



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



GIFTS GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Introduction:

Have ever received a gift that you couldn't use? When my wife, Julie, and I were first married, we had opened our wedding gifts and were sending out thank-you notes. One of the gifts was a box with a lovely picture of some china on the outside of it. So when we wrote the thank-you note, we thanked the givers for the lovely china they had given us. We hadn't opened the box but assumed that the picture on the outside of the box indicated its contents. Later, when we finally did open the box, we found the contents were much different from the picture. It was a hand-made macramé hanging light inside a terra cotta flower pot. What a surprise!

The lesson here is to open the box. Look inside because the gift is so much better than just reading about it on the outside of the box.

The two definitions of the word "gift" from Webster are: 1. a notable capacity, talent, or endowment and 2. something voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation.

The Holy Spirit has gifts to give to believers that will equip us to do the work of the ministry. In this series we have talked about the *fruit of the spirit* having to do with maturity; the *gifts of the spirit* having to do with ministry.

The power of the Holy Spirit is not given just so we can enjoy supernatural power for ourselves. The purpose of the power of the Holy Spirit is so ministry can happen. When there is a need for ministry within the body of believers, there are those in relationship with God who are filled with the Spirit and the Spirit will give them power for what is needed for ministry.

1 Corinthians. 12:4-12

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to

another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made

up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

When someone has given me a gift, it is a manifestation of their love and thoughtfulness. A gift is an expression of thought and care to encourage someone. The gift someone gives has purpose and they intend for that gift to be useful and appreciated by the recipient. I have never received a gift from someone that I didn't know or with whom I had no relationship.

For a gift to be useful there has to be cooperation between the giver and the recipient. If someone gave you a gift and you never opened it or used it for its intended purpose, you did not cooperate as a recipient. In that case, the gift would have value but the value was never realized. The Holy Spirit may give you a gift to be used but if you don't use it in love and faith, cooperating with the giver, that gift will not have the impact it was intended to have.

If you expect and desire God to give you the special gifts of the Holy Spirit, understand they are given to you for ministry. They will be given because you have a relationship with the Lord and there is a need. God will not give spiritual gifts to those who are not in a relationship with Him. They wouldn't know what to do with those gifts and unless they had a relationship with God, the ministry from those gifts would not happen. Service and ministry happens because of relationships. Everything the Bible says about spiritual gifts points to the fact that they are all still needed today. They are vital to accomplish the work of God. The gifts are appointed for the church, just as He has set the various parts of the human body in their place to fulfill their proper functions.

Historians tell us that spiritual gifts were important for the rapid growth of the early church. These gifts persisted into the third century after Christ and then gradually died out. From time to time, revivals brought restoration, but they were largely neglected by the church as a whole until the Pentecostal revival at the start of the 20th century.

The most extensive list of gifts is found in I Corinthians. 12:8-10. Each of these nine is directed toward the needs of the local assembly, instead of the needs of the person the Spirit uses to minister the gift.

The Greek manuscripts divide the gifts into three groups. First, the message of wisdom, knowledge

and prophecy are useful in teaching and preaching. Second, gifts of faith, healing, miraculous powers and distinguishing between spirits are useful in ministering to the church and to the world. Finally, different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues are useful in worship.

What are the Reasons for the gifts?

1. To confirm the word that is shared.

Any time a witness stands in a court of law and shares a testimony, that testimony is strengthened by evidence that supports what was said. The same is true of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They give strong and powerful evidence that what has been spoken is true.

When the first followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit, they went around doing the same things that Jesus did. They preached the message that Jesus was alive, that even though he died and was buried, He rose from death and was alive working through them the same way He did when He walked on earth in the flesh.

So the Holy Spirit validates the truth of what has been shared by gifts. I believe that whenever God gives a gift to someone to use, it speaks incredibly of the gift of God's love and care for that person or group of people. When you and I declare to people that God loves them, Jesus died to pay the penalty of death for their sin, and then you pray for them to be healed or for God to do something miraculous and it happens, it confirms the truth of what you have spoken.

In the book of Acts we see that the Holy Spirit made Himself known in the form of gifts that would confirm the truth of what the disciples were preaching or talking about. People today need to be convinced that Jesus is alive and the Bible is true, just like in Jesus' day.

2. To accomplish the work of God.

God works through His people. He speaks through His people. He heals through His people. He performs miracles through His people. Jesus, God's only begotten Son, limited Himself to work in a body of flesh when He walked on earth. Now He limits Himself to work through His people, the church, who are in relationship with Him.

I cannot do the work of God. You cannot do the work of God. God has to do His work through willing individuals who yield themselves to His power. God wants to use a human being to demonstrate and manifest His love and power. God can only do His work through me as I yield to Him.

It takes supernatural power to do God's work and that power is present as manifested in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3. To bring God Glory

John 14:12-14

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

I believe too often we fail to recognize the power and authority God has to invest in those who have relationship with Him. He has empowered us with the authority of His Name and the person of His Spirit. Because of the relationship we have with God, we can share truth and it will be confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Remember, whatever happens as a result of your sharing truth, happens so that God is glorified.

Ephesians. 4:11-12

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

4. To build up the body of Christ.

A believer needs to be baptized in the Holy Spirit to have access and utilize the gifts of the Spirit. That baptism is available to all believers. The baptism empowers us to be witnesses, to have a deeper understanding of the God's word and to live a life of faith and victory.

God wants a glorious church, a pure bride and a powerful strong body that is built up. When you don't use muscles, they get weaker. The word is atrophy. It means to decrease in size or wasting away of a body or tissue.

If we fail to use the gifts God has given us, we will grow weak. We end up wasting away the spiritual strength and impact that God wants those gifts to have. We are weak if we don't use what God has given us. Every morning when I get up and get alone with God, I use that time to strengthen my spiritual being. If you think you can live a Christian Spirit-filled life without daily reading and prayer, you are deceiving yourself. If you think you can go weeks and weeks without being in fellowship and coming to worship in the body of Christ, you are being deceived. Those spiritual disciplines are necessary to our spiritual existence.

Every morning when I go to the fitness center and work out, I am doing so to strengthen my physical body. When we use the spiritual gifts that God gives to us, it builds us up and in turn strengthens the body of Christ. The way we utilize the gifts God gives us demonstrates what we think about God's gifts to us. We can be selfish, prideful, shy or fearful. If we don't utilize the gifts that God gives us, then in reality we are not strengthening the body, but weakening the body.

God wants to demonstrate or manifest his power, love and grace. He will do that through the way His people utilize the gifts He gives to us.

1 Corinthians: 12:31

But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

The greatest gift of the Holy Spirit is love. Paul writes in I Corinthians 13 that all the gifts are wonderful, but without love they are meaningless and empty.

We understand from Acts that the initial empowering or baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost included the believers being filled and speaking as the Spirit gave them words to say. The initial evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is the gift of speaking in a language you haven't learned.

How to receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit

1. Ask
2. Yield
3. Use

Luke 11:13. If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Conclusion: God has made available to every believer the Holy Spirit who has gifts to give us that are powerful and practical. We simply need to ask Him to give us those gifts that will bless people in using them.