

# A Church Alive: Spiritual Gifts In Action

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*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. – 1 Corinthians 12:11*

## **From the Heart of a Giver**

Last week we looked at how Jesus approached prayer. He did not do so from a point of trying to “get” things. His focus in how he was instructing the disciples had to do with what they wanted for others. Jesus used the example of a friend taking care of a visitor and a father with a son to show that:

- 1) Provision comes even when it is inconvenient
- 2) It is normal and natural to give good and right things to and for those we care for.

As much as we can understand our own bent toward giving, we can rely on the fact that God’s heart is so much more inclined to give both good gifts, and the Holy Spirit to those He loves.

With this, as we study the gifts of the Spirit, we are not to focus so much on the “how” – the tactical operation of the gifts, but with the “heart” – the end result of what God wants for the person. When we do that, we line ourselves up with the heart of God, and in doing so can see His gifts in full operation around us.

## **Cookbooks Vs. Grandma’s Recipe**

*There are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

Walk through any bookstore, and in the Cooking section you will find dozens of cookbooks, all of which have recipes for the same dish, yet each of the recipes comes with its own unique flavor – an extra ingredient, swapping one thing for another, a different method of preparing. Take any one of those recipes to your grandma, or aunt or family friend who has made the dish from scratch, and you will likely see that recipe or cookbook used to support a mixing bowl as she continues to work with what she knows.

Typically when we study the gifts of the spirit, we do so like following a recipe – we look for the one method, the one application of the gift, and yet, from this we see that the only consistency is God Himself. The gifts in actuality vary in their look, their operation and application. Just look at healing – how many different ways did Jesus deliver healing to people?

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He spoke	So when he saw them he said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed	Luke 17:11-19
He held her hand	... he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose	Matthew 9:18-26
Put mud on the eyes	When he had said these things, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay	John 9:1-7
Spat and laid hands	...and when he had spit on his eyes and put his hands on him, he asked him if he saw anything...	Mark 8:22-25 (progressive healing)
He did Nothing	...when Jesus heard these things he marveled at him and turned around and said to the crowd that followed him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel." ...	Luke 7:1-10

Just as healing happens in various forms, the rest of the gifts vary in their application and method. This is important because we often dismiss the many ways in which the Holy Spirit pours out his gifts, and in doing so miss opportunities to partner with God in his work.

*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father. – John 14:10-12*

Jesus claimed no ownership for the works he did. He only claimed relationship with the Father. It was because of his closeness with the Father that Jesus was able to see the Father working through him in the manifestation of His Spirit. Jesus promises the same to us, but urges us to focus our attention on our belief in him and what he says to us. If we do, we will see this same activity, and even more happening through us. This however is not because we are making it happen. It is because Jesus went to the Father to pour out the promise of His Spirit.

### Seeing The Gifts in Scripture: At Pentecost

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" ... - Acts 2:14-16*

At Pentecost is where the Holy Spirit was first poured out, and as such we should expect to see the manifestation of the Spirit in a number of ways. While there is a

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focus on tongues, that is not the only thing that was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit upon his arrival:

Gift	Summary	Scripture	Reference
<b>Tongues</b>	Speaking by the spirit in a language unknown to the speaker	And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance	Acts 2:4; I Corinthians 14:1-5, 21
		... Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered	Romans 8:26
<b>Interpretation</b>	Ability to translate that which is spoken in tongues	And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?	Acts 2:5-8; I Corinthians 14:13-14
<b>Prophecy</b>	Speaking the words/works of God by His Spirit	But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them...	Acts 2:14a; I Corinthians 14:23-25
		...And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship	Acts 27:21-26
<b>Word of Knowledge</b>	Something revealed which was not previously known	But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:...	Acts 2:16-21; I Corinthians 13:2
		... he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."	Acts 21:11

It could be argued that there were more gifts in operation, but the main point is this... the Holy Spirit was moving in and through all in that day so everyone could profit, and for 3000 to come into relationship with the Father. **The operation of the Holy Spirit should always draw us closer to the Father.**

### Perfect Imperfection

*For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, each according to his ability, and immediately he went on a journey. – Matthew 25:14-15*

Our approach to the gifts can either set us free to walk in the power of God, or can paralyze us to the point that we are afraid of doing anything. One of the reasons is that we picture the operation of the Spirit in a certain way, and depending on how we are expecting God to move, we will either attribute it to God, or we will think it is “just us”.