and 11 were one and the same phenomenon as the “language” of verses 6 and 8. They were *known* languages.
 - 2) The other occurrences of tongues in the Book of Acts (Acts 10 - Cornelius and his household; Acts 19 - the disciples of John the Baptist) were the same gift and experience as given at Pentecost.

Acts 10:45-47 - “All the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ‘Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit *just as we did*, can he?’”

Acts 11:15-17 - Peter reported to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, saying, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, *just as He did upon us at the beginning*. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave

to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

- 3) The Greek word "*glossa*" [translated "tongues" in Acts and 1 Corinthians] primarily means human language when used in Scripture. That is true also in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), where it appears 30 times and *always* means normal human language.
 - 4) "Language" in Acts 2:6 & 8 translates the Greek word "*dialektos*," from which we get our English word "*dialect*" (idioms within a language group). Some of those at Pentecost heard God's message proclaimed in their own language group; some in their own dialect. Such classifications don't apply to unintelligible ecstatic speech because such speech comprises non-related sounds that don't fall into the category of a language.
- b. The terminology remains the same from Acts to 1 Corinthians.

"Since the same terminology is used in 1 Corinthians 12-14 as in Acts, one must assume a continuity of meaning. The two sources must be consistent unless somewhere a clear-cut change is made evident, which is not the case" (Hodge, p. 249).

- c. A confusing King James addition:

Unfortunately, the King James translators inserted the adjective "unknown" before "tongues" in 1 Corinthians 14 (verses 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27). Apparently they thought that the Corinthian tongues phenomenon consisted of speaking in an unknown, ecstatic utterance. "Unknown" is italicized in those King James passages because it is not in the original Greek text, and therefore should not be used in support of the ecstatic speech position.

2. THE TIME OF WRITING

"The gift of 'tongues' throughout the Book of Acts from chapter 2 (A.D. 33) to the end (A.D. 60) was a real language. Since 1 Corinthians was written during this same time period (A.D. 56), there is no reason to believe that it is anything but a real language (Geisler, p. 167).

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF LUKE TO PAUL

Luke (who wrote Acts in A.D. 60) and Paul (who wrote 1 Corinthians in A.D. 56) were close companions. Luke was undoubtedly acquainted with the contents of 1 Corinthians, either through reading the letter or listening to

Paul's teaching. It is unlikely that both would use the same terminology, at the same time, to describe different manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Foreign languages were spoken in Acts, and foreign languages must also have been spoken at Corinth.

4. THE CHURCH'S DEVELOPMENT

"In addition to continuity in the use of *glossa* ["tongues"], one must also weigh a continuity in the infant church's historical development. To change the nature of one of her basic tools for demonstrating God's presence and activity between Pentecost (Acts 2, A.D. 30) and Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 12-14, A.D. 55) injects an unnecessary break in her development that does not lend itself to satisfactory explanation" (Hodge, p. 248).

5. THE CLASSIFYING OF TONGUES

First Corinthians 12:10 speaks of different "kinds" of languages. The Greek word translated *kinds* is *genos*, which means a family, group, race, kind, sort, or nation (i.e., a language family). Unintelligible ecstatic speech cannot be classified into language families.

6. THE ILLUSTRATION OF ISAIAH 28:11-12

First Corinthians 14:21 says, "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,' says the Lord."

That verse parallels the gift of tongues with the tongues (language) of the Assyrians (Isaiah 28:11-12), who came in judgment upon unbelieving Israel. Their language sounded strange to the Jewish people, but it was a known language none-the-less.

Note verses 22-23, wherein Paul makes no distinction between the tongues (*glossa*) of the Assyrians and the gift of tongues (*glossa*): "So then tongues (*glossa* - as illustrated by the language of the Assyrians) are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe. If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues (*glossa*) and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?"

Obviously Paul isn't saying that the Assyrians had the spiritual gift of tongues, but simply that God used their natural language as a sign to unbelieving Israel.

7. ***THE CONTINUITY OF “SIGN” AND “GIFT”***

- a. Some teach that tongues in the book of Acts is the ***sign*** of tongues, and 1 Corinthians 12-14 is the ***gift*** of tongues. When Paul says, “All do not speak in tongues, do they?” (1 Corinthians 12:30), he is referring to the ***gift*** of tongues, not the ***sign***. Therefore, while every believer is to speak in tongues as an initial sign of Spirit Baptism, all do not have the ongoing spiritual gift of tongues.
- b. It seems artificial at best to draw a distinction in the nature of tongues based on “sign” versus “gift.” Apparently Paul made no such distinction. In 1 Corinthians 14:22 he calls the gift of tongues a “sign”, which designates its ***purpose***, as over against a “gift”, which designates its ***source*** (a gift of the Spirit).

8. ***THE NEED FOR INTERPRETATION***

- a. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 Paul introduces the gift of interpretation of languages. The Greek word translated *interpretation (hermeneuo)*, as used here, means “translation.”
- b. To translate is to take something in one language and put it into its equivalent in another known language. You cannot translate unintelligible ecstatic speech.
- c. “What does ‘interpret’ mean? In non-charismatic passages, it refers to an exposition [explanation and application] of Old Testament Scripture (Luke 24:27) or to a translation from one known, foreign language to another (John 1:38, 42; 9:7, Heb. 7:2). In both cases, it is an attempt to make clear through explanation or translation what is said in a known language. These usages must govern the meaning of the gift of interpretation” (Gromacki, p. 62).
- d. “There is strong evidence for assigning the usual meaning of ‘interpret’ in the sense of translating a foreign language into a language understandable to the listeners. This is the predominant use of the cognate [root or related] verb in the New Testament (John 1:38, 42; 9:7; Heb. 7:2), and of the compound verb as well (Acts 9:36).

“There is no legitimate reason for making this gift an ability in assigning intelligible content to a series of sounds that in themselves have no intelligible meaning to anyone anywhere. The concept of translating a language is also that which dominates the [Greek Old Testament’s] usage of *hermeneuo*. The possibility that the word is here used in the sense of ‘explanation’ or ‘exposition’ is quite remote” (Thomas, p. 181).

9. THE NEED FOR VERIFICATION

“Speaking in foreign languages which were not learned would certainly constitute a divine miracle; however, speaking in gibberish or in unknown sounds could easily be done by either a Christian or an unsaved person. There is no objective standard by which such speaking could be evaluated. Therefore, it is logical to assume that God would institute a miracle that men could not duplicate through human simulation” (Gromacki, p. 65).

10. CONCLUSION:

Biblical tongues were known languages!

*****#

We have seen that the gift of tongues was the Spirit-given ability to speak in languages not learned by the speaker through natural means. The gift had specific purposes, which were being violated by the Corinthian assembly. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 14 to correct that violation.

The following section of our study takes a detailed look at 1 Corinthians 14, which in large part reflects the work of Dr. Robert Thomas of The Master’s Seminary (*Exegetical Digest of 1 Corinthians 12-14*).

1 CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION:

Although written primarily to correct the abuse of tongues in first-century Corinth, this passage has a much broader application because it calls believers of every age to understand and properly exercising our own spiritual gifts.

1. An illustration

Shortly after the Northridge Earthquake, my wife and I visited the San Fernando Valley and saw for ourselves some of the unbelievable devastation that occurred there.

As we drove past what remains of the Northridge Mall, I was reminded of the dramatic rescue of Salvador, the street sweeper operator who was trapped in his vehicle after the mall’s multi-level parking structure collapsed on him during the quake.

Two teams of rescue workers risked their own lives by laboring all day long to extricate him from the rubble. Each aftershock brought renewed fears that they, along with Salvador, would be buried in a fresh collapse.

When Salvador was finally safely rescued and transported to a nearby hospital, everyone cheered and hailed the rescuers as true heroes--and rightly so. But can you imagine the outcry of anger and grief if, after placing Salvador into their care, the hospital staff refused to treat him, and allowed him to die for lack of attention? What an unthinkable situation!

However, what is unthinkable in medical practice is all too common in the church. Remember, Christ *died* for His Church (Acts 20:28), having redeemed her with His own precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). But, as 1 Corinthians shows, the church can languish in immaturity and spiritual stagnation if believers neglect, abuse, or withhold their spiritual gifts--just as a patient would languish and eventually die if medical personnel misapplied or withheld their vital skills.

Sadly, spiritual gifts, which were given for the growth and operation of Christ's Body, can be neglected, convoluted, or misapplied. Therefore, the abuses addressed in 1 Corinthians 14 extend to every church in every age. Even if there were no contemporary tongues issue to address, this chapter would have value for us because it addresses the misuse of spiritual gifts, which occurs in virtually every church.

This chapter shows us the problems that arise when believers fail to understand and use their gifts properly, or when gifts are not governed by love, wisdom, and humility. For example, imagine the confusion if everyone in with the gift of teaching insisted on teaching in the weekly church service, or if everyone with the gift of hospitality (helps) insisted on everyone in the church visiting them every day so they could exercise their gift.

Imagine the loss if those gifted with mercy, administration, or giving were to withhold their gifts. One of the most damaging things in a church is gifted people who refuse to minister because they've been offended, or feel they aren't appreciated enough, or minister for selfish reasons. Each of those situations is addressed in this chapter.

2. *How Paul dealt with the issue*

- a. As we have already seen (pp. 6-7 of this study), Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers for elevating tongues over other spiritual gifts, and for neglecting some gifts.
- b. For balance he also stresses that tongues had an important role to play in the church, so they were not to be ignored. However, tongues were to be governed by the instructions he gave in this chapter.

3. *Tongues defined:*

- a. No discussion of tongues at Corinth is completely adequate because the precise nature of this gift is obscured by its dormancy throughout the centuries. However, the issue Paul addresses in chapter 14 is probably the improper use of a legitimate spiritual gift (as opposed to a counterfeit gift--although there is some support for that view as well).
- b. Apparently those with the gift of tongues could choose whether or not to employ it in communicating what God had revealed to them.

Similar guidelines were placed on prophets, who received revelation but were to speak in orderly succession and to give preference to the prophet who received the more recent revelation (vv. 29-31).

4. *With that introduction, let's now study 1 Corinthians 14.*

I. THE AXIOM

(An axiom is a commonly held truth or principle.)

Spiritual gifts were given for the edification of the church.

A. THE AXIOM STATED

The primary purpose for spiritual gifts is to bring glory to God by edifying His church.

B. A COMMON THEME

1. *That axiom is the interpretive key that unlocks 1 Corinthians 14. Beyond that, it is the key to effective, productive ministry within the church.*
2. *It is the primary thought running through chapters 12-14. Any violation of that axiom is a violation of love and of the intent of spiritual gifts. That's why Paul wrote chapter 13 as a corrective.*
 - *12:7* - "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
 - *14:3* - Prophecy is superior to tongues because the "one who prophesies speaks to men for edification."
 - *14:4* - "One who prophesies edifies the church."

- **14:5** - “Greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”
 - **14:12** - “Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.” (Paul may have been speaking sarcastically.)
 - **14:26** - “Let all things be done for edification.”
3. ***Peter adds: “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another” (1 Pet. 4:10).***

C. A CONTROVERSIAL CONCLUSION

1. ***Most contemporary tongues speakers would argue that corporate edification is the purpose of tongues only when the church is assembled, and that tongues-speaking as a private prayer language and for personal edification is permitted according to the following verses:***

14:2 - “One who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God.”

14:4 - “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.”

14:17 - “You are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.”

14:28 - “If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.”

2. ***The following study of chapter 14 will clarify Paul’s teaching on those verses and show that speaking in tongues isn’t meant for personal edification or private prayer.***

II. THE VIOLATION

Verses 1-4 - “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

“But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”

A. THE VIOLATION STATED

Tongues as practiced at Corinth could not edify the church (therefore the practice violated its intended purpose. Paul wrote chapter 14 to correct that violation).

B. THE VIOLATION STUDIED

1. The priority of love

“Pursue love.” - v. 1a

- a. They were to pursue love, which is the more excellent way (12:31).
- b. Self-centered or thoughtless exercise of their spiritual gifts wasn't loving, and therefore needed to stop (1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5).

“When Christians of any generation have been able to take their eyes off themselves and look to the needs of the rest of Christ's body, they have witnessed and do witness remarkably rapid growth of the body. When unselfish devotion prevails, the lost are won and Christians are strengthened.

“Such evidence of love is an unmistakable badge of Christ's follower, and it inevitably results in wholesome fruit. ‘By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another’ (John 13:35)” (Thomas, pp. 129-30).

2. The place of spiritual gifts

“Yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts.” - v. 1b

Spiritual gifts weren't to be neglected, but were to be properly exercised.

3. The preference of prophecy over tongues

“Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” - v. 1c

- a. The context of Paul's statement is twofold:

- 1) Within the Body of Christ (cf. chapter 12).
 - 2) Within the gathered assembly of believers (cf. v. 26 - “When you assemble”).
- b. As individual Christians, they were to desire the edification that prophecy brought, and when assembled for public worship, they were to desire the expression of that gift over tongues, which could not edify (except when translated--but even then, it is the translation that edifies, not the tongues).
- c. Remember our definitions of the revelatory gifts, prophecy being one of them:
- 1) ***The Word of Wisdom*** was direct revelation from God of things previously hidden. Perhaps uniquely given to those through whom Scripture came.
 - 2) ***The Word of Knowledge*** was perhaps revelation specifically related to the application of Old Testament prophecies to New Testament circumstances.
 - 3) ***The Gift of Prophecy*** perhaps emphasizes the predictive element of revelation.
 - “It was this ability to prophesy future happenings accurately that provided this gift with its own authenticating value” (Dr. Robert Thomas, p. 43).
 - Additionally, in prophecy ***God communicated directly through individuals***, but not necessarily revealing new biblical truth. Often it was the application of truth to a situation, or revealing future circumstances.
 - It certainly involved preaching, but was not preaching as we know it, because this preaching had a definite revelatory element:

1 Cor. 14:29-33 - “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all

prophecy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

- In its general sense, Paul defined prophecy as speaking “to men for edification and exhortation and consolation” (v. 3).
- Today we no longer have revelatory prophecy. Preaching the revealed Word is its closest counterpart.

“What the gift of prophecy did for the early church, the gifts of teaching (Rom. 12:7) and exhortation (Rom. 12:8) have done since the completion of written New Testament revelation” (Thomas, p. 121).

4. *The futility of speaking to God (when you should be speaking to men)*

- a. Who is being addressed in tongues?

“For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God - v. 2a

- 1) Tongues, like every spiritual gift, was given for the edification of the Body of Christ, but it cannot serve that purpose unless it is translated (v. 5).
- 2) Most tongues advocates today claim that tongues is a special form of communication with God, because he who speaks in a tongue speaks to God, not men.
- 3) But Paul doesn’t say that tongues are designed for personal use in speaking to God. On the contrary, they are intended to be understood by men and thereby to bring edification. That’s the main point of the passage!
- 4) Those who speak in an untranslated tongue in a Christian assembly speak to God, not men, because GOD IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THEM!

Paul says, “for [because] no one understands.”

That’s why they speak to God--not because tongues were designed for special communication with divinity.

b. Who doesn’t understand?

“For no one understands.” - v. 2b

- 1) ***“No one understands”*** must be qualified by the context. This is tongues-speaking within a local assembly in which no one is of the language being spoken in tongues. Obviously tongues, when rightly expressed, were understood. That was the point of Pentecost.
- 2) But speaking to God alone isn’t the purpose of tongues. Paul isn’t defining the *nature* of the gift; he’s explaining its ***abuse***.
- 3) Note the content of tongues as disclosed in other passages:
 - At Pentecost the perplexed hearers said, “We hear them *in our own tongues* speaking of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:11).
 - In Acts 10, Peter and his Jewish companions heard Cornelius and his family and friends “speaking with tongues and exalting God” (v. 46).
 - In Acts 19, the disciples of John the Baptist spoke with tongues and prophesied.
- 4) Those occurrences seem to indicate that the tongues-speakers spoke ***about*** God, rather than ***to*** God, although praise and worship are implied.
- 5) Possibly Paul was being sarcastic in 14:2. Verse 12 might be sarcastic as well: “Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”
- 6) The ***nature*** of tongues was to exalt God, but clearly that wasn’t its ***purpose***, which was to authenticate the apostles (Mark 16, Acts 2), to

serve as a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22) and, when translated, to edify believers (v. 26).

While the Corinthians may have been truly exalting God when they spoke out in the assembly (cf. v. 17), they were also violating the purpose of their gift.

- 7) To say that only God understands what is being said doesn't condone the practice.

Imagine someone standing in a service today and praising God in a foreign language that no one present understands. When asked what was said, you could rightly reply, "***Only God knows!***"

- c. See explanation of verse 9 below.
d. Why don't men understand?

"But in his spirit he speaks mysteries." - v. 2c

- 1) "***But in his spirit***" defined:

- a) "But" = Greek *de*, which can be translated "but, moreover, or and."
- b) Note that "***his***" ("in *his* spirit) is italicized. That means it isn't in the Greek text. Literally the text says, "But *in spirit* he speaks mysteries."
- c) That raises the question of what spirit is in view here: the human spirit, the Holy Spirit, or a spiritual gift?
- "Spirit" is commonly understood to refer to the human spirit. That's why NASB inserts "his."
 - The KJV reads: "In *the* spirit he speaketh mysteries", apparently referring to the Holy Spirit.
 - The NIV reads: "With *his* spirit" and adds a footnote indicating it could be translated "by the Spirit."

- I believe it refers to his “spirit-manifestation” (spiritual gift), because the same word translated “spirit” in verse 2 is translated (in its plural form) “spiritual gifts” in verses 1 and 12 (also in 12:1).

2) **“Mysteries”** defined:

- a) Paul is not saying that the tongues speaker is speaking mysterious things to God. There are no mysteries to God--especially if He Himself has inspired the message.
- b) It is possible that Paul is saying that the message revealed to the tongues speaker, which should be made clear to the congregation through translation, remains unknown to them (a “mystery”) for lack of translation. However, elsewhere in his writings “mysteries” always means truths about God that were hidden for a time but are now revealed (cf. Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 13:2; 15:51; Eph. 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; Col. 1:26).

That is consistent with tongues in the Book of Acts, by which the speakers proclaimed the mighty deeds of God, exalting God, and prophesied. That is the likely meaning in this passage as well.

- c) See explanation of verse 6 below.

5. ***The impropriety of self-edification***

- a. Prophecy edifies the church

“But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification [even] exhortation and consolation.” - v. 3

Prophecy is superior to tongues because it edifies the church through exhortation and consolation (two aspects of edification). The “and” following “edification” carries the meaning of “even”, and further defines edification:

“One who prophesies speaks to men for edification: even exhortation and consolation.”

b. Tongues edify the speaker

“One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.” - v. 4

Untranslated tongues is inferior to prophecy because it edifies the speaker only.

- 1) “The tongues-speaker apparently had a limited understanding of the general nature of his own utterance. Otherwise, he himself could have received no edification” (Thomas, p. 121).
- 2) But apparently his understanding was not precise enough to be conveyed to others apart from the gift of interpretation.
- 3) Self-edification is a misuse of one’s spiritual gift(s) because believers are gifted for the benefit of others, not themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 25; 13:5, 6; 14:12, 19, 26).
- 4) Additionally, there is a destructive kind of edification that Paul may be referring to here (cf. 1 Cor. 8:10). But I believe Paul is using the term in its more commonly understood sense.
 - a) For example, my spiritual gift of teaching requires me to study Scripture extensively. As I study, I am edified (built up). But if I never teach others, I have violated the highest purpose of my gift.
 - b) Similarly, if a first century tongues-speaker exercised his gift without regard for edifying others, he violated its purpose.

III. THE CORRECTIVE STATED

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

A. A HYPERBOLIC STATEMENT

“Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy.” - v. 5a

- 1. “I wish that you all spoke in tongues” is hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis).*
- 2. Paul knew that every believer didn’t have the gift of tongues (12:11, 30), just as he knew that every believer didn’t have the gift of prophecy. He wasn’t devaluating tongues-speaking altogether; he was merely regulating it.*
- 3. Paul knew first-hand the value of tongues when properly exercised (v. 18), and he wished that every believer had that ministry. Yet even more so, he wished that they might prophecy.*

B. A CRUCIAL GUIDELINE

“Greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.” - v. 5b

- 1. Again Paul states that tongues edified the church only when interpreted, otherwise tongues were to remain silent and prophecy was to prevail.*
- 2. “Interprets” defined:*
 - a. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 Paul introduces the gift of interpretation of languages. The Greek word translated *interpretation* (*hermeneuo*), as used there, means “translation.”*
 - b. “What does ‘interpret’ mean? In non-charismatic passages, it refers to an exposition of Old Testament Scripture (Luke 24:27) or to a translation from one known, foreign language to another (John 1:38, 42; 9:7, Heb. 7:2).*

“In both cases, it is an attempt to make clear through explanation or translation what is said in a known language. These usages must govern the meaning of the gift of interpretation” (Gromacki, p. 62).

- c. One argument against tongues as unintelligible ecstatic speech is that such speech can't be translated.
- d. For further details, see above section titled “Were biblical tongues known languages?”

IV. THE CORRECTIVE ILLUSTRATED

Verses 6-12 - “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”

“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”

“So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”

“There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”

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

A. THE CORRECTIVE ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL'S OWN MINISTRY

“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?” - v. 6

1. ***Even one of apostolic rank couldn't profit the church through tongues-speaking.***
2. ***If Paul came speaking in tongues, it would profit nothing unless he spoke by way of revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching, which is an extended definition of the function of interpretation.***

That gives us a clue regarding the “mysteries” spoken in tongues:

“When interpreted into a familiar language, the ‘mysteries’ (14:2) of the tongues utterance were found to contain revelation, knowledge, prophesying, and doctrine. It was through making these understandable to the listeners that Paul hypothesized his coming with a tongues message could profit.

“There was, therefore, overlapping between interpretation on the one hand and the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching on the other” (Thomas, p. 125).

B. THE CORRECTIVE ILLUSTRATED BY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?”

“For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.” - vv. 7-9

1. The illustrations

a. Illustration #1 - A flute or harp

“Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?” - v. 7

- 1) Flutes and harps were common instruments known for making beautiful music.
- 2) If they played unrelated sounds or in monotone, their value would be sacrificed.

b. Illustration #2 - A bugle

“For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?” - v. 8

- 1) This depicts a more serious situation than the previous illustration. If troops didn't rally for battle, the consequences could be serious indeed.
- 2) Whether in worship, entertainment, or war, distinct sounds are absolutely necessary.

2. *The application*

“So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air” - v. 9

- a. “By the tongue” refers to the gift of tongues and applies the previous illustrations to the Corinthian situation.
- b. Like the indistinct sounds of a flute, harp, or bugle, untranslated tongues are unrecognizable and useless.
- c. There is no audience other than the air they breathed.
- d. ***Please note:*** Here Paul gives clarification to his statement in verse 2 - “One who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands.”
 - Verse 2 says God alone understands.
 - Verse 17 says they may be thanking God well enough, but . . .
 - Verse 9 shows the futility of such speaking: As far as the church is concerned, they were merely speaking into the air. Such speaking is futile.
- e. Whether then or now, if someone speaks in an untranslated language, he cannot justify the practice by claiming to be speaking to God. He is merely speaking into the air.

Keep in mind that Paul isn't defining the purpose of tongues here, he is correcting a misuse.

C. THE CORRECTIVE ILLUSTRATED BY HUMAN LANGUAGES

“There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.” - vv. 10-12

1. *The illustration*

“There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning” - v. 10

There are many languages in the world, but each has meaning to those who know the language.

2. *The alienation*

“If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me” - v. 11

- a. ***“Barbarian”*** = Foreigner (one who is unacquainted with the language being spoken).
- b. The Greek word is *barbaros*, which is onomatopoeic (someone whose language sounds like “bar, bar, bar, bar”).
- c. Such language barriers lead to confusion and fruitless communication.

“No language is unintelligible in itself. Unintelligibility is caused by foreignness, not by a deficiency in the language. The problem is with the hearer, not the speaker” (Thomas, p. 128).

3. *The application*

“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church” - v. 12

- a. Paul may be speaking sarcastically here.
- b. If not, he may be commending their zeal. Zeal wasn't the problem; application of that zeal for the right purpose was. They were to edify the church in all things.

V. **THE CORRECTIVE APPLIED**

Verses 13-19 - “Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

“What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.

“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

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

A. **PRAY SO AS TO BE INTERPRETED**

“Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” - v. 13

1. *A common misunderstanding*

- a. On the surface verse 13 implies that individual believers can request specific spiritual gifts from God. But that contradicts 1 Corinthians 12:11, which says that the Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His own sovereign choice.
- b. More specifically, it seems to say that tongues speakers should pray to receive the gift of interpretation.

2. *A closer look*

- a. “That he may interpret” is better translated, “With the purpose that someone may interpret.”
- b. Paul is saying this: “Seeing then that edification of the church is to be the prime consideration in your zeal for spiritual gifts, let the one praying with a tongue do so with a view toward someone interpreting what he says” (i.e., “pray with a tongue in order to generate an interpretation of that prayer”).

- c. Whether the tongues speaker or someone else interprets isn't specified. Verse 5 seems to indicate that the speaker may have had the gift of interpretation, but verse 27 indicates otherwise. Verse 28 implies that it was uncommon for the speaker to possess the gift of interpretation (Thomas, p. 211).

3. *A natural transition*

That interpretation of verse 13 leads into Paul's fuller treatment of praying with tongues in verses 14-17.

B. PRAY SO AS TO BE FRUITFUL

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.” - v. 14

1. *An incorrect teaching*

- a. Many Charismatics use this verse to support their view that tongues-speaking allows the Christian to *bypass his or her mind and commune directly with God*, spirit to Spirit.

- 1) This is normally thought to be a *higher plane of spirituality* than can be achieved if one's mind is involved.

- 2) For example, Charismatic author Harold Bredesen, addressing an audience at the University of Chicago Theological Seminary, said:

“Tongues enables our spirits to communicate directly with God above and beyond the power of our minds to understand.”

Speaking of his own initial tongues experience he said, “Overwhelmed and overjoyed [at discovering that God loved me unreservedly], I involuntarily lifted my hands and burst out, ‘thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus.’ I could not express the inexpressible. But to my great relief, the Holy Spirit did it for me.

“It was as if a bottle uncorked within me and a torrent of words poured out in a language I had never studied. It was as if my innermost being,

which had been bound and dumb and gagged, had suddenly been given a voice. For the first time I was able to say everything to God I had ever wanted to say in a language I had never studied.

“Immediately, the theologians [at the Seminary where I was speaking] interrupted. ‘Did you understand what you were saying?’

“I knew that if I replied, no, then they would say, ‘Well, what good is it?’ Man deifies the intellect, makes it his highest faculty and measures everything in terms of what it will do for him.

“So instead of saying, ‘No I didn’t know what I was saying,’ I replied, ‘Praise God no!’

“What is the bottleneck in our praise and our worship? Isn’t it our own finite, earthbound, carnal understanding? But once our spirits have been quickened by the Spirit of God, they yearn to communicate directly to him.

“As Paul says, ‘When I speak with tongues my understanding is unfruitful.’ Of course it is unfruitful; it’s been bypassed. ‘But my spirit,’ he says, ‘that part of me that is made for communion with God, *my spirit* speaks mysteries unto God’” (*Logos Journal*, March/April, 1978).

b. “Christian Mysticism”

- 1) The notion that the highest levels of spirituality are achieved when man’s spirit bypasses his mind to commune with God goes far beyond the tongues doctrine itself. It is the basis for much of the mysticism that plagues contemporary Christianity.
 - Mysticism maintains that ultimate truth is knowable intuitively or apart from rational thought or objective reality (such as Scripture alone).
 - Inner, subjective experiences are the criterion by which truth is tested (i.e., experience defines doctrine).

2) However, if someone today claims to be receiving special messages (revelations) from God, he places himself in the role of a prophet. Therefore, he must submit to the standard of Scripture and to scrutiny from the Christian community. If he is unwilling to do so, or if his message is found to be false, he is to be rejected outright (cf. Deut. 18:20-22).

3) Arthur Johnson, in *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*, says,

“If it is true that God still does speak directly to certain gifted persons in the way He did in biblical times, and if we wish to be true to the Word, we must apply the prophet-testing structure developed in the Old and New Testaments.

“On the other hand, if some individuals or congregations are unwilling to apply these tests, they have no right to claim that any man or message is directly from God.

“These tests are objective and public. They involve careful rational evaluation by persons other than the alleged prophet. The tests are not private or subjective. They do not include ‘spirit bearing witness with spirit’ or any intuitive ‘sensing’ of the truth. A mystical approach is not even suggested. In fact, mysticism is almost necessarily ruled out by the demand for public and rational evaluation.

“It must be emphasized that speaking for God is not a light matter. God’s command to Israel was that anyone who claimed to speak for Him, but through whom He had not really spoken, was to be put to death. They were to be examined by the prescribed tests (Deut. 18:20-22). A similar, but broader, caution is issued in the New Testament [James 3:1]” (p. 126, emphasis added).

4) Here is a sampling of Scripture’s perspective on the importance of Christ-centered reason and understanding:

- a) **Salvation** requires understanding the gospel message:

Isa. 1:18 - “Come, let us reason together.”

Rom. 10:8-15 - Faith comes by hearing, believing, and confessing--each of which requires reasoning.

Rom. 10:1-3 - The Jewish unbelievers were lost because they had a zeal for God, *yet without knowledge*.

- b) **Sanctification** is the renewing and transforming of the mind, not bypassing it - ***Rom. 12:2***

Phil. 4:6 - If you want peace and joy, you are to “be anxious for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

That involves rational thought and communication.

- c) ***Spiritual purity*** comes from keeping your way according to the principles of God’s Word - ***Ps. 119:9***.

Ps. 119:97-105 - The psalmist *meditated* on God’s law day and night. He gained *wisdom and understanding* from the Word, therefore he hated every false way. That’s how the word became a lamp to his feet and a light to his path.

Phil. 4:8 - Whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, worthy of praise, *let your mind dwell on [not bypass] these things!*

- d) *All spiritual resources* are granted through the true knowledge of Christ - ***2 Pet. 1:3***

- e) We are *commanded* to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ - ***2 Pet. 3:18***

- f) Nowhere in Scripture are we ever commanded or instructed to approach God through *mindless, mystical, worship or prayer*.

However, that is an increasingly popular approach today.

c. Consider carefully:

- 1) How can the modern tongues experience jump denominational lines, uniting Roman Catholics, extremist elements of Pentecostalism, more conservative Pentecostals and Charismatics, and Protestants of many denominations?

- It isn't unity based on doctrinal clarity or biblical authority, but on the psychological phenomenon of an *experience* taking precedence over Scripture.
- It is subjective, mystical feelings and encounters assumed to be from the Holy Spirit, but which, for the most part, are so general and nebulous in content that they defy biblical testing, which is the *only* standard God gives for determining what is truly from Him.

- 2) We must be cautious of unity at any cost.

- The satanic and apostate church of the final days will be a united church, but not united under the umbrella of biblical truth.
- Anything that draws us away from biblical authority, no matter how spiritual it may appear, must be rejected.

2. *A mid-course correction*

To balance the picture, I share this illustration from *Neil Babcox's* book, *A Search for Charismatic Reality*, in which he relates his painful struggle to come to grips with his own tongues experience. I find his comments very insightful.

“I had to be completely honest with myself about this [matter of my possessing the gifts of prophecy and tongues], because it is so easy to rationalize an experience in which one has invested a great deal of spiritual and emotional energy. It is extremely difficult to be objective about experiences we think have brought us closed to Jesus and made us intimate with the Holy Spirit.

“On the one hand, I feared to quench the Holy Spirit, and so dishonor the Giver by questioning His gift. But, on the other hand, I feared self-deception and error. In such circumstances one can only pray, ‘O God, be tender in your judgments.’

“Finally, I admitted it to myself. The truth is: there was nothing miraculous about this ‘gift’ of mine---I *learned* to speak in tongues. Here was no sign to marvel at. I had attained fluency in my tongues speech through practice, not by the sudden power of the Holy Spirit. And in retrospect, I can see I was guided more by the peer pressure of my well-meaning friends than by the Holy Spirit.

“Nevertheless, I must confess that at first I didn’t want to stop speaking in tongues. I had grown so accustomed to the practice that the prospect of quitting was like parting company with an old friend. Quitting was especially distasteful because speaking in tongues had seemed to be such an enriching aspect of my personal devotions. To stop now, after all those years, left a spiritual vacuum in my devotional life that my soul abhorred.

“However, I soon began to realize that speaking in tongues was not as edifying as I had previously thought. How could it be, since I was uttering words and phrases of my own invention? Therefore, I was beginning to understand that, far from being a deeper dimension of prayer, praying in tongues was an evasion--a failure to grapple with the profundities of prayer.

“I have always felt there is an aura of mystery surrounding prayer. At no time are we more aware of our weakness and inadequacy than when we kneel to pray. As Paul said, “we do not know how to pray as we should” (Romans 8:26 NASB). In the face of such spiritual helplessness, tongues can become a crutch. For example, when I found myself mute and dumb in His presence, I could far too quickly remedy the situation by praying in tongues. Again, when I was oppressed with a sense of guilt and felt alienated from God, it was far more easy to pray in tongues than to search my heart for the cause of the guilt.

“But what was all of this if it was not an evasion? Whereas previously I could avoid the difficulties inherent in prayer by resorting to tongues, now I found myself praying, ‘Lord, teach me to pray.’

“Undoubtedly, the most profound prayer is one which, having faced obstacles and hindrances by faith, fights its way through to the throne of grace. The need is not for a ‘prayer language,’ but for a truer grasp of the language of prayer. Indeed, prayer is a pouring out of the heart before God. But it reaches its more profound dimensions when it is prayed with the intensity of a Hannah, or the passion of the psalmist who wrote, ‘Out of the depths, O God, I cry unto Thee.’

“Now the time had come for me to squarely face the problem that God’s people have always faced in their efforts to pray: how to express the inexpressible. In the words of the familiar hymn, ‘What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend?’ Precisely! What language *could* I borrow?

“And so . . . I laid aside the ‘gift of tongues.’ It wasn’t as if I had set out to disprove the authenticity of speaking in tongues. On the contrary! I advocated speaking in tongues. Still more, I loved speaking in tongues. And in the face of mounting evidence which contradicted the validity of my own experiences, I did everything in my power to hold fast. I searched the Scriptures. I prayed. I practiced [the gift] more than many. But eventually, the gap between my experience of [this gift] and [its] portrayal in Scripture stretched my sense of integrity to the limits.

“Therefore, for me, the renunciation of [tongues] was hardly an act of unbelief; rather it was an act that required no small degree of faith. It was not doubt in God’s Word that led me to renounce [tongues]. It was faith in the truthfulness of God’s Word that led me to doubt and finally to renounce my own experiences” (pp. 64-67).

3. *A praying spirit*

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays.” - v. 14a

- a. “*My spirit*” refers to Paul’s spiritual gift of tongues (see also verses 1, 2, & 12, where the same root word is used).

The sense is this: “If I pray in a tongue, it is my Spirit-given ability to speak in a language foreign to my natural senses that is praying” (Thomas, p. 213).

- b. Those who maintain that “spirit” must refer to Paul’s human spirit, still do not establish the Charismatic doctrine of bypassing the mind when communing with God.
 - 1) In 1 Corinthians 2:11 Paul says, “Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him?”
 - 2) In that verse Paul himself teaches that a man’s spirit is directly linked to his conscience mind and rational understanding.
 - 3) That is borne out in other passages:

Mark 2:8 - “Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts.”

See also Luke 1:47; Matt. 26:42; Acts 17:16; 1 Pet. 3:4 (Budgen, pp. 52-53).

4. *An unfruitful mind*

“My spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.” - v. 14b

- a. Given the rational nature of a man’s spirit, the phrase “my mind is unfruitful” cannot mean that his mind was uninvolved in the tongues-speaking process.
- b. Despite the common Charismatic contention that “unfruitful” here means, “bypassed,” Charismatic evangelist Terry Law says:

“Praying in the spirit becomes an act of spiritual warfare. It fills your spirit with thoughts of God. It prepares your mind to receive the thoughts of God. In fact, one of the most successful means of renewing the mind is to pray in the spirit. It makes you immediately sensitive to the thoughts of God. When His thoughts come to your mind they have great power. This is the key to revelation. This is what sets you free” (*Praise Releases Faith: Transforming Power for Your Life* [Tulsa: Victory

House, 1987], p. 41. Cited in *the New Charismatics*, pp. 292-93, emphasis added).

There seems to be some confusion among Charismatics as to what tongues accomplishes within the speaker. Is his mind bypassed, or renewed? Is he conscious of the thoughts of God? If so, how is that possible apart from *thinking*?

The confusion is understandable because tongues were given for *communication*, not *transformation*! Tongues may have edified a believer, but they did not bring spiritual transformation. That was true in the first century, and would be true today also if the gift of tongues still existed.

c. What *did* Paul mean by an unfruitful mind?

First Corinthians 14 stresses the need to edify the church. A fruitful mind, therefore, is “a mind that needs to be fruitful in the common biblical sense of bearing fruit for the benefit of others” (Budgen, p. 53).

d. In other words Paul is saying:

- “The knowledge I have is no benefit to others” (John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Epworth Press, 1958, p. 629).
- “‘My understanding produces no fruit’ i.e. it does not benefit others” (Charles Hodge, p. 288).
- “Nor is it here said, my *understanding* is dark or blind, but *unfruitful*, that is, though [I] myself understand, yet my knowledge bringeth forth no fruit to the advantage or good of others” (Matthew Poole, *A commentary on the Holy Bible*, Banner of Truth, 1979, Vol. III, p. 589).
- “The present discussion does not center on the activity or non-activity of the tongues speaker’s mind, but rather on potential benefit derived by listeners” (Thomas, p. 215).

e. Paul isn’t distinguishing between his own spirit and mind, but between his spiritual gift of tongues, and his inability to benefit his hearers apart from interpretation.

C. MINISTER WITH THE SPIRIT AND THE MIND

vv. 15-19 - “What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.

“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.

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

1. *The importance of balance*

“What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.” - v. 15

- a. Praying and singing with the *SPIRIT* is *exercising the gift of tongues* through prayer and song.
- b. Praying and singing with the *MIND* is *exercising the gift of interpretation* so that his mind is fruitful for others.
 - Granted, that is an unusual use of “mind”, but this is an unusual chapter of Scripture.
 - Additionally, in verse 19, Paul describes interpretation as *speaking with his mind*:
 - “However, in the church *I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also*, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”
 - Paul contrasts one spiritual gift (tongues) with another (interpretation), which maintains the overall thrust of verses 13-19 regarding the need for tongues to be interpreted (Thomas, p. 214).

2. *The consequences of imbalance*

The consequences of untranslated tongues are:

a. The absence of praise

“Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?” - v. 16

- 1) ***“Bless”*** = *Euloge*, from which we get “eulogy”, which is to praise or speak kindly of someone (as at a funeral service). This blessing also contained elements of thanksgiving.
- 2) ***“The one who fills the place of the ungifted”*** refers to anyone unfamiliar with the language being spoken (whether that person is a believer or unbeliever).
- 3) ***“Ungifted”*** = *idiotes*, from which we get our English word ***“idiot.”*** Here it refers to the uninformed ones.
- 4) ***“Amen”*** = “Truly,” or “So let it be.” It is a verbal affirmation of what has been said.
- 5) Note again Paul’s emphasis on ***reasoned, thoughtful worship.*** We are never to worship God blindly, ignorantly, or purely from emotions. And we’re never to cause other believers to do so either.

b. The absence of edification

“For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.” - v. 17

- 1) Untranslated tongues were not useless.

They were a legitimate means of praising God when exercised properly, but here, as in verse 4, untranslated tongues violated the gift’s intended purpose.
- 2) This is a restatement of Paul’s continual theme and our axiom: Spiritual gifts are given for edification of the church, not merely self-edification. That is not to discount the personal satisfaction and edification that comes to us as we minister our

gifts. However, their primary purpose is to benefit others.

3. *Paul's personal priority*

a. Paul's personal priority outside the church

“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all.” - v. 18

1) The possible translations:

Verse 18 can be translated three ways:

- “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all” (that is the more common translation as in NASB and NIV).
- “I give thanks to God more than all of you that I speak in tongues” (Smith, p. 56).
- “I give thanks to God [in tongues], additionally, I speak in tongues more than you all” (Thomas, p. 218-19).

2) The context is the final determiner of which translation is best. The context of chapter 14 is:

- You bless in the spirit (in tongues) - v. 16
- You give thanks in the spirit (in tongues) - v. 16
- You are giving thanks well enough (in tongues) - v. 17
- I give thanks to God (in tongues) - v. 18
- Beyond that, I speak in tongues more than you all.

Paul's tongues messages were not limited to prayers of thanksgiving. They came in other forms as well (Thomas, p. 136).

3) The preferred translation:

“I give thanks to God [in tongues], additionally, I speak in tongues more than you all” (Thomas, p. 218-19).

With inflection it would sound like this:

“You are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. *I* thank God, *I* speak in tongues more than *you all*; however, in the *church* I desire to speak *five words* with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than *ten thousand* words in a tongue” (vv. 17-19).

4) The nature of Paul’s ministry

When did Paul exercise his gift of tongues more than the Corinthians?

- It wasn’t in Christian meetings (vv. 19, 23).
- It wasn’t in private, because the context of 1 Cor. 11-14 is public matters, and gifts weren’t given for self-edification (1 Cor. 12:7, 25; 13:5, 6; 14:12, 19, 26). Tongues were given for public use, not private (vv. 20-25).
- “It must . . . be in connection with a public ministry of some kind that Paul found need to exercise his own deep endowment of tongues. As the missionary apostle to the Gentiles, he frequently encountered new linguistic groups in his travels.

“Authenticating signs accompanied the ministry of one such as he (Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12), and tongues was one of these signs. Upon hearing a foreigner speak their own language without ever studying it, the listeners were impressed by the apostle’s miraculous demonstration and were ready to give attention to his divinely verified presentation of the gospel (cf. Acts 2:1-13).

“It was for this purpose that Paul found ample room, even an indispensable place, for tongues. He used the gift extensively in this way (1 Cor. 14:22). This, however, was far different from the Corinthian habit of exhibiting their linguistic talents among themselves as a source of selfish satisfaction” (Thomas, p. 137).

b. Paul's personal priority within the church

“However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.” - v. 19

1) As valuable as tongues were, Paul preferred to speak five words with the gift of interpretation (with “my mind”), than ten thousand with an untranslated tongue.

a) “Ten thousand words in a tongue” is hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis).

b) But consider the implications.

- First Corinthians 14 contains 5,923 words in the English NASB text.
- Paul says that he would rather speak ***just five words*** in an understandable manner than to speak the ***equivalent of two chapters*** in an untranslated tongue.
- In other words, just five words of understandable, meaningful prophecy is more valuable than 10,000 words in an untranslated tongue.
- By implication, a very brief time of ministry in the power of the Spirit and with proper motives is of far greater value than prolonged ministry in the flesh.

2) Paul sought to “***instruct others also***”, which is the primary means by which believers are edified and brought to maturity.

D. GROW UP!

v. 20 - “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

That's a call to spiritual maturity.

1. *Stop thinking like children*

“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes.” - v. 20a

- a. This a command to stop a present action (i.e., “Do not continue.”) (Rienecker & Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, p. 436).
- b. That is quite a rebuke, since the Corinthians thought they were super spiritual, but in many ways were spiritual infants.

Note: That’s another reason this chapter is so important to Christians today. It addresses not only the abuse of a spiritual gift, but also speaks to motive and exposes the ignorance, spiritual immaturity, and sinful attitudes leading to the abuse.

Note the progression:

- 1) ***1 Cor. 1:11*** - “I have been informed concerning you, my brethren . . . that there are quarrels among you.”
- 2) ***1 Cor. 1:31*** - “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”
- 3) ***1 Cor. 3:1-3*** - “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”
- 4) Because they weren’t growing, Paul had to correct problem after problem in their assembly.
 - Unity - Chapters 1-3
 - Servanthood - 4
 - Morality - 5-6
 - Marriage - 7
 - Liberty - 8-11:1
 - Men & women in the church - 11:2-16
 - The Lord’s Supper - 11:17-34

- Spiritual Gifts - 12-14
- Stewardship - 16

5) *1 Cor. 12:31* - Regarding their pursuit of the more showy, up-front gifts (primarily tongues), Paul shows them the more excellent way: *spiritual gifts ministered in love.*

6) Here in *1 Cor. 14:20* - They thought they were spiritual, yet they hadn't even come to understand the most basic elements of spiritual gifts.

7) *1 Cor. 14:36-38* - Paul says sarcastically,

“Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?”

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the *Lord's* commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized [i.e., he is to be ignored or disregarded].”

8) They made the common mistake of confusing spiritual infancy with spiritual maturity.

Remember, the Corinthians were not lacking in any gift (1:7), but they lacked godly motives when exercising some of there gifts.

c. “*Yet in evil be babes*” - Paul admonished them not to be children in their thinking, but to be infants in evil. Perhaps that refers to their evil, selfish pursuit of tongues.

2. *Start thinking like adults*

“*But in your thinking be mature.*” - v. 20b

- To progress in Christian maturity they needed to learn the basic purpose of spiritual gifts--especially tongues and prophecy.
- Additionally, they needed to reject their shallow understanding of what Christianity and Christian worship were to be.

Dr. Robert Thomas comments:

“Their craving for what was amusing rather than useful, for the fluttering and spectacular rather than the solid, was a token of their shallow understanding” (p. 140).

c. Their immaturity impacted not only their worship, but their whole lives in general (as evidenced by the many sins Paul addressed in 1 & 2 Corinthians).

d. A word for our day:

1) Paul was addressing the misuse of a spiritual gift and the sinful motives that prompted them to exalt one gift over another.

2) In some ways the church today isn't even up to that level of evil.

How much more is it a sign of spiritual infancy and sin to turn from the power of the truth to secular or worldly attractions in an effort to promote the church--as if the gospel were impotent and Christian fellowship socially inept.

3) For example I've heard people say, “If only we had this caliber of singer or that caliber of speaker, or this celebrity or that kind of dynamic testimony, then we'd have a truly powerful ministry.”

At least the Corinthians were dealing in the area of spiritual gifts! (i.e., “If we had more tongues speakers in our assembly we would have a really powerful ministry.”)

4) Today words like “contemporary,” “exciting,” “culturally relevant,” “dynamic,” “cutting edge” are popular in the church.

- We want to be trendy, cool, contemporary.
- We want to be attractive by the world's standards so unbelievers will come to our meetings.
- To be thought of as fools for Jesus is out of the question.
- Foolish doesn't sell.
- Foolish doesn't draw crowds.

- 5) Yet Paul told the Corinthians, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

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

“For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

- That’s our calling
- That’s our priority
- That must be our commitment!

Note: This is where our series ended (3/20/94). What follows is a brief outline of the remainder of 1 Corinthians 14, a list of key principles from our study, an overview of the Pentecostal Movement and Trinity Broadcasting Network, and a bibliography of sources used in this study.

VI. THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES CLARIFIED

After correcting the improper use of tongues in the Christian assembly, Paul now settles the issue of where and with whom tongues *are* to be used.

Verses 20-25 - “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

“In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord.

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

“If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?”

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

A. AN OLD TESTAMENT PARALLEL

“In the Law it is written, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,” says the Lord.” - v. 21

B. A NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION

“So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.” - v. 22

C. A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

“If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?” - v. 23

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all. - v. 24

“The secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.” - v. 25

VII. SUMMARY GUIDELINES

Verses 26-40 - “What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

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

“Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

“Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophecy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.”

A. THE AXIOM RESTATED

“What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” - v. 26

B. GUIDELINES FOR TONGUES

1. When to speak

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret.” - v. 27

2. When not to speak

“But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.” - v. 28

a. It is in the church that interpreted tongues had value, and in the church that the tongues-speaker apart from an interpreter was to speak to himself and to God.

b. *“Speak to himself and to God”* is a proverbial way of depicting meditation (Edwards, p. 379). It is not granting the validity of private tongues-speaking.

“That Paul would advocate private tongues as a substitute for use in public is unlikely in that throughout chapters 12-14 the proper function of gifts is to benefit other members (cf. vv. 26; 31)” (Thomas, p. 226).

- c. Nowhere in this passage or elsewhere does Paul address private tongues. That meaning is imposed on the text.

A question to be resolved: Why would God give a tongues-speaker a message he can't communicate to others if the gift was for others, and if it was direct movement of the Holy Spirit on the speaker?

C. GUIDELINES FOR PROPHETS

1. ***When to speak***

“And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.” - v. 29

2. ***When not to speak***

“But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.” - v. 30

3. ***Why order is necessary***

- a. To promote learning

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted.” - v. 31

- b. To demonstrate control

“And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.” - v. 32

- c. To avoid confusion

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” - v. 33a

D. GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN

1. ***When not to speak***

“As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.” - vv. 33b-34

2. *When to speak*

“And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.” - v. 35

3. *For a detailed study of these verses and the broader question of a women’s right to preach, see our study guide, “A Women’s Right to Preach: Is it Biblical?”*

E. GUIDELINES FOR SELF-EVALUATION

1. *Recognize the source of biblical authority*

a. Paul was the proclaimer; the Corinthians were the recipients.

“Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?” - v. 36

b. Paul set the standard; the Corinthians were to submit.

“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.” - v. 37

2. *Reject those who oppose biblical authority*

“But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.” - v. 38

F. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophecy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.” - vv. 39-40

KEY PRINCIPLES FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 14

1. Don’t allow experience to take precedence over Scripture as the determiner of truth.
2. Don’t confuse emotionalism with spirituality.

3. It is possible for many well-meaning Christians to practice something they *think* is of the Spirit when in fact it is not.
4. Many Christians are reluctant to apply biblical tests to supposed Christian phenomena for fear of speaking against the Holy Spirit.
5. It may be evil to speak against the Holy Spirit, but it is no less evil to attribute to Him something that isn't from Him. So don't be intimidated about questioning doctrines and practices that don't square with God's Word. It is never unloving to maintain a biblical stance.
6. A tongues experience can appear to be a dramatic contrast to the cold, dull, lifeless brand of Christianity that some people are accustomed to. Therefore we must make true spirituality attractive by reflecting the joy of the Lord coupled with biblical integrity.
7. Don't make the common mistake of equating numerical growth with success or doctrinal accuracy. Biblical truth is never determined by majority rule, but by God's Word alone.
8. Having a tongues experience is not the solution to sin, nor is it the path to super spirituality.
9. As a believer, you are indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, and have been given all things pertaining to life and godliness. You need not seek emotional or "spiritual" experiences to augment your Christian life.
10. As a believer, you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, therefore glorify God in your bodies (1 Cor. 6:19).
11. As a believer, you received Spirit baptism when the Holy Spirit placed you into Christ's Body at the moment of your salvation (1 Cor. 12:13). Therefore, don't allow faulty theology to confuse you or shake your confidence in God's provisions.
12. The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts sovereignly and individually just as *He* wills (1 Cor. 12:11). They are never taught or developed through human means (contrary to the common practice of teaching believers to speak in tongues). So don't seek on the human level what God alone can give.
13. Spiritual gifts are given to edify others within the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:12). Self-edification alone violates that purpose. Seek therefore to minister to others.
14. If someone claims to have attained a higher plane of spirituality, don't automatically attribute it to their experience. Instead, observe their doctrine and see if their life manifests the fruit of the Spirit.

15. We must know not only *what* we believe, but *why* we believe it. That means we must be able to defend our beliefs from God's Word, otherwise, they become little more than personal opinions.
16. Biblical tongues were always *known* languages. That principle gives us a standard by which to measure all contemporary claims to tongues-speaking.
17. Every legitimate spiritual ministry has an appropriate time, place, purpose, motive, expression, and application.
18. Even if there tongues-speaking were not an issue in contemporary Christianity, 1 Corinthians 14 has great value for us it teaches us how to identify and correct the misuse of spiritual gifts.
19. The misuse of tongues at Corinth shows us how confusing and detrimental it can be when believers fail to understand their gifts or attempt to minister then apart from love, wisdom, and humility.
20. Jesus gave His life for the church and has entrusted it into our keeping. Just as a responsible hospital staff wouldn't let a patient die for lack of attention, we mustn't let the church languish in immaturity and spiritual stagnation because we fail to minister our gifts as God designed.
21. Don't let envy of believers with higher profile gifts (teaching, leading, etc.) rob you of the joy and appreciation of what God has given *you*. *Every* believer is important to Christ and to His Body.
22. Understanding that spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the church is an important key to effective, productive ministry.
23. Love is to govern everything we do, but self-centered or thoughtless exercise of our spiritual gifts violates love (1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5).
24. When our church gathers for public worship, we are to encourage the expression of gifts that instruct and edify everyone.
25. If you desire true spiritual growth, seek to learn from those with the edifying gifts rather than looking for emotional or ecstatic experiences.
26. Be wary of those claiming to have "new revelations" from God. The gifts of teaching and exhortation have replaced the first-century gift of prophecy.
27. Tongues were not given as a special level of communication with God. Thoughtful, humble *prayer* serves that purpose!

28. Every aspect of a public worship service must be understandable, thoughtful, and sensitive to the congregation as a whole.
29. God's truth is to be determined by His objective Word, not by individual, subjective impressions or emotions (so-called "Christian mysticism"). Such mysticism is at the heart of much doctrinal error.
30. The notion that the highest levels of spirituality are achieved when man's spirit bypasses his mind to commune with God, violates Scripture. God *never* requires us to bypass our minds when worshiping Him. On the contrary, we're to worship Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
31. We must never assume that subjective mystical feelings and encounters are from the Holy Spirit. We must test them by God's Word.
32. True Christian unity never compromises biblical truth (Phil. 1:10-12).
33. Anything that draws us away from biblical authority, no matter how spiritual it may appear, must be rejected.
34. Anyone claiming to receive special messages from God is claiming divine revelation and placing himself the role of a prophet. He must therefore be tested by the biblical standards. If his character or message fails the test, he is to be rejected outright.
35. First Corinthians 14 addresses not only the abuse of one spiritual gift, but also exposes the ignorance, spiritual immaturity, and sinful motives that led to the abuse.
36. The neglect or abuse of a spiritual gift is a symptom of a deeper problem. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul says he couldn't give them solid food because they weren't able to receive it yet. Therefore he had to give them milk to drink. In verse 3 he adds, "For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" Like those to whom Hebrews was written, they should have been teachers, but instead still needed to learn the elementary principles of the Word.

We see that:

- Sin retards spiritual growth.
- Sin dampens one's appetite for the Word.
- Sin weakens one's toleration for biblical truth.
- Sin exalts one's fleshly expressions.

37. Some equate praying in tongues with renewing the mind. Such a distinction is foreign to Scripture and should be rejected. The Spirit and the Word renew the believer's mind. Tongues were given for *communication*, not *transformation*!
38. Five words of edification are more beneficial to the church than 10,000 words in a tongue. More generally, a small quantity of ministry in the power of the Spirit and with proper motives is of far greater benefit than vast amounts of "ministry" from selfish and insensitive motives. That emphasizes the importance of attitude and motives in everything we do for Christ.
39. Biblical instruction is the primary means by which believers are brought to maturity (edified).
40. It is possible to confuse spiritual infancy with spiritual maturity. Your motive for ministering is one important indicator of your true level of maturity.
41. Ignorance of spiritual gifts is indicative of spiritual immaturity.
42. The things Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 14 are the Lord's commandments and therefore must not be taken lightly.
43. Why do you teach, sing, play, lead, give, or serve in the church? Ultimately there is but one acceptable motive for ministry: Do all for the glory of God! Anything less betrays spiritual immaturity. Do your motives pass the test?

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