COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 46

3 OF 5

The Gifts & Offices in the New Testament

STUDY GUIDE 3 OF 5:

The Gifts In Operation

An overview of spiritual gifts serving the Church in order.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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CONCLUSION: CHRIST WORKS THROUGH THE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY

Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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Spiritual gifts are not separate from Jesus Christ. They are part of His continuing work within the Church through the Holy Spirit. The same Christ who saves, indwells and leads His people also works through the members of His body in different ways according to His will.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:11**:

> *"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

The gifts differ, but the Spirit does not. Jesus Christ works through His people as the Holy Spirit, giving different operations for the strengthening and edification of His body.

The previous Study Guide established the foundation for understanding spiritual gifts. Gifts are given by grace, distributed according to the will of God and exercised for the benefit of others. They do not establish spiritual rank, and no particular gift is the universal evidence that a person has received the Holy Spirit.

This Study Guide will now examine more of those gifts in detail. These include faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, exhortation, mercy, tongues, interpretation, giving and helps.

Some of these gifts may appear dramatic, while others operate quietly. Scripture does not measure their value by how visible they are. Their importance is found in the purpose for which Christ gives them and in the way they contribute to the life of His body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

Every genuine spiritual gift must therefore serve the purpose of Christ. It should strengthen the Church, support the proclamation of truth, meet genuine needs and contribute to the spiritual well-being of the body.

The operation of spiritual gifts must also remain governed by love, truth and order. A remarkable manifestation does not automatically prove that something comes from God. Spiritual claims must agree with Scripture and remain under the headship of Jesus Christ.

The gifts examined in this Study Guide reveal the wide range of ways in which Christ can work through His people. Some involve extraordinary faith or divine intervention, while others involve speaking, discerning, encouraging, showing mercy, giving or practical service.

The central truth remains unchanged: there are many gifts, but there is one Spirit. Jesus Christ dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through the members of His body according to His will for the edification of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must every gift be understood as the work of the one Spirit?

Personal Reflection

When have you been more impressed by a person displaying a gift than by Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Identify that misplaced admiration and explain how you will direct your attention back to Christ whenever you consider spiritual gifts.

INTRODUCTION

BACK TO CONTENTS

The gifts of the Spirit reveal the many ways in which Jesus Christ works through the members of His body. Some gifts involve unusual manifestations of divine power, while others operate through teaching, encouragement, compassion, giving or practical service. Each gift has its own purpose, but all come from the same Spirit and are given for the good of the Church.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Paul presents a remarkable variety of spiritual gifts, yet repeatedly brings attention back to their common source. The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation all belong to the operation of *"one and the selfsame Spirit."*

The previous Study Guide examined the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. We will now continue with the remaining gifts named in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and also consider several gifts described elsewhere in the New Testament, including exhortation, mercy, giving and helps.

These gifts must always be understood from the foundation already established. Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church. He dwells within every born-again believer as the Holy Spirit, and He works through the different members according to His will.

This means that spiritual gifts are not independent abilities that believers own and control. A person may be used through a particular gift, but the source remains Christ within. The operation belongs to Him.

Paul also makes clear that not every believer receives the same gift. He wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:29-30**:

> *"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"*

The answer is no, because the body contains different members with different functions. No single gift can therefore be made the universal evidence that someone possesses the Holy Spirit. Every born-again believer possesses the Spirit of Christ, while the gifts concern how that one Spirit chooses to work through the members of the body.

Some of the gifts examined in this Study Guide have also been misunderstood or misrepresented. Faith can be confused with the faith common to every believer, healing and miracles can become centred upon personalities rather than Christ, and prophecy can be reduced either to prediction alone or to ordinary preaching. Tongues can also be separated from their biblical purpose and turned into a supposed universal sign of receiving the Holy Spirit.

These matters must therefore be examined carefully from Scripture. The purpose is not simply to identify different gifts by name, but to understand what each gift is, why it is given, how it operates and how it serves the body of Christ.

Throughout the study, one principle must remain central:

The gift is never greater than the Giver. Jesus Christ remains the Head, the source and the One working within His people as the Holy Spirit.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why can no gift be greater than the Giver?

Personal Reflection

Which gift have you admired for its dramatic appearance rather than for the good it does?

Action Step

Examine that attraction in the light of **1 Corinthians 12:7** *and explain how your judgement of spiritual service needs to change.*

THE GIFT OF FAITH

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Faith is essential to every believer. We are saved through faith, we walk by faith and we continue trusting Jesus Christ throughout the Christian life. However, when Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, he identifies a particular operation called *"faith"* that is distributed by the Spirit according to His will.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:9**:

> *"To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;"*

This gift of faith is not a second kind of salvation, nor does it mean that some believers have faith while others do not. Every born-again believer has already trusted Jesus Christ for salvation. The gift of faith concerns an extraordinary operation of the Spirit in circumstances where unusual confidence in God is required.

Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, can give remarkable confidence to trust and obey Him when the situation lies beyond ordinary human reasoning.

Saving Faith and the Gift of Faith

The faith by which a person receives salvation belongs to every born-again believer.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:8**:

> *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"*

No one belongs to Christ without faith. The gift of faith listed in **1 Corinthians 12:9** must therefore not be confused with the faith through which salvation is received. Paul says, *"To another faith by the same Spirit,"* showing that he is describing a particular spiritual operation distributed within the body rather than the saving faith common to every believer.

The gift of faith may operate when Christ gives a believer unusual confidence to trust Him in a situation that appears impossible by natural reasoning. That confidence does not arise from positive thinking or a strong personality. It comes from the operation of the Spirit.

Faith and Signs

Scripture records occasions when faith, healing and miracles operated as signs that confirmed the Gospel. Extraordinary works sometimes accompanied the preaching of Christ and gave visible confirmation to the message being declared.

Mark wrote in **Mark 16:20**:

> *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."*

The important words are *"the Lord working with them."* The disciples were not producing supernatural power from themselves. Jesus Christ was working with them.

Signs must therefore never become the centre of the Gospel. Their proper purpose is to direct attention towards the truth being proclaimed and towards Jesus Christ Himself. Neither should we conclude that every genuine servant of Christ must continually perform visible miracles, because the Spirit distributes His gifts according to His own will.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must signs never become the centre of the Gospel?

Personal Reflection

Are you more eager to hear about signs than to understand the Gospel those signs are meant to support?

Action Step

Identify that preference and explain how you will keep the saving work of Jesus Christ central when discussing signs.

Stephen: Full of Faith and Power

Stephen provides a clear New Testament example of extraordinary faith operating together with other manifestations of the Spirit.

Luke wrote in **Acts 6:5**:

> *"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:"*

Luke later wrote in **Acts 6:8**:

> *"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."*

Stephen's faith was accompanied by power, wonders and miracles. Yet his faith was also evident in something even more demanding: he remained faithful to Christ under severe opposition. The presence of extraordinary faith did not guarantee Stephen physical deliverance from every trial, because he eventually suffered death for his testimony.

This is important when understanding the gift of faith. Genuine faith does not mean that God must always produce the outcome a person desires. Faith remains confidence in God and submission to His purpose.

Barnabas: Full of Faith Without the Same Outward Signs

Barnabas gives us another valuable example.

Luke wrote in **Acts 11:24**:

> *"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."*

Barnabas is described as *"full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,"* yet Scripture does not emphasise signs and miracles in his ministry in the same way that it does with Stephen. Instead, the result recorded is that *"much people was added unto the Lord."*

This reminds us that faith should not be measured only by spectacular outward manifestations. The same Jesus Christ may work through different believers in different ways. One believer may exercise extraordinary faith in connection with healing or miracles, while another may demonstrate remarkable faith through preaching, perseverance, encouragement or obedience under difficult circumstances.

The Spirit determines the operation according to His will, and the believer remains dependent upon Christ.

Faith Can Produce Boldness

The gift of faith can also be seen in unusual boldness when God calls someone to act in a difficult situation. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal provides an Old Testament example of extraordinary confidence in God.

Elijah said in **1 Kings 18:24**:

> *"And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."*

Elijah stood against widespread false worship and trusted God to reveal the truth. His confidence was not based upon favourable circumstances because everything depended upon God.

The gift of faith can likewise give believers unusual boldness when obedience to Christ requires them to stand firmly despite opposition. This boldness must never become human recklessness. Genuine faith remains submitted to the will of God and consistent with His Word.

Faith Operating With Healing

Peter and John provide another example of faith operating in connection with divine healing. At the temple gate they met a man who had been lame from birth. He expected to receive money, but Peter directed his attention towards something entirely different.

Luke wrote in **Acts 3:4-8**:

> *"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."*

Peter acted with remarkable confidence, but the authority was explicitly *"in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."* The miracle did not direct attention towards Peter as the source. Jesus Christ was the One through whom healing came.

The visible result also gave undeniable confirmation that something extraordinary had occurred.

Luke later wrote in **Acts 4:14**:

> *"And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."*

The healed man stood before them as evidence of what had taken place. Yet the testimony still directed attention to Jesus Christ rather than to the men through whom He had worked.

Faith Must Act When Christ Directs

Faith is not passive unbelief disguised as caution. When Christ gives direction and confidence, faith responds in obedience.

James wrote in **James 2:20-22**:

> *"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"*

James teaches that genuine faith becomes evident through obedient action. This principle applies when the gift of faith operates. The believer does not create the outcome through action, but responds obediently to the confidence God has supplied.

The power remains God's, and the believer remains dependent upon Him.

The Gift of Faith Remains Dependent Upon Christ

The gift of faith may operate alongside healing, miracles, bold preaching or perseverance under intense opposition. It may give unusual confidence when circumstances appear impossible, but the gift must never become confidence in faith itself.

Faith has an object: the believer trusts Jesus Christ. No person owns a permanent supply of supernatural faith that can be activated independently. The Spirit distributes according to His will, and every manifestation remains dependent upon Christ.

This protects the Church from personalities who present themselves as possessing spiritual power that others must seek from them. The gift belongs to the operation of Jesus Christ within His body, and the believer remains a vessel through whom He works.

The gift of faith is an extraordinary operation of the Spirit through which Jesus Christ gives a believer confidence to trust and obey Him in circumstances beyond ordinary human reasoning. The faith is exercised by the believer, but the source and power remain Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Christ remain the source of the gift of faith even while a believer exercises it?

Personal Reflection

In what difficult situation have you tried to force confidence rather than trust Christ?

Action Step

Bring that situation before Christ, name the pressure you need to release, and explain how you will obey His Word without trying to control the outcome.

THE GIFTS OF HEALING

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Healing is one of the spiritual operations named by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. He does not speak of a single gift of healing, but of *"the gifts of healing."* This wording points to variety in the way the Spirit may work according to the needs of different people and situations.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:9**:

> *"To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;"*

The source remains the same Spirit. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, is the One who heals and determines how the gift operates. The believer through whom healing takes place is never the source of the power. The gift belongs to the operation of Christ.

Why Scripture Speaks of "Gifts" of Healing

Paul consistently uses the plural form.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:28**:

> *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."*

He later asked in **1 Corinthians 12:30**:

> *"Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"*

The repeated use of the plural shows that healing should not be reduced to one fixed operation or method. The Greek word translated *"healing"* is IAMA, carrying the thought of healing or cure. The expression *"gifts of healings"* therefore directs attention towards different gracious operations of God according to different needs.

This variety is important because sickness and affliction do not always appear in the same form. Jesus demonstrated authority over many kinds of physical conditions and spiritual afflictions.

Matthew wrote in **Matthew 10:1**:

> *"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."*

The verse speaks of *"all manner of sickness"* and *"all manner of disease."* The need varied, yet the authority came from Christ.

There Is No Single Required Method

Scripture records healings taking place in different ways. This prevents the Church from turning one particular method into a rule that God must always follow.

At times Jesus touched the sick.

Matthew wrote in **Matthew 8:14-15**:

> *"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."*

At other times healing occurred through a spoken command.

Jesus said in **John 5:8-9**:

> *"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."*

In the book of Acts, unusual circumstances also accompanied healing.

Luke wrote in **Acts 5:15-16**:

> *"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."*

Luke also recorded extraordinary healings connected with Paul's ministry.

Luke wrote in **Acts 19:11-12**:

> *"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."*

These verses should not be turned into healing formulas. Scripture does not command believers to reproduce Peter's shadow or Paul's handkerchiefs as rituals. The important statement is *"God wrought."* The method varied, but God remained the source.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should Bible verses about healing never be used as a formula?

Personal Reflection

Have you expected healing to follow a particular method or assumed that continued illness proves weak faith?

Action Step

Examine that expectation against the Bible and explain how you will pray for the sick with compassion without making promises God has not given.

Healing Does Not Belong to the Human Instrument

The variety of biblical healings protects the Church from building a ministry around a person who claims to possess healing power. Peter refused that kind of attention after the lame man at the temple was healed.

Peter said in **Acts 3:12**:

> *"Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"*

Peter immediately denied that the healing came through *"our own power or holiness."* A believer may be used through a gift of healing, but the believer does not become a healer in the sense of independently possessing divine power.

Jesus Christ remains the Healer and the source of every genuine manifestation. The gift should therefore direct attention towards Christ rather than towards the person through whom He works.

Healing and Faith May Operate Together

The gifts of healing may operate together with the gift of faith. Peter's response to the lame man at the temple showed unusual confidence in Christ.

Peter said in **Acts 3:6**:

> *"Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."*

Faith acted, but the authority remained *"in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."* The gift of faith and the gifts of healing may therefore operate together, but one does not replace the other. The Spirit may supply extraordinary confidence while also producing the healing itself.

Healing Can Confirm the Gospel

Healing sometimes served as a visible confirmation of the Gospel being proclaimed. Luke recorded what happened in Samaria through Philip's ministry.

Luke wrote in **Acts 8:5-8**:

> *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."*

The order is important: Philip *"preached Christ unto them."* The miracles accompanied the proclamation of Christ. Healing was not the Gospel itself. The Gospel was Jesus Christ.

Signs may confirm the truth, but they must never replace the message.

Healing Must Not Become a Measure of Salvation

The presence or absence of physical healing must never be used to determine whether someone is saved, spiritual or accepted by God. Every born-again believer is complete in Christ.

A person does not become more saved because they receive physical healing, and another believer is not less complete because sickness remains. Spiritual gifts concern service and the operation of Christ within His body. They do not add to salvation.

This distinction is especially important because false teaching can place guilt upon sick people by suggesting that continued illness proves a lack of faith. Scripture does not support that conclusion.

Healing Remains Subject to the Will of God

The Spirit distributes gifts *"as he will."* The same principle applies to healing. No person can demand that God operate in one particular way, at one particular time or through one particular individual.

The Church may pray, believe and seek God, but the outcome remains under His authority. This protects genuine faith from becoming presumption.

Faith trusts Christ; presumption attempts to control Him. The gifts of healing remain gifts. They are gracious operations of God, not spiritual techniques controlled by people.

Healing and the Body of Christ

The purpose of healing extends beyond the individual experience. A healing may strengthen faith, encourage the Church, confirm the Gospel or demonstrate the compassion of Christ.

Jesus frequently responded to human need with compassion.

Matthew wrote in **Matthew 14:14**:

> *"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."*

The compassion came from Christ, and the healing followed. That same Jesus Christ now dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit. When He chooses to work through gifts of healing, the operation should reflect His character rather than human ambition.

Christ Remains the Healer

The gifts of healing reveal the power and compassion of Jesus Christ. They do not establish a special class of people who possess healing power, depend upon one fixed method, replace the Gospel or determine a person's salvation.

They are manifestations of the one Spirit according to His will. The needs, circumstances and manner of healing may differ, but the source remains the same.

The gifts of healing are varied operations of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, given according to His will to meet human need, strengthen His body and direct attention towards Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the gifts of healing serve people while directing attention to Jesus?

Personal Reflection

When someone remains unwell, have you offered less care because no healing was visible?

Action Step

Recognise what needs to change and offer prayer and suitable practical help while leaving the outcome in Christ's hands.

THE WORKING OF MIRACLES

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Paul identifies *"the working of miracles"* as another operation of the Spirit within the body of Christ. Miracles are acts of divine power that go beyond ordinary human ability and reveal the intervention of God.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:10**:

> *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"*

The Greek word translated *"miracles"* is DUNAMIS. It carries the thought of power, strength or mighty works. The gift therefore concerns the operation of God's power through circumstances that cannot be explained by normal human ability alone.

The believer does not become the source of that power. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, remains the One who works.

God Is the One Who Works the Miracle

The book of Acts repeatedly guards against placing the emphasis upon the human instrument.

Luke wrote in **Acts 19:11-12**:

> *"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."*

The wording is important: *"God wrought special miracles."* Paul's hands were involved, but Paul was not the source. God worked through him.

The unusual circumstances surrounding the handkerchiefs and aprons should not be turned into a method to be copied. Scripture records what God did, not a ritual that believers are commanded to reproduce. The miracle remained God's operation.

Paul and Eutychus

Another extraordinary event took place during Paul's ministry at Troas.

Luke wrote in **Acts 20:9-10**:

> *"And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."*

The situation was beyond normal human ability. Eutychus had fallen from the third loft and was *"taken up dead."* Paul responded with confidence in God, and the young man's life was restored.

This illustrates how the gift of faith and the working of miracles may operate together. The miracle did not demonstrate Paul's personal power. It revealed the power of God working through him.

Peter and Dorcas

Peter also witnessed the working of miracles when Dorcas died and he was called to Joppa.

Luke wrote in **Acts 9:40**:

> *"But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up."*

Peter prayed before speaking to her, showing dependence upon God rather than confidence in himself. The result also affected many others.

Luke wrote in **Acts 9:42**:

> *"And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."*

The miracle did not become an end in itself. It directed attention towards the Lord. A genuine miracle should magnify Jesus Christ rather than the personality through whom the Spirit works.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did the miracle in this section direct people beyond the event to Jesus and His message?

Personal Reflection

When you hear of a miracle, do you first ask what happened or what truth about Christ was revealed?

Action Step

Revisit one biblical miracle and explain how your response to such reports will place Christ's message ahead of excitement.

Miracles Can Confirm the Gospel

Miracles sometimes accompanied the preaching of the Gospel and gave visible confirmation to the message.

Luke recorded what happened in Samaria through Philip's ministry in **Acts 8:5-6**:

> *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."*

Philip *"preached Christ."* The miracles accompanied that preaching. The order must remain clear because the miracles did not replace the Gospel. They helped direct attention towards the truth being proclaimed.

The same principle appears at the conclusion of Mark's Gospel.

Mark wrote in **Mark 16:20**:

> *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."*

Again, Scripture says *"the Lord working with them."* The power came from Christ, and the signs served the proclamation of His Word.

Miracles and Apostolic Ministry

Scripture gives particular examples of miracles accompanying apostolic and evangelistic work. Peter and Paul often entered places where the Gospel was not yet established, and extraordinary manifestations of God's power could provide visible confirmation of the message they preached.

Paul wrote in **Romans 15:18-19**:

> *"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."*

Paul does not say that he produced these works. He speaks of *"those things which Christ hath wrought by me."* That language agrees with the central truth of spiritual gifts: Christ works through the believer.

Miracles Do Not Validate False Teaching

The fact that miracles can confirm the Gospel does not mean that every claimed miracle proves that a teaching is true. Jesus warned that remarkable spiritual claims can be associated with deception.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:22-23**:

> *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

Wonderful works by themselves are therefore not the final test of truth. The Word of God remains the plumb line. Any miracle, manifestation or spiritual claim must agree with Scripture, glorify Jesus Christ and remain consistent with the Gospel.

Miracles Must Not Become Spectacle

Miracles can easily attract attention, and this creates a danger. People may become interested in the spectacular while losing sight of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the gift is not entertainment, nor is it given so that a minister can establish a reputation for supernatural power.

Peter rejected that thinking after the healing of the lame man.

Peter said in **Acts 3:12**:

> *"Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"*

Peter directed attention away from himself. The same principle must govern the Church today. Genuine miracles exalt Christ rather than the human vessel.

Miracles Remain Subject to the Spirit's Will

The working of miracles is one of many gifts distributed by the Spirit *"as he will."* No believer can demand a miracle or manufacture one through emotional intensity, repeated phrases or human confidence.

The Church may pray and believe, but the power remains under the authority of Christ. This keeps faith from becoming presumption because the believer trusts God to work according to His will rather than attempting to force a supernatural result.

The Working of Miracles Continues to Serve the Gospel

The working of miracles continues to have a place within the Church because Jesus Christ continues to work through His people in the Gospel Day. The purpose, however, remains unchanged.

Miracles are not the centre of the Christian message. Jesus Christ is. When the Spirit works miraculously, the result should strengthen faith, confirm truth, open hearts to the Gospel and direct attention towards Christ.

The Church should therefore desire spiritual gifts while remaining completely dependent upon the Giver. The power belongs to Christ, the operation belongs to His Spirit, and the glory belongs to Him.

The working of miracles is a manifestation of the power of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, accomplishing what human ability cannot do and directing attention towards the truth of the Gospel and the Lord who works through His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do miracles point beyond human ability to Christ and the truth of the Gospel?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever given a striking manifestation more weight than the truth of God's Word?

Action Step

Identify that occasion or tendency and state how you will test future claims while keeping the Gospel central.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

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Prophecy is another spiritual gift through which Jesus Christ works within His Church. Scripture shows that prophecy can involve both the foretelling of events revealed beforehand by God and the forth-telling of divine truth for the instruction, warning and edification of His people.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:10**:

> *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"*

Paul also wrote in **Romans 12:6**:

> *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;"*

Prophecy is therefore a gift of grace. The person through whom it operates is not an independent source of divine truth. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, remains the source.

What Is Prophecy?

The Greek word translated *"prophecy"* is PROPHETEIA. It carries the thought of speaking forth what God has made known. Prophecy is often associated only with predicting future events, but Scripture gives it a wider function.

The gift can involve revealing something that will occur, but it can also involve declaring, explaining and applying truth that God has already revealed. Two broad aspects can therefore be recognised, and both must remain under the authority of God and consistent with His Word:

- Foretelling: speaking beforehand concerning events God has revealed;
- Forth-telling: declaring and explaining divine truth for the benefit of God's people.

Prophecy and the Office of Prophet

The gift of prophecy is closely connected with the ministry of prophets, but the gift and the office should not automatically be treated as identical. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:11**:

> *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"*

A prophet has a recognised ministry within the body, while prophecy describes a spiritual operation through which truth is spoken according to the Spirit's direction. A believer may therefore operate through a spiritual gift without that operation by itself establishing a ministry office.

The detailed ministry of the prophet will be examined later in this module. Jesus Christ remains the One who appoints ministries and distributes gifts.

Prophecy Continues to Serve the Church

Prophecy was not presented as a temporary curiosity in the early Church. Paul encouraged believers to desire spiritual gifts and gave particular attention to prophecy because of its value in edifying the body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:1**:

> *"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."*

The Church continues to need truth, instruction, warning, encouragement and clarity. The Spirit of Christ therefore continues to work through His people according to His will.

Paul also wrote in **Romans 11:29**:

> *"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."*

God does not abandon the gifts and callings He has established according to His purpose. Prophecy remains part of His provision for the Church, but its operation must always remain governed by Scripture, love and the headship of Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should misuse of a spiritual gift lead believers to test its use rather than dismiss God's purpose for it?

Personal Reflection

Have you dismissed prophecy altogether because you have seen it misused?

Action Step

Examine that reaction against the teaching on prophecy and explain how you will avoid both careless acceptance and unfair rejection.

Foretelling: Agabus and the Famine

Agabus provides a clear New Testament example of prophecy foretelling a future event. Luke wrote in **Acts 11:27-28**:

> *"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar."*

Agabus spoke concerning something that had not yet occurred, and Luke then records that the event came to pass. The prophecy also led to practical action.

Luke continued in **Acts 11:29-30**:

> *"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."*

The prophecy was not given to satisfy curiosity about the future. It prepared the Church to respond in love and practical service. This illustrates an important principle: genuine prophecy serves God's purpose.

Agabus and Paul's Imprisonment

Agabus later gave another prophetic warning concerning Paul. Luke wrote in **Acts 21:10-11**:

> *"And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."*

Agabus foretold suffering that lay ahead for Paul. Prophecy therefore does not always promise deliverance, prosperity or pleasant circumstances. God may reveal a difficulty so that His servant is prepared to face it faithfully. This protects the Church from the false idea that genuine prophecy must always tell people what they want to hear.

Paul's Prophetic Warning

Paul also gave prophetic warning concerning conditions that would arise within Christianity.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 4:1**:

> *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"*

Notice the expression *"the Spirit speaketh expressly."* The warning came from the Spirit and concerned dangers that would affect the Church. Prophecy can therefore prepare God's people for deception and help them recognise spiritual conditions when they arise. The purpose is protection and faithfulness to truth.

Forth-Telling: Declaring Divine Truth

Prophecy is not limited to foretelling events. Paul especially emphasises its value in communicating truth that strengthens the Church.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:3**:

> *"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."*

This verse shows the practical direction of prophecy. It brings edification by building up, exhortation by strengthening and urging believers towards faithfulness, and comfort by helping God's people remain established in truth. Prophecy therefore includes the Spirit-enabled declaration and application of God's truth to the needs of the Church.

Prophecy Edifies the Church

Paul makes the purpose even clearer. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:4**:

> *"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church."*

The value of prophecy is connected directly with edification. A genuine prophetic ministry should therefore leave the Church stronger in truth, clearer concerning Christ and better equipped to walk faithfully.

Prophecy is not given to create dependence upon a personality who continually claims to possess secret information from God. Its purpose is the edification of Christ's body.

Prophecy Must Agree With Scripture

No prophetic claim has authority to contradict the written Word of God. Paul instructed the Church to examine what was spoken.

Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 5:20-21**:

> *"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

The instruction is balanced. Believers are not to despise prophecy, but neither are they instructed to accept every prophetic claim without examination. They must *"prove all things."*

Scripture remains the plumb line. The Spirit of truth will never contradict the truth He has already revealed in the Word. A claim that contradicts Scripture cannot be made true simply by adding the words, *"God told me."*

Prophecy Must Be Judged

Paul gave similar instruction concerning prophecy within the congregation. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:29**:

> *"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."*

Prophetic speech was not exempt from examination. This protects the Church from accepting error simply because a person speaks with confidence or spiritual language. The operation of the Spirit will withstand biblical examination because Jesus Christ is the truth.

Prophecy Does Not Add Another Gospel

The gift of prophecy must never become a means of introducing teaching that changes the Gospel. Paul wrote in **Galatians 1:8**:

> *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."*

No spiritual manifestation has authority to replace or alter the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Prophecy can illuminate, explain, apply, warn and edify, but it remains subject to established truth.

Jesus Christ is not continually creating new foundations for His Church. He works through His Spirit to bring His people into clearer understanding and faithful application of the truth already given.

Prophecy Must Operate Through Love

Paul's instruction to desire prophecy begins with the words *"Follow after charity."* This is important because prophecy can become harsh, proud or controlling when separated from love.

The purpose is not to make the speaker appear spiritually superior. Neither is prophecy a licence to dominate others by claiming unquestionable divine authority. The life of Jesus Christ within must govern the operation.

Truth and love belong together.

Christ Remains the Source

The gift of prophecy continues to serve the Church through foretelling when God chooses to reveal what lies ahead and through forth-telling as divine truth is declared, explained and applied. Its purpose is to edify, exhort, comfort, warn and strengthen the body of Christ.

Prophecy is not given for speculation, spiritual status or the creation of new truth apart from Scripture. Every prophetic claim must remain subject to the Word of God and centred upon Jesus Christ.

The gift of prophecy is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by which divine truth is spoken for the edification, warning, instruction and strengthening of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How should prophecy strengthen, instruct, warn and build up the Church?

Personal Reflection

Are you easily moved by confident prophetic language, even when its truth has not been tested?

Action Step

Examine one message against the Bible and consider whether it truly builds up people in Christ; state what you will now accept or reject.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

BACK TO CONTENTS

The gift of discerning of spirits enables the Church to recognise the true nature and source of spiritual influences. Outward appearances can be convincing and words can sound correct, yet Scripture warns that not every spiritual influence is from God.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:10**:

> *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"*

The words *"to another"* show that Paul is speaking of a particular spiritual gift. All believers must exercise biblical discernment, but discerning of spirits is a distinct operation of the Holy Spirit through which something not apparent outwardly may be recognised. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, gives this discernment for the protection and edification of His body.

What Is Discernment?

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:15**:

> *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."*

The Greek word translated *"judgeth"* is ANAKRINO. It carries the thought of examining or discerning something in order to determine its true character. The gift of discerning of spirits may expose an influence that is from God, arising from human motives or the flesh, or deceptive and spiritually corrupt.

Its purpose is not to make believers suspicious of everyone around them. It is given to protect the Church from deception and help God's people respond according to truth.

Try the Spirits

John wrote in **1 John 4:1**:

> *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*

Spiritual claims must not be accepted simply because they appear supernatural or use religious language. They must be tested. The Word of God remains the plumb line, and Jesus

Christ is the Spirit of truth. Anything genuinely proceeding from Him will agree with the truth He has revealed.

Peter Discerned the Deception of Ananias

Ananias and Sapphira provide a striking example of hidden motives being exposed. Their outward action could have appeared generous, but Peter recognised the deception.

Luke wrote in **Acts 5:3-4**:

> *"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."*

The issue was not that Ananias had failed to give all of the money. Peter specifically said that the property and its proceeds had been within his own power. The sin was presenting something false as though it were true.

The Spirit exposed what human observation alone could not have known.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must believers seek the Spirit's discernment instead of judging a spiritual claim by appearances?

Personal Reflection

Have you mistaken impressive outward behaviour for evidence that a spiritual influence is from God?

Action Step

Identify one claim you need to reassess, test it by God's Word, and describe how you will respond more carefully.

Discernment Can Reveal the Condition of the Heart

Another example appears in the account of Simon in Samaria. When Simon attempted to obtain spiritual authority through money, Peter recognised the condition behind his request.

Peter said in **Acts 8:20-23**:

> *"But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."*

Peter saw beyond Simon's outward interest in spiritual things and recognised that *"thy heart is not right in the sight of God."* Discernment can therefore expose motives hidden beneath religious behaviour.

True Words Can Come From a Wrong Source

Acts chapter 16 provides one of the clearest demonstrations of why discernment is necessary. A young woman followed Paul and his companions while speaking words that sounded completely accurate.

Luke wrote in **Acts 16:16-18**:

> *"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."*

Her words sounded true. Paul and his companions were servants of God and were proclaiming the way of salvation. Yet the source of those words was wrong.

Paul discerned *"a spirit of divination."* Accuracy of words alone does not establish the source of a spiritual manifestation. The source must also be discerned.

Discernment Protects the Gospel

Had Paul welcomed the woman's testimony, the Gospel could have appeared to receive endorsement from a spirit of divination. Instead, he separated the work of Christ from that false spiritual influence.

Jesus warned in **Matthew 7:15-16**:

> *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"*

Outward appearance is not enough. Truth, fruit and spiritual source must be examined so that the Church remains faithful to Jesus Christ.

Discernment Is Not Suspicion

The gift of discerning of spirits must not become an excuse for continually questioning people's motives without evidence or spiritual direction. Suspicion assumes evil, while discernment recognises what is actually present. Genuine spiritual discernment serves the Church by exposing deception when necessary while remaining governed by the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:15**:

> *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"*

Discernment identifies what is true, while love governs how that truth is handled. The purpose is protection and faithfulness, not accusation or suspicion.

The Church Still Needs Discernment

The Church continues to face teachings, ministries and spiritual claims presented as coming from God. Some may be genuine, some may arise from human enthusiasm or ambition, and others may be deceptive.

Discernment protects the body from false teaching, manipulative spiritual claims and deceptive practices. Yet the gift itself remains subject to Scripture. No one can justify an accusation simply by saying, *"I discerned it."*

Jesus Christ is the Spirit of truth dwelling within His people. The believer through whom discernment operates remains dependent upon Him, and the purpose is always to protect and edify His body.

Discerning of spirits is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that enables the true source and character of spiritual influences to be recognised, so that His Church may reject deception, preserve truth and remain faithful to Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is discerning of spirits needed to protect truth and reject deception?

Personal Reflection

Have you trusted a spiritual influence because its words sounded right without considering its source and fruit?

Action Step

Examine that influence with the teaching in Acts and identify the correction needed in your judgement or conduct.

THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION

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The gift of exhortation is a Spirit-given ability to encourage, strengthen, comfort and urge believers towards faithfulness. Biblical exhortation helps people remain steadfast in Christ, especially during difficulty, uncertainty or spiritual discouragement.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:8**:

> *"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

Paul presents exhortation as a distinct area of spiritual service. The believer through whom this gift operates becomes an instrument through whom Jesus Christ strengthens others within His body.

The Meaning of Exhortation

The Greek word translated *"exhorteth"* is PARAKALEO. It carries the thought of calling near, encouraging, comforting, urging or strengthening.

Exhortation therefore includes more than emotional encouragement. It can comfort someone who is suffering, strengthen someone who is discouraged and urge someone towards obedience. The goal is spiritual strengthening and continued faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

Barnabas: A Son of Consolation

Barnabas provides one of the clearest examples of exhortation in the New Testament.

Luke wrote in **Acts 4:36**:

> *"And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,"*

Barnabas became known for the strengthening influence he had upon others. His ministry was not centred upon drawing attention to himself, but upon helping other believers become established and useful in the work of Christ.

When he came to Antioch and saw the grace of God working among the believers, he responded with exhortation.

Luke wrote in **Acts 11:22-23**:

> *"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."*

His encouragement had direction. He strengthened them to *"cleave unto the Lord."* Biblical exhortation directs people towards Jesus Christ rather than towards the person offering the encouragement.

Exhortation Urges Towards Faithfulness

Exhortation can also urge believers towards love, good works and continued obedience.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:24-25**:

> *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

A weary believer may need strengthening, while a careless person may need to be urged towards faithfulness. Someone facing trial may need courage to continue. The gift helps supply that strength through the operation of Christ within His body.

Exhortation and Comfort

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**:

> *"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."*

The gift of exhortation can operate powerfully during grief, persecution, disappointment and spiritual struggle. The person exercising the gift does not remove every trial. Christ works through that believer to help another member remain established while passing through it.

Jesus Christ Is the Comforter Within

The biblical title *"Comforter"* helps us understand the source of this strengthening ministry.

Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

The Holy Spirit is not another divine Person separate from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to dwell within His people as the Holy Spirit. The gift of exhortation therefore reflects His own strengthening work within the body.

When one believer encourages another through this gift, the source is not simply a naturally optimistic personality. Jesus Christ works through the member to strengthen another member of His body.

Exhortation Must Remain Grounded in Truth

Encouragement that ignores truth is not biblical exhortation. A person may offer comforting words while avoiding something that genuinely needs correction, but that does not necessarily strengthen the believer spiritually.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:2**:

> *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."*

Exhortation is connected with *"doctrine."* It does not replace sound teaching. The Spirit of Christ may use exhortation to encourage, correct, warn or strengthen, but whatever is spoken must remain consistent with Scripture.

The gift may operate publicly through preaching or teaching, or personally through a timely conversation or word of encouragement. Its value is not measured by visibility, but by the strength it gives to the body.

The gift of exhortation is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that encourages, comforts, strengthens and urges believers to remain faithful, helping the body stand firm in truth and continue walking with Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does exhortation encourage believers while also urging them to remain faithful?

Personal Reflection

When helping someone, have you offered easy comfort when truth was needed, or harsh correction when comfort was needed?

Action Step

Consider a real person's need, examine your motive, and plan a truthful and compassionate response through Christ's love within you.

THE GIFT OF MERCY

BACK TO CONTENTS

The gift of mercy is a Spirit-given ability to respond with compassion, kindness, forgiveness and restoration. Mercy is something every believer should show, but Paul also identifies it as a particular area of spiritual service.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:8**:

> *"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, works through believers to bring compassion and restoration where others are hurting or in need. The gift reflects His own mercy operating through the members of His body.

Mercy Reflects the Character of God

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:4**:

> *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,"*

God is *"rich in mercy."* The mercy shown through believers should therefore reflect His character. Spiritual mercy flows from the life of Christ within rather than simply from a naturally gentle personality.

Mercy and Discernment Work Together

Mercy does not require the Church to ignore truth or wrongdoing. It must work together with spiritual discernment so that the response is both truthful and compassionate.

Zechariah wrote in **Zechariah 7:9**:

> *"Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:"*

Judgement and mercy are not enemies. Discernment recognises what is actually happening, while mercy helps ensure that the response reflects the compassion of Christ. Without discernment, mercy can become careless. Without mercy, discernment can become harsh.

Mercy Does Not Ignore Sin

Biblical mercy does not require wrongdoing to be called acceptable. Peter confronted Simon directly concerning the condition of his heart.

Peter said in **Acts 8:22-23**:

> *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."*

Peter's words were serious, but they also included the opportunity to repent. Correction and mercy can therefore work together with the goal of repentance and restoration.

The purpose is not personal punishment or humiliation. Where restoration is possible, correction should help lead the person back towards truth and faithfulness.

Mercy Knows When to Restore

Paul gives an important example involving a believer who had received church discipline.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 2:6-8**:

> *"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."*

There had been a time for correction, but now there was a time for forgiveness and comfort. Paul recognised that continuing punishment after its purpose had been accomplished could cause unnecessary harm.

A person refusing truth may need correction, while a person who has genuinely repented may need restoration. Mercy requires spiritual sensitivity to know the difference.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why might one person need correction while a repentant person needs restoration?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated a repentant person as though their earlier failure must always define them?

Action Step

Identify one relationship where correction or restoration is needed, and explain how you will act with both truth and mercy.

Barnabas and John Mark

John Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas but later withdrew from the work.

Luke wrote in **Acts 13:13**:

> *"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."*

Later, Paul did not believe John Mark should accompany them again.

Luke wrote in **Acts 15:37-39**:

> *"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;"*

Barnabas gave John Mark another opportunity. Later Scripture shows that Mark became useful in ministry.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:11**:

> *"Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."*

The man Paul had once refused to take was later described as *"profitable to me for the ministry."* Mercy can recognise that failure does not always have to be the final word.

Mercy Can Recognise Potential

Barnabas also helped Saul when other believers were afraid of him.

Luke wrote in **Acts 9:27**:

> *"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."*

Barnabas recognised what God was doing in Saul's life and helped others see it. Mercy therefore does more than respond to suffering. It can recognise what Christ is doing in someone whose past causes others to hesitate.

This does not mean ignoring genuine danger or abandoning discernment. Truth, discernment and mercy must work together.

Mercy Must Be Shown Cheerfully

Paul says mercy should be shown *"with cheerfulness."* Mercy should not be offered with resentment or in a way that makes the person receiving it feel like an unwanted burden.

At the same time, mercy does not mean that every request must be granted or that wise boundaries are unnecessary. Mercy is compassionate service governed by truth.

The Church contains people who experience grief, failure, weakness and the consequences of poor decisions. The gift of mercy helps the body respond with the compassion of Jesus Christ without abandoning truth.

The gift of mercy is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that enables believers to respond with compassion, forgiveness and restoration, while remaining governed by truth and spiritual discernment.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can mercy remain compassionate without setting aside truth or discernment?

Personal Reflection

Where have you avoided necessary truth because you wanted your response to appear merciful?

Action Step

Name the truth you must not avoid and identify a compassionate way to respond that protects the other person rather than condemning them.

DIVERS KINDS OF TONGUES

BACK TO CONTENTS

Among the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul includes *"divers kinds of tongues."* This gift has often been misunderstood, so Scripture itself must establish what a tongue is, how the gift operates and what purpose it serves.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:10**:

> *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"*

The gift is distributed by the one Spirit according to His will. It must never be separated from Jesus Christ, made a universal requirement for believers or treated as evidence that someone has received more of the Holy Spirit than another born-again believer.

What Does "Tongues" Mean?

The Greek word translated *"tongues"* is GLOSSA. In verses where GLOSSA refers to speech, it denotes a tongue or language with meaningful words. The biblical gift of tongues therefore concerns meaningful language rather than meaningless sounds.

This becomes especially clear on the Day of Pentecost.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:4-8**:

> *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"*

The speakers were Galilaeans, yet people from different nations heard them speaking languages into which they had been born. These were understandable human languages.

Luke continued in **Acts 2:9-11**:

> *"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."*

The hearers understood what was being spoken. Both the speakers and hearers understood the languages being used. The miracle was that people spoke languages they had not naturally learned, while people who knew those languages understood them.

Tongues Are Not the Universal Evidence of the Holy Spirit

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:29-30**:

> *"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"*

The answer to Paul's questions is no. Not every believer exercises the same spiritual gift. Every born-again believer receives the Spirit of Christ at the new birth, but the Spirit does not operate through every believer in the same way.

The absence of tongues therefore does not mean that a person has failed to receive the Holy Spirit. No particular spiritual gift can become the universal evidence that someone possesses Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the absence of tongues not mean that someone lacks the Holy Spirit?

Personal Reflection

Have you believed that speaking with tongues is necessary to prove that someone has received the Holy Spirit?

Action Step

Use **Romans 8:9** *and* **1 Corinthians 12:29–30** *to correct that belief and explain how it changes the way you recognise a born-again believer.*

The Spirit Distributes the Gift

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:11**:

> *"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

The Spirit decides how He will work through the members of the body. A believer cannot make tongues a required spiritual experience when Scripture says that the gifts are divided *"severally as he will."*

Neither should anyone attempt to learn or imitate sounds in order to produce what is claimed to be the gift. A genuine spiritual gift is the operation of Christ through His Spirit, not a behaviour taught or manufactured by people.

Tongues at the House of Cornelius

Luke wrote in **Acts 10:44-46**:

> *"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."*

This event was significant because Cornelius and his household were Gentiles. Jewish believers needed clear evidence that God had accepted Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter later explained what had happened.

Peter said in **Acts 11:15-17**:

> *"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"*

The event did not establish a second reception of the Spirit following salvation. It demonstrated to the Jewish observers that Gentiles who believed on Jesus Christ were accepted by God and received the same Spirit.

Tongues in Acts 19

A further occurrence is recorded at Ephesus among people who had known only John's baptism.

Luke wrote in **Acts 19:5-6**:

> *"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."*

These people had not yet understood the completed Gospel concerning Jesus Christ. These verses belong to the transitional history recorded in Acts and must not be turned into a pattern requiring born-again believers to seek the Holy Spirit at a later time.

The settled New Covenant truth remains that anyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of Christ.

Acts Records Transition

The Gospel was moving outward from Jerusalem into a world divided by Jewish and Gentile distinctions, cultures and languages. The early Jewish believers themselves were learning the full implications of the New Covenant.

Tongues sometimes provided visible confirmation that God was working among people whom Jewish believers might otherwise have questioned or excluded. However, transitional events must never overturn the clear doctrinal teaching that the Holy Spirit is received at the new birth.

Christ does not save a person first and then enter that person later. The believer possesses the Spirit of Christ from the moment of the new birth. Christ's completed work must interpret transitional conduct. Transitional conduct must never redefine Christ's completed work.

Tongues Can Serve as a Sign

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:22**:

> *"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."*

A supernatural ability to speak a language never learned could provide visible evidence of God's operation. On Pentecost, the hearers immediately recognised that something extraordinary was happening because Galilaeans were speaking languages understood by people from many nations.

The sign, however, pointed beyond itself. Its purpose was not fascination with language, but to direct people towards the works and truth of God.

Tongues Must Edify

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:9-11**:

> *"So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."*

Paul's concern is understanding. A language unknown to the listener still has meaning, but without interpretation the listener cannot receive that meaning. Spiritual gifts within the Church must contribute to understanding and edification.

There Must Be Order

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:27-28**:

> *"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."*

There should not be uncontrolled speaking in languages the congregation cannot understand. If the language is unknown to those listening, interpretation is required. Without interpretation, the speaker is told to keep silence in the Church.

This shows that spiritual gifts do not produce uncontrollable behaviour. The operation of the Spirit remains orderly and directed towards edification.

The Gift Remains Relevant

Language barriers still exist throughout the world, and the Gospel continues to be carried among people speaking many different languages. The gift of tongues therefore remains a possible operation of the Spirit wherever Christ chooses to overcome such barriers according to His will.

However, it must remain what Scripture describes. It is not universal evidence of salvation, proof of a second experience after the new birth or meaningless speech produced for personal display. It is a spiritual gift distributed by Christ for His purpose.

Jesus Christ remains the centre, and tongues are one of many operations through which He may work within His body. The language, speaker and circumstances may differ, but the Spirit working through the gift is one.

Divers kinds of tongues is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by which a believer may speak a real language not naturally learned, according to His will, so that the Gospel may be communicated and the body of Christ edified.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What purpose does speaking a real, unlearned language serve when Christ gives this gift?

Personal Reflection

Have you valued the unusual sound of tongues above whether people understand and are helped?

Action Step

Examine that priority using Acts 2 and explain why meaningful communication and the good of the hearer should guide your judgement.

THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

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The interpretation of tongues is the companion gift to divers kinds of tongues. When a language is spoken that the congregation does not understand, interpretation makes the meaning clear so that those listening can receive and be edified by what has been said.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:10**:

> *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:"*

The gift belongs to the same operation of the one Spirit. Jesus Christ, dwelling within His people as the Holy Spirit, may give one person the ability to speak a language not naturally learned and another the ability to interpret what has been spoken. The purpose is understanding and edification.

What Does "Interpretation" Mean?

The Greek word translated *"interpretation"* is HERMENEIA. It carries the thought of interpretation, explanation or translation. The gift therefore concerns making the meaning of a language understandable to those who do not know it.

This agrees with what Scripture has already established concerning tongues. A tongue is a real language with meaning, and if the hearers do not know that language, interpretation enables them to understand the message. The gift is not needed because the language itself is meaningless, but because the hearers do not understand that particular language.

Natural Translation and Spiritual Interpretation

There is an important distinction between natural translation and the spiritual gift of interpretation. A person may learn another language through education, experience or regular use and then translate naturally because they understand both languages.

The spiritual gift of interpretation does not depend upon that natural training. It is an operation of the Spirit through which the meaning of a language is made known according to the will of God. Natural ability can be useful, but natural ability and spiritual gifting are not identical. The source of the gift remains Christ.

Interpretation Is Required for Edification

Paul gives direct instruction concerning the use of tongues in the gathered Church. He wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:27-28**:

> *"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."*

Paul's concern is clear. If the congregation does not understand the language, the message must be interpreted, and if no interpreter is present, the speaker is to remain silent in the Church. This shows that spiritual gifts are not given simply to create an experience. They are given so that the body may receive something useful.

Understanding matters because the purpose of the gift is edification.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the Church need to understand what a speaker says before it can be built up?

Personal Reflection

When speaking about spiritual things, have you tried to sound impressive instead of being understood?

Action Step

Identify that habit and explain how you will speak more plainly and helpfully so that another person can understand God's truth.

The Body Must Know What Is Being Said

Paul repeatedly returns to this principle. He wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:6**:

> *"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?"*

Paul asks, *"what shall I profit you?"* The question is not whether the speaker has experienced something spiritual, but whether the body receives benefit. A message that cannot be understood cannot instruct, strengthen or edify the hearers unless its meaning is made clear.

Interpretation therefore serves the same larger purpose as every other gift: *"to profit withal."*

Understanding Is Better Than Display

Paul places great importance upon intelligibility. He wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:19**:

> *"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."*

The contrast is striking. Paul does not measure spiritual value by the number of words spoken or by how unusual the experience appears. Five understandable words that teach others are more useful than thousands of words the congregation cannot understand.

The purpose of spiritual gifts is not display. The purpose is communication and edification.

Interpretation Preserves Order

The gift of interpretation also contributes to order within the Church. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 14:33**:

> *"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."*

A congregation in which people speak without understanding, interpretation or order does not reflect the purpose Paul establishes. The Spirit does not create confusion, and the same Christ who gives the gift also governs how it should be used. Spiritual gifts therefore remain subject to spiritual order.

Interpretation Communicates the Meaning

Spiritual interpretation is more than an opportunity for someone to speak after a tongue has been given. Its purpose is to communicate the meaning of what has been spoken clearly and faithfully so that those listening can understand the message.

The interpreter must not add ideas that were not spoken, alter the meaning or use the opportunity to introduce personal teaching. This is especially important when the message concerns the Gospel or instruction for the Church. The gift serves the message rather than replacing it.

Daniel Provides an Illustration of Supernatural Interpretation

Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall provides an illustration of God making meaning known supernaturally. Daniel was called when the king's wise men could not explain the writing.

Daniel said in **Daniel 5:17**:

> *"Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."*

Daniel did not claim natural ability as the source. God enabled him to make known what others could not understand. This is not the same New Testament gift described in 1 Corinthians 12, but it illustrates the principle that God can supernaturally make meaning known.

The spiritual gift of interpretation likewise depends upon God rather than ordinary linguistic training.

Interpretation Supports the Gospel

Language barriers remain a reality wherever the Gospel is carried throughout the world. Jesus said in **Mark 16:15**:

> *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*

The Gospel is intended for people of every nation and language. Natural translation is an important and useful means of communicating across those barriers, but Scripture also

recognises that Jesus Christ may work supernaturally through the gifts of tongues and interpretation according to His will.

When He does, the purpose remains the same: people must understand the truth. The gift serves communication rather than drawing attention to the manifestation itself.

The Gift Is Not a Private Display

The gift of interpretation is especially important because it exposes the weakness of treating tongues as a public display with no concern for understanding. If interpretation were unnecessary, Paul's instruction to *"let one interpret"* would have little meaning.

The very existence of the companion gift shows that communication matters. Tongues and interpretation work together so that what is spoken can serve the body. The manifestation is not given for the spiritual status of the speaker, but for the good of those listening.

Christ Remains the Source

The gift of interpretation must never become centred upon the interpreter. The interpreter does not become an independent authority over what God has said, nor does the gift permit someone to invent meaning and call it interpretation.

Jesus Christ remains the source, and the operation must remain truthful, orderly and directed towards edification. The language may be unknown to the hearers and the interpreter may have no natural knowledge of it, but when Christ chooses to work through this gift, the meaning becomes understandable.

The interpretation of tongues is an operation of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by which the meaning of a real language is made understandable to those who do not know it, so that the Gospel may be communicated clearly and the Church edified.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must interpretation communicate the meaning of a tongue faithfully for the Church's benefit?

Personal Reflection

Have you accepted an interpretation of tongues without considering whether it gives the hearers clear meaning?

Action Step

Examine the purpose of interpretation in the Bible and state how your response to unclear or untested claims should change.

THE GIFTS OF GIVING AND HELPS

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Not every spiritual gift operates through preaching, prophecy, healing or another highly visible ministry. Some gifts are expressed through generosity and practical service. The gifts of giving and helps show that Jesus Christ works through His people in ways that meet needs, support ministry and strengthen the body.

These gifts may receive little public attention, but they are essential to the proper functioning of the Church. Their value is not measured by visibility, but by the service they provide.

The Gift of Giving

Paul identifies giving as an area of spiritual service. He wrote in **Romans 12:8**:

> *"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."*

The Greek word translated *"giveth"* is METADIDOMI. It carries the thought of sharing or imparting what one possesses for the benefit of another. Giving therefore includes willingly sharing what God has entrusted to us so that needs may be met and the work of the Gospel supported.

Giving With Simplicity

Paul says that the person who gives should do so *"with simplicity."* The Greek word HAPLOTES carries the thought of sincerity, generosity and singleness of purpose. Giving should therefore be free from pride, manipulation or the desire for recognition.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:3-4**:

> *"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."*

The purpose is not to make the giver appear generous. The focus is upon serving Christ and meeting genuine needs.

Giving Is More Than Money

The principle of giving extends beyond finances. John the Baptist said in **Luke 3:11**:

> *"He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."*

Giving may therefore involve possessions, food, time, effort, hospitality, skills or other resources. Paul also wrote in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**:

> *"So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."*

True giving comes from a willingness to share ourselves and what God has placed in our hands for the good of others.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does generous giving require beyond passing on something you can spare?

Personal Reflection

Is there something you could give or share that you have held back through fear or self-interest?

Action Step

Name the motive involved and choose a specific need to meet through the generosity of Christ's life within you.

Barnabas and the Macedonian Churches

Barnabas demonstrated generosity in the early Church. Luke wrote in **Acts 4:36-37**:

> *"And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."*

His action was voluntary. Scripture does not make the selling of property a requirement for every believer. Barnabas simply used what he possessed to help meet the needs of the Church.

The churches of Macedonia provide another powerful example. Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**:

> *"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."*

Their generosity did not come from abundance. Paul says they were in *"deep poverty,"* yet they were *"willing of themselves."* Most importantly, they *"first gave their own selves to the Lord."*

Christ came first, and their generosity flowed from their relationship with Him.

Giving Supports the Gospel

The Philippian believers also supported Paul in his ministry. Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:15-16**:

> *"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."*

Their giving helped meet Paul's practical needs while he preached the Gospel. One member may go and preach, while another supplies what is necessary for that work. Both contribute to the same purpose.

The Gift of Helps

Paul also names "helps" among the gifts God has placed within the Church. He wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:28**:

> *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."*

The Greek word translated *"helps"* is ANTILEPSIS. It carries the thought of taking hold in order to support or assist. The gift of helps therefore involves practical service that eases another person's burden and enables the body to function effectively.

Practical Service Is Spiritual Service

The gift of helps may operate through ordinary tasks that receive little recognition. It may include caring for the sick or weak, preparing food, assisting with practical organisation, supporting ministry, helping with administration or meeting everyday needs within the congregation.

These actions may appear simple, but practical service is not less spiritual because it is unseen. Jesus Christ works through the members of His body in different ways.

Helping the Weak

Paul strongly emphasised practical support. He said in **Acts 20:33-35**:

> *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Paul worked not only for himself but also to help others. He specifically said believers *"ought to support the weak."* This expresses the spirit of helps: recognising a burden and willingly taking hold of it.

Helps Can Support Other Ministries

Acts chapter 6 shows how practical service can enable other members to fulfil their responsibilities. The apostles said in **Acts 6:2-4**:

> *"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."*

The practical need was important. Those appointed to meet it were required to be *"full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."* Their service enabled other members to concentrate upon prayer and the ministry of the Word.

This is the body working together.

Helps Is Not a Lesser Gift

Because helps often operates quietly, it can be undervalued. Yet Paul lists it alongside apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles and healings.

The Church cannot function properly if practical needs are neglected. A congregation may have strong preaching and teaching, but the body also needs members who care for the weak, support ministry and respond faithfully to everyday needs.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:10**:

> *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

The purpose is service *"one to another."* Giving and helps both serve the body and express faithful stewardship of what God has entrusted to His people.

Christ's Servant Life Within

Jesus taught that greatness is expressed through service. He said in **Matthew 23:11**:

> *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."*

Giving and helps reflect this servant principle. The believer does not serve in order to gain recognition. Generosity and practical service flow from Jesus Christ dwelling within and working through His people as the Holy Spirit.

One member may give resources while another takes hold of practical burdens. One may support the spread of the Gospel while another cares for someone whose need might otherwise be overlooked. Both are expressions of Christ serving through His body.

The gifts of giving and helps are operations of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by which believers share what God has entrusted to them and take hold of the burdens of others, strengthening His body through generous and practical service.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do giving and helps carry another person's burden in Christ's body?

Personal Reflection

Whose burden have you noticed but quietly expected someone else to carry?

Action Step

Recognise your reluctance and offer suitable practical help, explaining how this expresses Christ's care through His body.

CONCLUSION: CHRIST WORKS THROUGH THE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY

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The gifts examined in this Study Guide show the wide range of ways in which Jesus Christ works through His people. Some involve extraordinary manifestations of faith, healing or miracles, while others involve prophecy, discernment, exhortation, mercy, languages, interpretation, giving or practical help. The operations differ, but the source remains one.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:11**:

> *"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."*

Jesus Christ dwells within His born-again people as the Holy Spirit. He is therefore not separate from the Spirit who distributes and operates the gifts. The same Christ who saves and indwells the believer also works through the members of His body according to His will.

The gift of faith shows that Christ can give extraordinary confidence when His people face circumstances beyond ordinary human reasoning. The gifts of healing and the working of miracles reveal His power and compassion while keeping attention upon Him rather than upon the person through whom He works.

Prophecy serves the Church through the declaration of divine truth, whether by foretelling what God reveals or by forth-telling truth for edification, warning and instruction. Every prophetic claim must remain subject to Scripture because the Spirit of truth will never contradict the Word of God.

Discerning of spirits protects the Church from deception. It enables spiritual influences, motives and teachings to be examined according to their true character. Yet discernment must never become suspicion or accusation, but must remain governed by truth and love.

Exhortation and mercy demonstrate the strengthening and compassionate life of Christ within His people. Exhortation encourages believers to remain faithful, while mercy responds to weakness, failure and genuine need with compassion and restoration.

The gifts of tongues and interpretation demonstrate that language barriers do not limit the work of Christ. Biblical tongues are real languages, and interpretation makes an unknown language understandable to the hearers. Neither gift is the universal evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. Every born-again believer already possesses the Spirit of Christ, while gifts are distributed differently according to His will.

Giving and helps remind us that spiritual gifts are not always public or spectacular. Christ also works through generosity, practical service, support for ministry and care for those in need. A quiet gift exercised faithfully may strengthen the body in ways that few people ever see.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7**:

> *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."*

This remains the governing purpose of every gift. Spiritual gifts are given for service, not status; for edification, not self-exaltation; and for the glory of Jesus Christ, not the prominence of the human instrument.

No believer owns spiritual power independently. No gift makes a person more complete in Christ, and no single manifestation becomes the measure of another believer's spirituality. The believer possesses the Person, and the gifts flow from the Person. Jesus Christ remains the Head of His Church, and His life within supplies everything necessary for spiritual service.

There are many gifts and many members, but one Spirit works through them all. Jesus Christ dwells within His people as the Holy Spirit and works through the members of His body according to His will for the edification of His Church.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can many different gifts serve one body through the one Spirit?

Personal Reflection

Which gift discussed here has changed the way you view another believer's worth or service?

Action Step

Identify one attitude that has changed and support that believer's service in a way that honours Christ rather than the gift itself.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Explain the common purpose of gifts such as healing, prophecy, tongues, mercy and helps. Why must the person using a gift direct attention to Christ and the good of His body?

2. Understanding

Why should believers neither turn healing accounts into formulas nor seek miracles for their own sake? Explain how the signs in the Bible point to Jesus and His message.

3. Personal Reflection

Which teaching about the gifts in operation has corrected or strengthened your understanding? Explain what you now understand differently and how it affects the way you view another believer's service.

4. Response to Truth

If a spiritual message sounds powerful, how will you test its truth and its effect on the Church? Explain how you should respond if it does not agree with the Bible.

5. Action Step

Think of someone who needs truthful encouragement, practical help or mercy. What have you overlooked in your response to that person, and how will you express Christ's love while remaining faithful to His truth?

6. Early Response

Have you begun the response you identified in Question 5? If so, explain what you said or did and what you learnt about serving through Christ's love. If not, explain what has prevented you from beginning.

7. Ongoing Practice

What will help you continue to judge gifts of speech by whether people understand the message and are strengthened? Explain how this will guide what you say or accept in the Church.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Why does the absence of tongues not mean that a believer lacks the Holy Spirit? Explain the purpose of a real language and its interpretation, and why understanding matters for the Church.

9. Living the Truth

A believer needs both correction and care. How would you decide what to say and what practical help to give? Explain how truth, mercy and discernment should work together in your response.

10. Final Response

Bring together the gifts that speak, the gifts that meet needs, and the need to test spiritual claims. What has become clearer to you, and how will you serve Christ's body without making a gift or its user the centre?