



Signs and Wonders

A Guide to the Supernatural Realm

Daniel L. Segraves

SIGNS AND WONDERS:
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by Daniel L. Segraves

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Scripture quotations in this book are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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Preface

During the winter of 1986-87, it seemed the Lord began to deal with some of the faculty of Christian Life College about the need to introduce a course that would specifically address the issues relating to the supernatural.

It seemed that the course should not deal with these things in a purely academic way, but that the theoretical and the practical should meet in the class as faculty and students put into immediate practice the truths under consideration.

As a result, the author of this course and Phillip Dugas, another instructor, both independently prompted by the Holy Spirit, agreed to work together in teaching Signs and Wonders. The syllabus focused on the gifts of the Spirit, and the class was structured so as to allow one hour for teaching and one hour for ministry. Neither instructor professed expertise in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, but both desired to see them restored to their evident place in the New Testament church.

The results of this effort form a history of sorts. Since the spring of 1987, the course Signs and Wonders has been offered. The course concentrates on the role of signs and wonders in the New Testament church and the operation of the nine spiritual gifts of I Corinthians 12, and it emphasizes practical aspects of the operation of the gifts and the confirmation of the word with signs following.

Early in our experience with this class, we made some attempt to record the healings and miracles that occurred. This soon became impractical, however, as the sheer volume of these events increased. Scores of students and guests to the class have testified to being healed instantly of various maladies. The gift of the word of knowledge has operated to pinpoint specific needs of healing and salvation, and the prayers offered on the basis of the operation of this gift have been answered in remarkably brief periods of time. The gifts of divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and prophecy have operated for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of those present.

The impact of the class is now being felt far beyond the campus. Graduates are going forth, emboldened to step out by faith in their ministries to declare the wonderful works of God. This letter from an alumnus who ministered in New York State after graduation reads like a chapter from the Book of Acts, as God confirmed his word with signs following in this man's ministry:

Dear Brother Segraves:

Praise the Lord! He is so good!

I'm happy and excited to hear that the college is going forward in its quest to prepare laborers for the harvest field.

So many things have been going on back here in New York, I thought I would write and share some of it with you, for we are laborers together with God!

I am wonderfully amazed at how God continues to confirm his word with signs following as we step out in faith and obedience. In a recent service, I preached that "God is Able," declaring how that God is still able and willing to do the miraculous today! At the close of the service, an elderly man came hobbling up to the front in a lot of pain. He asked me to pray for him, telling me that his right leg was giving him a great deal of pain

and problems, and he was even having trouble walking even short distances.

I laid my hands on his head and in the Name of Jesus commanded the pain to leave and the leg to be healed. The power of God hit him and he was slain in the spirit. After about one minute on the floor, he suddenly jumped up and ran down the middle aisle of the church. The pain was gone and he was completely healed!

That set the whole thing off, and for another solid hour I ministered to practically the whole church; everyone, it seems, had a need!

One woman was in a lot of pain from what she described as a “knot” in her lower back. She too was slain, and upon getting up, testified that it was gone!

One girl with Down’s syndrome was brought forward, and the Lord really touched her. She began rejoicing in the Lord as the Spirit of God began to minister to her. The next week her mother testified that her teachers were amazed at her performance in her special classes that week at school. God is truly able!

Then again, in another service, I had the privilege of praying for a woman whom the doctor had told was suffering from an ulcer. She was prayed for, and then went in for further testing (GI series). They found absolutely nothing!

Just last week a woman came forward for prayer, stating she is unable to have children, but is believing God to do a miracle. We laid hands on her, and the Lord gave me words to pray. I asked the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father, to make her “a joyful mother of children.” We are believing God for some good news soon!

Yesterday, I preached (Sunday A.M.) of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. At the end, several came forward for healing. One man was in great pain with a gripping toothache. As we prayed, he said, the pain simply vanished. Praise God!

In that same service, a man came forward, confessing he was harboring bitterness and unforgiveness towards another individual in his heart. We prayed, and the Lord ministered to him in a very beautiful way, as that poison lifted from his spirit.

I have found that when people know that you believe in the healing power of Jesus Christ, they will come to you! This is a needy, hurting world! Jesus is the answer!

Thank you, Brother Segraves, for instilling in my heart the boldness and confidence that we can still see the miraculous today!

Maybe you could share some of this letter with your “Signs and Wonders” class, as an inspiration to them. I sat where they are sitting only a few months ago! Their chance is coming too!

Well, God bless you all, as you labor for the Master!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Bill Countaway, Jr.

Another graduate wrote to share his gratefulness for the impact of the Signs and Wonders class on his ministry as an evangelist.

Dear Brother Segraves,

I just returned from [Adelaide, Australia] and had a great time, thoroughly enjoying it. The camp was excellent and had a great impact on those attending. Some of

the leaders of the camp remarked that they would probably bring more home from the camp than any previous camp. The last night especially we had a good case of “Holy Laughter,” not worked up by comedic acts. We also had two individuals who after a season of prayer lasting over two and one half hours, were not able to speak English. They could only talk in tongues. To God be the glory for all of this.

I also thought to write of a couple of miracles that took place down there. One, especially, who was not a part of the church (she is now, though), and who was a nurse came up to be prayed for concerning healing. After she told me a couple of the things she wanted, God gave me a word of knowledge concerning some blood clots and other problems with her blood. I don’t remember what I said, but she said that the terminology I used was medically accurate and precise and that it was so exact only someone who knew medicine would have stated it in such a way. I, of course, do not know medicine. But this lifted her faith and she was made whole – even confirmed by the x-rays and some tests.

Another lady was facing surgery for her hips because she was always in pain, could not sleep on one side, and could not stand more than a “very short time.” She was made whole so completely that she cancelled the surgery.

Another one was made completely whole of carpal tunnel [syndrome] and other problems with her hands.

Yours in His excellent service,

David P. Sanzo

Another student, a doctor of dental surgery, wrote to testify of the impact of the class on him and his ministry.

Dear Dr. Segraves and Brother Dugas,

Just a note for the Signs and Wonders class. Last year I attended the class and this year I am teaching it in Don Vigil’s Bible class. We are having miracles. One of the students in the class has received such a magnificent utilization of the Holy Ghost it is marvelous He went to a home of an old friend. He went into the home and the Lord began to urge him to heal the family. He asked for the permission of the father, his old friend, and it was given. He began to have clear knowledge of the hurts in the family. He just told each member of the pain they were experiencing and what they could do to heal the breaks in relationships in the family. The outpouring of the Spirit lasted for about an hour. He said that when he left there was not a dry eye in the house of over twenty relatives and all were greatly blessed. We have many other events happening, to the edification and comfort and exhortation of the church.

I cannot tell you how many times in the last year I was stymied by a problem in dentistry and began praying in tongues and the desired result simply happened virtually instantly. The Holy Ghost is the best partner in dentistry I could possibly hope for.

For your information on the results of your class in my life. I was prayed for in the class for allergies. They promptly went away and I went to the allergist for a follow up visit and told him God healed me and he said, “Oh! Okay!” There was a little

skepticism there. I was convinced that it was true. I thought to myself, "I will not be returning with this problem." However, being a Doctor, I did not want to state to you until I was sure this was a true and real event and not my imagination or some manifestation of the placebo effect. I have gone through this allergy season and watched all my staff suffer this year as never before. And, I have had no sign of an allergy. For the last four years allergies have been a real severe problem for me and I have documentation for this healing from the allergist. This is real . . . PRAISE GOD!

Thank you for opening up the class to me. I really appreciate the results and I am sure that some one will be touched by the class we are teaching.

Sincerely,

Doug Martin, D.D.S.

A student in the first Signs and Wonders class wrote to express the ongoing influence of the class on his ministry, including a missions trip to India.

Brother Segraves,

I have been trying to remember when I took the first Signs and Wonders Class at Christian Life College, a course taught by you and Brother Phillip Dugas. I believe it was 17 years ago, but the effects of what we learned in that class are still bearing much fruit. Over the years I have seen God confirm his word along these lines so many times here in America both in our local church and in the churches that I have been privileged to preach in around the United States.

It was my privilege to be invited to minister in the nation of India this last January, 2007. I believe years ago that God put in my heart a desire to go overseas to see first hand what this teaching would do with hungry people who have more or less still held to a first century worldview.

We were not to be disappointed. As you taught in the class, the problem with seeing this ministry take place is never with the Lord; often the problem is with unbelief. When we preach the Word with faith and then allow the Lord an opportunity to confirm His word, it is as though He was waiting the entire time ready to do it.

We taught directly from the manual throughout most of the three day conference in Ahmedabad, India. After the initial session of preaching about the anointing (Luke 4) and how the ministry of Jesus is to be continued in this current generation, God began to move upon us by giving us words of knowledge about people in the conference. One encounter that stands out in my memory involves a particular woman in the congregation.

Her face kept standing out to me as I scanned the group, and the more I looked at her, the Lord begin to reveal to me that her husband was standing against her in her relationship with the Lord and that she was greatly troubled and discouraged.

I had her come forward to receive ministry. Sure enough the word given to her was right on; her husband was not only opposing her walk with God, but was also physically abusing her. Having her come forward to receive ministry and direction through this word of knowledge brought tremendous confidence and strength to her. Though she had to leave the conference after the first service because he was forbidding

her to stay any longer, God knew exactly what she needed and she left greatly encouraged by this word of knowledge.

In the second session, I taught how that each believer, by virtue of being a member of the body of Christ, has a spiritual gift. We taught on what gifts have been given to the church as found in 1 Corinthians 12 and we defined and described each of these gifts and taught how to identify them.

We then waited on the Lord for a time of impartation to those He was speaking to. Again, as we learned in that first Signs and Wonders class, it simply is not enough to preach and/or teach on these things without giving the Lord a time to confirm His word.

We felt a few words of knowledge about physical conditions, and those that felt that maybe the Lord wanted to use them in healing came forward to pray for those in pain. Many that were ministered to felt instantly relieved of pain.

In another session we preached about why we need Signs and Wonders and why God gives Signs and Wonders, again taken from this material. I had all the local pastors come forward and instructed them that healing would take place as they stepped out in faith. More people came to these Indian pastors for ministry. One woman who had a spike (long thorn) in her back for the last 7 years came forward to testify that the moment hands were laid on her the spike shot instantly out of her back. There was a word of knowledge about growths or tumors. A sister came that had a noticeable growth in her body and I had a sister who was interpreting for us lay her hand on her hand and she reported that the growth begin to shrink instantly. She also received prayer for her vision in her left eye and she reported that her vision instantly improved.

Another gentleman came forward and received prayer for paralysis on the right side of his body; he instantly received improvement and recovery. Another man was healed of a cataract in his left eye; he later danced with joy after receiving his healing. The more we waited on the Lord and prayed for people the more things begin to happen. It was wonderful to see these local Indian pastors begin to have healing take place through them.

The next to last session, I taught on the Gifts of Healing and how to minister healing to the sick. I have a strong conviction that it isn't enough for those we teach to simply watch us do the ministry, so after a time of instruction and demonstration about how to minister healing, I had two lines form at the front of the building, one for those who felt led to pray for the sick and those that needed healing. I had no idea how easily this simple action would turn into an incredible atmosphere for the miraculous.

The group that came to minister healing watched me as I demonstrated by asking some specific questions on the condition needing healing, how long they suffered and where the pain currently was. I then instructed them to lay their hands on that body area where the pain or condition was, as modesty allowed, and to command healing to be released.

With great joy I report to you that every person that received ministry (about 10 people) from those gathered to minister reported the pain instantly left or the condition was noticeably improved. As they were doing it, this so-called expert (me) got out of the way and watched. These beautiful Indian people begin to minister healing to each others and it lasted for what seemed like an hours. In fact, our host had to send some men to retrieve us from his crowd of newly equipped believers, who now had signs following

them.

Before I close my letter, let me tell you about one lady who was a new convert from Hinduism. As she came up in the line to minister healing, someone told me that she had never had the Lord or any god answer a prayer. Filled with the boldness of the Spirit, I told her, "You are going to see Him answer a prayer right now." I had her lay hands on a sister who had come forward with extensive pain in her knees and gave her some simple instructions. I watched her lay hands on this sister's knees, and the pain instantly left her. This was so shocking to this sister who had confessed that God never answered any of her prayers that she begin to question the sister that received prayer to see if she was lying. Yeah, God! Hallelujah! Again and again over the last 17 years I have seen God confirm His word when believers step out in faith, believing God for Signs and Wonders.

Thank you for teaching this material. My ministry and life has never been the same.

Pastor Keith McCann

P.S. One week later, the host Pastor who oversees this network of churches and conference reported to me that his church has been turned upside down by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He described how those ordinary saints in his local church now had small groups in their homes and they have begun to practice what we declared that God wanted to do through them. These signs really do follow believers. One man had 20 Hindus in his house and then brought them to church the next Sunday.

During the time since we began to hunger after the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, sections of Scripture have opened up on this subject in a marvelously clear way. To be candid, our ministries have been revitalized as we have seen the hand of God work in ways unprecedented in our ministries. Situations and circumstances to which we would previously have responded in other ways are now seen as obvious opportunities for the manifestation of the supernatural power of God. Life has become fresh and new each day as we eagerly anticipate the miracles God may perform.

INTRODUCTION

As we begin our study of signs and wonders and the confirmation of the word with signs following, one of the most important things to do is to put all skepticism aside. Skepticism and unbelief often masquerade as “common sense” and “caution,” and skeptics often think they are providing a healthy moderating influence on those who would otherwise fly into unreasonable fits of fanaticism.

But the word of God, when properly divided, will provide the necessary balance. Those who might possibly be given to genuine excesses in this area will soon find themselves drawn up short when God refuses to confirm their self-centered fancies. God cannot be forced to do things against his will by magical formulas or acts of piety.

The Emphasis Must Be On Faith.

We are surrounded by such skepticism from a society strongly influenced by humanism that our emphasis must be on faith, not caution. We must not limit God by unbelief. We must abandon our safe and secure havens of limited experience and allow the Holy Ghost to lead us into the realm of the supernatural. There are so many opportunities; there is so much to be done. But the potential God has given us will never be realized by the arm of flesh. Only as the realm of human experience is invaded by the dynamic supernatural power of God will we realize the dream God has given us.

The Full Preaching of the Gospel

According to Paul, the gospel is not fully preached unless the word is confirmed with signs and wonders. He wrote:

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient – in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:18-19, NKJV).

This is certainly in keeping with the pattern established for apostolic ministry from the first. After listing the supernatural signs that would follow believers (casting out demons, speaking with new languages, taking up serpents, drinking deadly things without harm and laying hands on the sick for their recovery), Mark recorded that “they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:17-20, NKJV).

Skepticism Limits the Miraculous.

Put skepticism aside as we enter this arena of thrilling truth. Lay aside your preconceived ideas as to how God will or will not work. Allow the Holy Bible to be your only guide into the world of the miraculous.

Jesus Christ himself did not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people (Matthew 13:58). The problem of those skeptics was that they knew Jesus too well. He was the carpenter’s son. They knew his mother, Mary, his brethren, James, Joses, Simon,

Judas, and his sisters. On the basis of familiarity alone they rejected the possibility that Jesus could perform the miraculous. In response, Jesus made the classic statement: “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house” (Matthew 13:57).

While in Nazareth, Jesus, as his custom was, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood to read, and when the scroll was delivered to him, he read a passage with which the people of Nazareth were well acquainted:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

His hearers had no problem with this ancient text from Isaiah 61. They believed without reservation that these words were actually written by the Prophet Isaiah under the direction of God himself. They also believed that the day would come when the Messiah would fulfill them.

But they were not prepared for Jesus’ assertion: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).

They had faith for the past. They had faith for the future. But they had no faith for the present. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22). Solely because they knew Jesus, they rejected the possibility that he might indeed be speaking the truth.

Jesus then proceeded to explain to the people of Nazareth that there were many Jewish widows in Israel during Elijah’s time, when for three and one half years famine stalked the land. But none of them received supernatural aid. Instead, God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow and worked a great miracle for her (Luke 4:25-26).

Next Jesus pointed out that there were many Jewish lepers during Elisha’s time, but none of them were healed. Only Naaman, a Syrian, was cleansed (Luke 4:27-28).

This so angered the people of Nazareth that they “were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (Luke 4:28-29).

The implication of Jesus’ words is this: If there are none among God’s chosen people who will believe him for the miraculous, he will turn to others who will. This fits perfectly with the fact that, because of the people’s unbelief, Jesus did not do many mighty works in Nazareth.

Skepticism and unbelief will cause God to withhold his miracle working power.

Supernatural Ministry is a Free Gift from God.

In Matthew 10:1, Jesus called together his twelve disciples, and “gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” His commission to them included these words, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

Jesus actually gave his disciples the power to do these miraculous things. He gave it to them freely. Since he freely gave them this power, they from that moment possessed the ability to cast out unclean spirits, to heal all kinds of sickness and disease, and to raise the dead.

But seven chapters later, the Book of Matthew records the failure of the disciples to do what Jesus had already given them the power to do:

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour (Matthew 17: 14-18).

Jesus had given his disciples power for situations specifically like this. The boy was possessed of a devil. His father brought him to Jesus' disciples. They had been given the power to cast out unclean spirits. They tried to do it, but they failed. The disciples were apparently puzzled, and they asked Jesus privately, "Why could not we cast him out?" (Matthew 17:19). There seems to be a note of amazement in their question. They thought they could do it; they had been given the power to do it; they tried to do it. But they failed.

Jesus' answer is an important key to performing the supernatural. He said, "Because of your unbelief" (Matthew 17:20). While the disciples had the power and authority for situations like this, they failed because of their unbelief.

Jesus then said, "For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20). The point is, if the disciples had had faith as a grain of mustard seed, they would have been able to cast the devil out of the boy. Faith is all that was lacking. They had already been given the power.

Then Jesus is recorded as having said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). While the words "this kind" grammatically refer to the specific class of evil spirit that had been inhabiting the boy, it must be realized that Jesus had already told them that the only reason they could not cast him out was because of their lack of faith. Therefore, the goal of the prayer and fasting according to verse 21 must be to obtain increased faith.

It may be of interest to note that virtually all English translations since 1611 have omitted verse 21. The reason for this is the discovery of Greek manuscripts more ancient than those used in the translation of the King James Version. These manuscripts do not include verse 21. Most Greek scholars who deal with the history of the text in an attempt to establish as closely as possible the original wording believe that at some point a scribe copying the Book of Matthew borrowed the reading of Mark 9:29, where the same story is recorded, and inserted it into Matthew's account, probably in an attempt to include all relevant information. Then when other scribes later copied that manuscript, they of course included the reading. But even in Mark's account, the most ancient manuscripts do not include the words "and fasting" in 9:29. It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss all of the manuscript evidence and the reasons for the variations of readings, but regardless of which reading is original, Matthew makes it clear in a reading to which all manuscripts agree, that the reason the disciples could not cast out the demon was their lack of faith. Some additional insight may be gained by the textually undisputed statement of Jesus as recorded by Mark: "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer" (Mark 9:29). Throughout the gospels and the Book of Acts, demons are seen to come out at the command of a person of faith. But it may be that in some cases, specific demons may be cast out only by resorting to prayer that God would cast out the demon. The knowledge that this is true may be gained by observation or by the gift of the discerning of spirits. On the other hand, it may

simply be that the disciples were unable to cast out the demon because they were not prayerfully dependent upon God in their attempts to cast it out. The important thing to know is that the disciples had been freely given the power to cast out devils; the failure was theirs, not God's. And the only reason for their failure was their unbelief.

This power to cast out devils was not given to the twelve apostles only. Luke 10:1 records that Jesus sent seventy disciples, two by two, to precede him into "every city and place where he himself was about to go." These seventy disciples returned from their ministry trip joyfully, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17, NKJV). Jesus answered:

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:18-20, NKJV).

These seventy disciples were given authority by Jesus over "serpent and scorpions," a reference to the spirits which were subject to them. From Genesis 3 throughout Scripture, Satan is referred to as a "serpent" and a "dragon." The command of Jesus not to rejoice in their authority over spirits, but to rejoice that their names were written in heaven in no way minimizes the importance of the power he gave them over evil spirits. It is simply a command to rejoice in the cause, not in the effect. That is, the reason they had this authority is because their names were written in heaven. They were to keep their priorities right.

Spirit-filled believers must recognize that they too have already been given the power necessary to cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, drink deadly things without harm, and to lay hands on the sick and effect their recovery (Mark 16:17-18). Luke 10:18-20 helps us understand Mark 16:17-18. The "serpents" believers will "take up" are the spirits (demons) over which believers have authority. Certainly God can protect believers from literal serpents, as he did Paul (Acts 28:3). But contextually in Mark, Jesus seems to refer to the authority of believers over evil spirits. His promise that believers would drink deadly things without harm seems to be the same as Luke's record of Jesus' promise that "nothing shall by any means hurt" his disciples. Thus there is no support in Mark 16:17-18 for the practice of "snake handling," where literal snakes are picked up in an attempt to demonstrate faith, or for the practice of purposefully drinking poisons. God did protect Paul when he accidentally picked up a serpent, and he has many times protected believers from attempts to poison them, but that gives no one the authority to tempt God by intentionally picking up serpents or drinking poison. Jesus refused Satan's temptation to leap from the pinnacle of the temple, even though Satan referred to a Scripture that seemed to support the idea that God would be obligated to protect him from harm. (See Matthew 4:5-7.)

The problem for Spirit-filled believers is not a lack of power. The problem today, as in the days of the disciples, is simply a lack of faith. Believers should be ready to do whatever is necessary, including hearing the word (Romans 10:17), praying, and fasting, in order to build their faith to the point of laying aside all unbelief. Unbelief is the only thing standing in the way of the supernatural for Spirit-filled believers.

If you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, you have within you the power to cast out devils and heal the sick. The only thing that can prevent you from doing these things is unbelief.

So put your skepticism aside and begin to believe God for the “impossible”! Don’t try to psychoanalyze every person being prayed for or the person doing the praying. Don’t try to explain away and rationalize the move of the Holy Spirit. Just release your faith and let God do what he will.

You will find that God will do much more for and through those who have simple childlike faith than those who are always questioning and trying to explain away his work.

CHAPTER ONE

You Have a Spiritual Gift

Though the believers at Corinth had many problems, they did not come behind in any gift (I Corinthians 1:7). The gifts of the Spirit operated profusely in the Corinthian church. There were, however, abuses of the gifts, and Paul wrote to correct these in I Corinthians 12-14.

Carnality is No Hindrance to Spiritual Gifts.

The carnality of the Corinthians (I Corinthians 3:3-4) did not prevent the gifts from operating. The reason for this is that the gifts of the Spirit are just that: gifts. They are not evidence of spiritual maturity. They do not indicate that the person operating them has achieved advanced spiritual standing. This is the difference between gifts and fruit. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) gives evidence of spiritual maturity. The fruit tells us something about the person's character and spirituality. But the gifts tell us nothing about the person's character or spirituality. Instead, they tell us about the nature of the giver, who is God himself.

Many are confused at this point. Since they think the gifts of the Spirit could operate only in the life of one who is spiritually mature, of sterling character, and perfect in every way, they reject any apparent operation of a gift through anyone who does not measure up to these qualifications. When, in their view, genuine gifts do operate through a person, they tend to idolize that individual as one who is far advanced spiritually. They seem to think spiritual gifts can operate only through those who are exceptional; they have little hope they could ever reach the place in God where He could trust them with these gifts.

But all of this is wrong. The Corinthians are themselves proof that the possession of gifts is not to be equated with maturity or perfection. A gift tells us nothing about the character of the recipient; it reveals only the character of the giver. A gift is not deserved or earned, or it would not be a gift.

The validity of a gift is not so much determined by an examination of the life of the person through whom it operates. It is determined by comparing its message with the Word of God and its fruit with the criteria of edification, exhortation, and comfort (I Corinthians 14:3, 12, 29).

Those Who Minister Spiritual Gifts Are Fallible.

The idea that if a spiritual gift is from God the person through whom it operates must be completely right 100% of the time is simply wrong. If this were true, there would be no need to judge spiritual gifts. Paul wrote, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge" (I Corinthians 14:29, NKJV). He gave the Thessalonians a similar admonition: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:19-21, NKJV). Prophecy is apparently the most desirable of all spiritual gifts. The fact that it must be "judged" and "tested" indicates that there is always the possibility for error. But this possibility of error does not mean that we should avoid prophecy or that the person who makes the error is evil, a deceiver, or a false prophet. It simply means that the people through whom the gifts of the Spirit operate are not rendered infallible by a spiritual gift.

Some people are confused on this point by warnings against false prophets in Deuteronomy 18:20-22:

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?” – when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (NKJV).

Several things should be noted about this passage. First, it is a reference to ancient prophets who presumed to speak upon the authority of Yahweh long before the completion of the Old Testament. In that era, the words of a prophet were considered infallible; if they were true, they had a status equal to the current status of Holy Scriptures: they were considered inspired, inerrant, and infallible. This is not true of any spiritual gift today. Any word spoken by means of any spiritual gift today, even if it is from God, does not have authority equal with Holy Scripture, for the Holy Spirit does not overrule the human agent’s fallible nature. The Bible is the only inspired, infallible, inerrant authority we have. This is why spiritual gifts must be judged or tested, and the ultimate authority by which they are judged is Scripture. The exercise of the spiritual gift of prophecy in the New Testament church does not at all perform the same function as the declarations of an Old Testament prophet. The spiritual gift of prophecy is for the edification, exhortation and comfort of people (I Corinthians 14:3); the Old Testament prophet was the inerrant mouthpiece of Yahweh to the nation of Israel, giving them infallible communication from God. (Aaron is called Moses’ “prophet” because he would declare what Moses told him [Exodus 7:1-2].) Second, the warning of Deuteronomy 18:20-22 is given in the larger context of the promise of a true Prophet who would be raised up by God to speak infallible words:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.” And the Lord said to me: “What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put my Words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear my words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:15-19, NKJV).

According to Peter, this Prophet was Jesus (Acts 3:19-26). Therefore, Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is a messianic prophecy. The words of Jesus, the Messiah, certainly were infallible; they were the very words of God. (See John 6:63; 12:48-50 and 14:24.) Since Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, the warning against false prophets in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 is essentially a warning against false messiahs, whether they spoke in the name of Yahweh or in the names of false gods. New Testament believers who obey Scripture and earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, are not making messianic claims. Their desire is not to set themselves up as messiahs, but to bring glory to the true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

There is no suggestion anywhere in the New Testament that a genuine believer who in

good faith attempts to be led by the Spirit of God, but who errs, is to be put to death or even rejected. He is to be corrected, and that is part of the learning process. He may be partly right and partly wrong if he goes beyond the faith God has given him. (See Romans 12:6.)

One reason those using spiritual gifts may err is this: The fact that a person has received a spiritual gift does not mean he knows how to operate it perfectly. As with any other gift one is given, it is necessary to learn to use a spiritual gift. When a child receives his first bicycle as a birthday or Christmas gift, it does not mean he knows how to ride it perfectly. Although the bicycle is his, he may fall several times before he is able to keep his balance consistently. Likewise with a spiritual gift, a person may stumble several times before he learns how God does and does not speak to him. Even after many years of experience, a person may falter when using a spiritual gift, just as an experienced bicyclist may fall if he encounters an unexpected or strange obstacle.

You Have a Spiritual Gift.

By virtue of your membership in the body of Christ, you have at least one spiritual gift:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (I Corinthians 12:7, 11-13, 18, 27).

The context of the granting of the spiritual gifts is membership in the body of Christ. In other words, it is your spiritual gift, in this context, which gives you your place in the body of Christ, or the church. By virtue of being a member of the body of Christ, *you have been given at least one spiritual gift to give you your place and function in the body as it relates to spiritual gifts.* (This doesn't mean that the only function you have in the body of Christ is the one given to you by your spiritual gift. There are also motivational gifts [Romans 12:6-8] and positional gifts [Ephesians 4:11].)

There is no member of your physical body without a specific gift and function; there is no member of the body of Christ without a specific gift and function.

This is an important point, for many do not realize or believe they have a spiritual gift. This unbelief prevents them from ever operating the gift they have been given.

An illustration of the fact that those who are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ are immediately, by virtue of their membership in the body, given spiritual gifts, occurs in Acts 19:1-6. When Paul met the disciples of John the Baptist, taught them about Jesus and baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, he laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them, "And they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). The speaking with tongues was the initial evidence that they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. (See also Acts 2:4; 10:44-46.) But immediately following their speaking with tongues, these men began to prophesy. Prophecy is not the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost; it is one of the nine spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:10; 14:1, 3, 5, 6, 24, 25, 29-32). These men moved immediately from the initial

evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism to the operation of the spiritual gift of prophecy, and prophecy is the greatest of the gifts (I Corinthians 14:1). And just moments before this, they did not even realize Jesus was the promised Messiah! This illustrates that gifts are not earned by seniority. They are given immediately to those who are baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Peter also addressed this point: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (I Peter 4:10). The implication is that there is no man who has not received a gift, so as to be unable to minister to another. All are to be good stewards of the grace of God; that is, they are to properly handle the gifts given them by God.

The Motivational Gifts

In his discussion of the seven motivational gifts, Paul also revealed that they are given universally to all who are members of the body of Christ:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another (Romans 12:3-5).

So every member of the body of Christ has a motivational gift which serves as his primary vehicle for ministry, and he has at least one spiritual gift which ordinarily complements that motivational gift. That is, the motivational gift will often be expressed through and/or assisted by the spiritual gift.

CHAPTER TWO

How You Can Identify Your Spiritual Gift

There seem to be three major keys to identifying the spiritual gift or gifts God has to this point given you. They are:

1. Desire
2. Ability
3. Confirmation

This is based on the following Scriptures:

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare (I Timothy 1:18).

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands (II Timothy 1:6).

First, notice that it is God who works in us to give us right desires (“to will”). In and of ourselves, we are incapable of doing any good thing (Romans 3:12). Since it would be a good thing to desire spiritual things, we may be sure that desire is not of ourselves; it is of God. He has given it to us.

Second, God works in us to give us the ability (“to do”) that which he gives us the desire (“to will”) to do. God will never give us the desire to do something that he will refuse to give us the ability to do.

Therefore, if you have a specific desire related to the spiritual gifts, you may be certain that desire is given to you by God. And if he has given you the desire for a certain gift or gifts, he will surely give you the ability to minister these gifts. As Paul said, we are to “covet earnestly the best gifts” and to “desire spiritual gifts” (I Corinthians 12:31; 14:1). There is nothing evil or wrong about desiring spiritual gifts. Indeed, the desire is from God, and it is supported by his word.

The third key is confirmation. That is, if God has truly given you a spiritual gift or gifts, you will not be the only one who knows it. It will be witnessed to by the church at large. Others will recognize the operation of the gifts through you to be genuine. In Timothy’s case, the gift given to him was confirmed by the laying on of Paul’s hands and by the prophecies which were given over him.

What gift or gifts are you most interested in? Do you sincerely desire to use this gift or these gifts to minister edification to others? (See I Corinthians 14:12.) Or are you looking for personal glory and acclaim? We must beware of wrong desires based on pride and greed. Simon had a desire for spiritual power, and he offered to pay for it. He thought spiritual gifts could be

purchased with money. But Peter, no doubt by means of the gift of discerning of spirits or perhaps the word of knowledge, perceived that Simon was “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:23). God will not reward selfish desires. (See James 4:3.)

But if your motives are pure, and you desire to be used of God to help hurting people, and you would yield to him in this area even if no one ever knew about you and if no fame or wealth came your way as a result of it, God will use you in the gifts of the Spirit.

CHAPTER THREE

Signs and Wonders in the Old Testament

Signs and wonders are mentioned at least thirteen times in the Old Testament. In most cases, the references are to the miracles God wrought to deliver his people out of Egypt. For example:

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt (Exodus 7:3). (See also Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11; Nehemiah 9:10; Psalm 78:43; 105:27; Jeremiah 32:21.)

At least one New Testament reference to signs and wonders is to the manner in which God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. Stephen said, "He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years" (Acts 7:36).

In addition to these references to deliverance from Egypt, the Old Testament uses the phrase "signs and wonders" to refer to other miraculous works of God.

Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion (Isaiah 8:18).

Nebuchadnezzar, following the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, confessed:

I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation (Daniel 4:2-3).

Darius, after Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions, testified of Daniel's God:

He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (Daniel 6:27).

In each Old Testament occurrence, signs and wonders refer to the miraculous demonstration of the power of God, whether in the ten plagues over Egypt, through the children of Israel, or in conjunction with the supernatural deliverance of Daniel and his friends in Babylonian captivity. These signs and wonders convinced unbelievers, including Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius, of the power of the true God. Though Pharaoh was convinced reluctantly and subsequently attempted to recapture the Israelites, the effect of the signs and wonders was sufficient to produce the freedom of the children of Israel.

CHAPTER FOUR

Signs and Wonders in the New Testament

References to signs and wonders are common from the Day of Pentecost forward. In his first message, Peter said:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts 2:22).

Peter considered the miraculous ministry of Jesus – the signs and the wonders – to demonstrate the approval of God upon Jesus of Nazareth.

Following the Day of Pentecost, one of the contributing factors to the growth of the church was the fact that “many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43).

When the early church was persecuted and commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, they prayed, “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30).

After the dramatic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, the apostles were involved in working “many signs and wonders . . . among the people” (Acts 5:12).

Paul and Barnabas abode a long time in Iconium, “speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3).

To the church at Rome, Paul described his ministry as one characterized by “mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Ilyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19).

He made a similar claim to the Corinthians: “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (II Corinthians 12:12).

The role of signs and wonders in the confirmation of truth is seen in Hebrews 2:3-4:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

When the nobleman whose son was at the point of death in Capernaum asked Jesus to heal his son, Jesus answered, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe” (John 4:48).

Some have thought this to be a rebuke, but it seems better to understand it as a simple statement of fact. Jesus did, after all, proceed to heal the boy. Jesus recognized that, in addition to the very real help they give to hurting people, signs and wonders are a great aid to faith.

Indeed, John, explaining the purpose behind his book, said:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are

not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

Satan has a counterfeit to the miracle working power of God, and there will as a result be false signs and wonders. (See Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; II Thessalonians 2:9.) But the sincere Christian who allows the Bible to be his final authority, who confesses the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, and whose interest in signs and wonders is to bring glory to the true God and to minister to those in need, does not have to fear the spurious. He will remember that Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Those who, in sincere faith, ask God for the Holy Spirit, or, as Matthew puts it, "good things" (Matthew 7:11), need not fear that they will receive a counterfeit.

All conservative, evangelical believers agree that the miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened. But some tend to believe these miracles were just for the early church and that they were given to confirm that Jesus was the Messiah and that the gospel was true. But we see no scriptural evidence to support the idea that miracles were for the first century only. The miracles of the New Testament are to be normative throughout the church age. They continually confirm the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and that the gospel is true.

Some may think of the events recorded in the Bible, like those miraculous events in Acts, as being special or non-reproducible today because of the inspiration of Scripture. We know God is not inspiring Scripture today. But it is the Scripture, or the record of the events that is inspired, not the events themselves. Any of the miracles that occurred in the early church are reproducible today, as God wills.

CHAPTER FIVE

Responses to the Miraculous in Jesus' Ministry

The miraculous ministry of Jesus dynamically attracted the attention of multitudes that were then candidates to hear him teach. This is seen in a survey of his miracles.

The skeptical Nathanael doubted that any good thing, much less the Messiah, could come out of Nazareth. But after Jesus said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (John 1:48), Nathanael quickly reversed his position and said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). It seems there may be a hint of humor in Jesus' answer: "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these" (John 1:50).

The first miracle worked by Jesus was the turning of the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. This "manifested forth his glory" and as a result "his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11).

When he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did" (John 2:23).

Nicodemus, a leading rabbi, declared, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

One of the most interesting results of what we would call the operation of the word of knowledge is when Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly" (John 4:17-18). This revelation so startled the woman that she immediately declared, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19). This brief demonstration of supernatural insight had a typical effect on the woman: it seemed to her that her whole life had been laid bare. She said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). The effect on the Samaritans of that city is also interesting: "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did" (John 4:39).

After Jesus cast an unclean spirit out of a man in the synagogue, "they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee" (Mark 1:27-28).

At sunset one day, Jesus healed all that came to him with various diseases, and he cast out many devils. The next day, though he departed and went into a desert place, "the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them" (Luke 4:42).

When Simon and his fellow fishermen caught a great multitude of fish at Jesus' command, after fishing fruitlessly all night, Simon "was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken" (Luke 5:9).

Following this, Simon could truthfully say, "All men seek for thee" (Mark 1:37).

As a result of Jesus cleansing a leper, the people "came to him from every quarter" (Mark 1:45).

After Jesus saw the faith of those who let the palsied man down through the roof on a cot,

he healed the man and forgave his sins. All who observed this miracle were “amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion” (Mark 2:12).

Even though Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, they were followed by a great multitude which “had heard what great things he did” (Mark 3:8).

After Jesus calmed the turbulent sea, his disciples said, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:41).

After the disciples, in fear of their lives, awakened the sleeping Jesus to tell him about the stormy sea, he calmed the raging waters. “And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:25).

When the former demoniac of the Gadarenes began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, “all men did marvel” (Mark 5:20).

As a result of Jesus raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, “they were astonished with a great astonishment” (Mark 5:42).

When Jesus returned to Nazareth and taught in the synagogue, “many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?” (Mark 6:2).

After the disciples failed to cast the unclean spirit out of the boy, Jesus did the work. “And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God” (Luke 9:43).

When Jesus came walking on the stormy sea and joined his disciples in their ship, the wind ceased. His disciples “were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered” (Mark 6:51).

In short, as a result of his miracles, Jesus “could not be hid” (Mark 7:24).

Even though Jesus, after healing a deaf person with a speech impediment, charged those who observed the miracle to tell no one, “so much the more a great deal they published it; And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak” (Mark 7:36-37).

When Jesus raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain, “there came a great fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people” (Luke 7:16).

After Jesus defended his healing of the woman who had the infirmity eighteen years, “all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him” (Luke 13:17).

The blind man of Jericho, after being healed by Jesus, “followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God” (Luke 18:43).

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, “the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen” (Luke 19:37).

The following scriptures will further illustrate the effect of the supernatural ministry of Jesus:

And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were cleansed (John 6:2).

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a

truth that prophet that should come into the world (John 6:14).

And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? (John 7:31).

Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? (John 10:21).

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him (John 11:45).

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation (John 11:47-48).

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus (John 12:9-11).

For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle (John 12:18).

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing (John 20:27).

While there certainly were those who did not believe in spite of Jesus' miracles (see, for example, John 12:37 and Luke 6:11), the fact is that in the vast majority of cases, the miracles drew the attention of people and caused many to believe on him. He thus accomplished a twofold purpose: He helped hurting people, and he attracted the attention of the multitudes in order to teach them the true word of God.

CHAPTER SIX

Responses to the Miraculous in the Early Church

On the birthday of the church, the Day of Pentecost, the great miracle of speaking with tongues brought a mixed response: “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:12-13). This gave Peter an opportunity to respond by declaring the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

After the lame man at the Gate Beautiful was healed through the ministry of Peter and John, “all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering” (Acts 3:11). This again provided Peter an opportunity to preach Jesus.

Following the dramatic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, “great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:11). The miracles that followed had two different effects on two groups of people:

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) (Acts 5:12-14).

Here is seen a common response to the miraculous: Those who choose not to believe and obey are made aware of the supernatural nature of the work of God, and they take care to avoid it. But those who choose to believe are strengthened and encouraged by the manifestation of the power of God.

When the phenomenon of people being healed after Peter’s shadow passed over them became known, “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” (Acts 5:16). This filled the high priests and all the Sadducees with indignation, and they thrust the apostles into prison. But the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors by night and gave the apostles this command: “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). The next morning, when the high priest sent for the supposedly imprisoned apostles, and they were not found, all those in authority “doubted of them whereunto this would grow” (Acts 5:24). When they heard that the apostles were teaching in the temple, they sent officers to bring them “without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned” (Acts 5:26). This again illustrates the fear that comes upon those who are determined not to believe when they behold the supernatural works of God.

Stephen, one of the seven men chosen to serve tables, “full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). He was, as a result, falsely accused by the unbelievers and subsequently stoned to death. Even the fact that they “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” was not enough to turn the unbelievers away from their violence against him (Acts 6:15).

As Philip preached Christ in Samaria, “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” (Acts 8:6-8). Though Simon’s pride and greed drove him to offer to purchase supernatural power, the overwhelming effect of the supernatural in Samaria was positive, as it created faith in the people.

Saul was converted as a result of a supernatural occurrence: A bright light shone from heaven about him and he heard an audible voice calling his name (Acts 9:1-9). The salvation of Saul also involved a vision in which the Lord spoke to Ananias (Acts 9:10-18).

When Peter ministered healing to Aeneas, who had been bedfast with palsy for eight years, “all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord” (Acts 9:35).

When he raised Dorcas from the dead, “it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:42).

The salvation of Cornelius was the result of an angelic visitation to him (Acts 10:1-6) and a vision seen by Peter (Acts 10:9-16).

As a result of a prediction by the prophet Agabus, the disciples anticipated a great dearth and sent relief to the brethren in Judaea (Acts 11:27-30).

When Peter was released from prison by an angel, many believers were astonished (Acts 12:16).

When Herod gave an oration and accepted the people’s claim to his deity, an angel smote him so that he was eaten with worms and died (Acts 12:20-23). “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 10:24).

The Holy Ghost, apparently by means of the operation of a gift of the Spirit, gave direction for Barnabas and Saul to work together (Acts 13:2).

When Saul pronounced temporary blindness upon Elymas, a government official who saw what was done “believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).

Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time in Iconium, “speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:3). The people were divided, however, with some siding with the Jews against Paul and Barnabas, and some taking the side of the apostles.

When Paul ministered healing to the crippled man of Lystra, and the people saw what he had done, “they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men” (Acts 14:11). Even with the most forcible effort to convince the people that they were not gods, Paul and Barnabas “scarce restrained . . . the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them” (Acts 14:18).

At the important church council in Acts 15, one of the factors which influenced the outcome was that “all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (Acts 15:12).

When Paul cast the spirit of divination out of the damsel, the overwhelming response of the community was negative (Acts 16:17-24). But something good was to come out of it, because when God intervened with their imprisonment with an earthquake that loosed their bonds, the jailer and his family were saved (Acts 16:25-34).

In Acts 18:9-10, Paul received specific direction for his ministry by means of a vision.

When God “wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:11), there were unbelieving Jewish vagabonds who attempted to cast out evil spirits like Paul did, in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:13-16). They failed miserably, and the man possessed of the evil spirit nearly destroyed the seven men. When this became known to the people of Ephesus, “fear fell on them

all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:17-20).

When Paul raised back to life the young man who had fallen from the window, the believers “were not a little comforted” (Acts 20:12).

Possibly as a result of the fact that Paul had correctly predicted the survival of those on board his ship – a prediction made possible by an angelic visitation – the centurion overruled the soldiers when the ship became stuck. Paul’s life was thus saved (Acts 27:21-44).

When the viper fastened itself to Paul's hand, the people of the island of Melita at first thought he was probably a murderer, but when no harm came to him, “they changed their minds, and said that he was a god” (Acts 28:6). While on the island, Paul ministered healing to the chief man of the island. This opened the door to many others being healed. The people were so grateful that they honored Paul with “many honors” and gave them “such things as were necessary” (Acts 28:10).

To summarize, we see much the same response to the supernatural in the Book of Acts as in the ministry of Jesus. While those who were determined to reject truth remained unconvinced, the miracles served to help hurting people and to draw the attention of those who were sincere to the claims of Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Unity of the Visible and Invisible Realms

Two created realms exist side by side. One is the natural and visible realm, which is discerned by the five senses. The other is the spiritual, invisible realm, which is discerned by the gifts of the Spirit.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him (Colossians 1:16).

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Corinthians 4:18).

God's Ideal: Perfect Union

The ideal that God had in the beginning was that there would be perfect union between the visible and the invisible realms. The visible realm was to reflect the spiritual, or invisible realm. He wished for there to be no division between the two.

Man himself was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). There was a tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). It is seen again in the eternal state (Revelation 22:2).

Because of the perfect unity that existed between the visible and invisible realms before the fall of man, Adam and Eve could hear the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). But sin drove a wedge between man and God, a wedge that hides God's face from man and man's voice from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

But even under the Law of Moses, visible things on earth represented things in the invisible realm.

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount (Hebrews 8:5).

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

The Barrier of Sin Removed

The sin that drove the wedge between man and God was the work of the devil. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8), and this included a restoration of the relationship between the natural and the spiritual for those who would come through the blood of Christ.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20).

This “holiest” is not a physical building or room; it is a spiritual place of relationship to God.

In the invisible realm of the Holy Spirit, there is no sickness, disease, bondage, lack, depression, and so forth. All of the woes that have come upon man are the result of sin.¹ Jesus said, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Success in ministry will come when we are sufficiently sensitive to the Holy Spirit to bring over into the natural realm those things available in the realm of the Spirit.

The Key to Jesus’ Success

The key to the success of Jesus’ ministry was that *he attempted nothing by the power of the flesh*. Instead, he was so spiritually sensitive that he looked over into the realm of the Spirit and did only what his Father showed him.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel (John 5:17-20).

The unity between the visible and invisible realms found perfect expression in the ministry of Jesus. He did only what, with the eye of the Spirit, he saw his Father do. Indeed, this harmony was so intimate and perfect that Jesus could truthfully say that the Father showed him *all* things that he did. These works, which Jesus saw occurring in the realm of the Spirit, he acted on in the natural, visible realm. He simply carried out in the physical and natural realm what God was doing in the Spirit realm.

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me . . . the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me (John 5:30, 36).

Since he moved in perfect harmony with the Spirit, Jesus’ ministry never failed. When he said to the man at the pool of Bethesda, “Take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5:8), he was not speaking merely on impulse or by optimism, hoping it could be God’s will to heal the man at that time. Instead, he saw that that moment was God’s time to loose the infirmity of thirty-eight years, and he merely acted on what was going on in the Spirit realm.

¹ This does not mean that these problems are the direct result of specific sin in a person’s life. Rather, they are the result of the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden.

This explains why none of the others lying about the pool on the five porches (John 5:2-3) were healed. In the sovereign timing of God, it was time for only one of them to be healed.

This is the answer to those who doubt healing is for our day. They sometimes protest, “But if you believe in healing, why don’t you go to the hospitals and empty them out?” The pool of Bethesda was a sort of hospital of its time. There were many sick folks there at all times. But Jesus healed only one. We may not understand why it was not God’s time for any of the others, but we cannot question God. The point is that success in ministry comes when we are so perfectly in tune with what God is doing in the spiritual realm that that is all we attempt to do in the visible, natural realm. Any attempt to go beyond him to do something we want to do in our flesh will be doomed to failure.

Bringing Invisible Realities into the Visible Realm

There have been others throughout Scripture who were able to see over into the realm of the Spirit and to translate those invisible realities into the visible world.

- Elisha could see the horses and chariots of fire his servant could not see (II Kings 6:17).
- Stephen saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56).
- Twice Peter saw angels who delivered him from prison, going so far as to open literal doors (Acts 5:19; 12:7-11).
- Saul saw a bright light from heaven and heard an audible voice (Acts 9:3-6).
- Ananias saw the Lord in a vision and was given Saul’s name and address (Acts 9:10-11).
- Cornelius in a vision saw and talked with the angel of the Lord who gave him Peter’s name and address (Acts 10:3-4).
- Peter saw a vision from heaven and talked with the Lord (Acts 10:10-16).
- Paul was caught up into Paradise where he heard unspeakable words (II Corinthians 12:2-4).
- The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and spoke encouraging words to him (Acts 18:9-10).
- The angel of God appeared to Paul on board ship with a message of encouragement (Acts 27:22-24).
- The church began with a visible glimpse into the realm of the Spirit when cloven tongues like as of fire were seen resting upon each believer (Acts 2:3).
- Peter, quoting Joel, declared that the young would see visions and the old would dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

One of the most startling promises made by Jesus to his followers is included in the following passage:

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be

glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it (John 14:10-14).

The interpretation of this passage is assisted by John 5:19-20:

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

Just as Jesus' success in ministry was due to the fact that he attempted nothing by the arm of flesh, but that he relied totally on what he saw occurring in the Spirit realm, so our success will come when we stop attempting to make things happen by human power, and we become so sensitive to the Spirit that we can look over into the realm of the Spirit and see what Jesus – in his exalted place above all principality, power, might, dominion, and every name (Ephesians 1:21) – is doing.

There have been many attempts to blunt the dramatic force of John 14:10-14 by explaining away the words “greater things.” Some say this refers to the new birth, which is the greatest miracle of them all. The new birth certainly is the greatest supernatural work of them all, but it is clearly not what is in view in the passage. A simple, straightforward reading of the passage indicates that Jesus was referring to the whole realm of the miraculous.

Notice that Jesus did not say, “He that believeth on me, the works that I *did* shall he do also.” He said, “The works that I *do* [present tense] shall he do also; and greater works than *these* [the works he had already done up to that point] shall he do.”

John 14:10-14 does not mean we will do greater works than Jesus could ever do, nor does it mean we will simply do what he did. It means *we will do what he is doing*, at that moment, as his agent, just as he did what the Father was doing. The term “greater works” means simply, just as in John 5:20, greater than any that had been done up to that point.

The Greater Works of Jesus

Jesus had worked miracles prior to John 5:20. But he said the Father would show him greater works to do than he had yet done. What had Jesus done up to that point?

- He turned the water into wine (John 2:1-11).
- He performed miracles in Jerusalem at the Passover (John 2:23). These miracles resulted in the night visit of Nicodemus (John 3:1-2).
- He had a word of knowledge about the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-18). This resulted in the conversion of the woman and many in that city (John 4:39-42.)
- He brought the nobleman's son back from the point of death (John 4:45-54).
- He healed a man with an infirmity for 38 years (John 5:1-9).

What miracles did Jesus perform after John 5:20?

- He performed miracles on those who were diseased (John 6:2). This resulted in a great multitude following him.

- He fed the 5,000 men with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, with 12 baskets remaining (John 6:5-13).
- He walked on the stormy Sea of Galilee. When the disciples received him into the ship, the boat was immediately at the shore! (John 6:16-21).
- He healed the blind man (John 9:1-7). Apparently this was the first blind person ever healed in the history of the human race. This resulted in the man's conversion (John 9:38).
- He raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead 4 days (John 11:1-46). This resulted in the conversion of many of the Jews (John 11:45).

We would surely have to say that the works Jesus did after John 5:20 were greater than those he did prior to John 5:20. This in no way detracts from the prior miracles, but he himself said greater ones were to come. They came.

The Greater Works of the Disciples

Jesus said in John 14:12 that those who believe on him would do greater works even than these. What does the record say about the works of the early Christians?

- They did many signs and wonders (Acts 2:43).
- They healed a lame man who had never walked in the more than 40 years of his life (Acts 3:1-4:2). This resulted in about 5,000 believing.
- They did many signs and wonders (Acts 5:12). This resulted in multitudes being added.
- Multitudes of sick and demon possessed people were healed – every one – many, many when Peter's shadow touched them (Acts 5:15-16).
- Stephen did great wonders and miracles (Acts 6:8).
- Phillip performed miracles which could be seen and heard, including the casting out of evil spirits and healings of palsy and lameness (Acts 8:7, 13).
- Philip took a 20-mile S.R.T. [Spiritual Rapid Transit] trip (Acts 8:39-40).
- Ananias saw visions (Acts 9:10).
- Peter healed Aeneas, who had been bedridden 8 years with palsy (Acts 9:32-35). This resulted in the conversion of all in Lydda and Saron.
- Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42). This resulted in many believing.
- Peter saw a vision (Acts 10:9-16) giving specific direction. This resulted in the conversion of a whole house full of Gentiles.
- Agabus prophesied of a great famine; it came to pass (Acts 11:27-28).
- Paul pronounced blindness on an evil sorcerer (Acts 13:9-12). This resulted in the salvation of the deputy, Sergius Paulus.
- Paul and Barnabas performed signs and wonders (Acts 14:3).
- Paul healed a man of Lystra crippled from birth (Acts 14:8-10).
- Paul had a vision that gave him specific ministry direction to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10).
- Paul cast the evil spirit out of the fortune-telling damsel in Thyatira (Acts 16:14-18).
- Paul and Silas sang a jailhouse open, converting the jailer and his entire family (Acts 16:25-34).
- Paul had a vision giving him ministry direction (Acts 18:9-10).
- Special miracles were done as handkerchiefs and aprons that had been on Paul's body

were placed on the sick and demon possessed (Acts 19:11-12).

- Paul raised Eutychus to life after he had gone to sleep during Paul's sermon and fell out a third story window (Acts 20:9).
- The Lord appeared to Paul giving him specific ministry direction (Acts 23:11).
- Paul predicted no loss of life on the ship to Rome, regardless of the storm (Acts 27:21-26). He was right.
- Paul handled a viper with no harm (Acts 28:1-6).
- Paul healed Publius' father of a fever and hemorrhage (Acts 28:7-10).
- Paul healed others on the island (Acts 28:9-10).

It would seem that, just as Jesus said, his followers did even greater works after his ascension than he did while on earth! Of course, it was not ultimately his followers doing the works themselves; they were merely doing in the natural, visible realm what they saw him doing in the realm of the Spirit. The exalted Jesus was actually doing the work, through his disciples, just as the Father had done his work through Jesus, when he was on the earth in a physical body.

This helps us understand the significance of this statement:

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (John 14:13-14).

This does not refer to an indiscriminate use of the name of Jesus as a kind of magic talisman, where we just tack the words "in Jesus' name" onto our request, but they refer to asking by his authority in accordance with his character, purpose and will in the same sense that Jesus came in his Father's name (John 5:43) doing the specific works the Father gave him to do (John 5:36).

Asking in Jesus' Name

In other words, we ask in his name when we look over into the spirit realm, see what he is doing, and act as his legal representative by doing that same work in the visible realm, in the same sense that Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). This is further illustrated by the following references:

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17).

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also (John 14:19).

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself

to him (John 14:21).

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 (John 14:26).

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye shall, and it shall be done unto you (John 15:7).

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (John 15:15).

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16).

I John 5:14-15 seems to be a further explanation of the principle seen in John 14:12-14:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

This is a marvelous promise, much like the promise of Jesus in John 14:13-14. But how do we know the will of God?

We know his will in general from his written word, the Bible. Anything that the Bible promises to New Testament believers will without question be granted if the conditions are met.

But how do we know his specific will in situations not addressed in Scripture? How do we see over into the realm of the Spirit? Jesus did nothing but what he saw the Father do. He said that following his ascension, believers would do what he does. But how do we know what he is doing?

We know the specific will of God, or what he is doing in the Spirit realm, by means of the gifts of the Spirit.

- Through the word of wisdom, God gives us direction.
- Through the word of knowledge, God gives us information.
- Through the discerning of spirits, God allows us to see what spirit is at work in a given situation.
- Through the working of miracles, God allows us to transcend natural law.
- Through the gifts of healings, God reverses the progress of sickness and disease.
- Through the gift of faith, God allows us to envision what he sees as possible.
- Through the gifts of divers kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy, we hear the Lord speaking for edification, exhortation, and comfort.

Through the gifts of the Spirit, we see over into the Spirit realm; it is not us, but Jesus at work.

This helps to explain Mark 16:17-20:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

All of these miracles are done “in his name,” as we act on his authority. This is seen in the phrase, “The Lord working with them, confirming the word with signs following.”

When believers actually enter into this type of ministry, it will be like the ministry of Jesus being multiplied over hundreds of thousands of times. The world impact will be staggering.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Practical Observations on the Operation of the Gifts of the Spirit

Before we discuss in detail each spiritual gift, we would like to point out some general principles we have found to be true.

Many Spirit-filled believers are reluctant to enter into an active operation of any spiritual gift, for they don't want to make a mistake. They want to be sure their operation of any spiritual gift is done perfectly, from the very first. This attitude will most certainly prevent one from ever entering into the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, for it fails to realize that the spiritual gifts work through frail human vessels which are prone to, indeed which are certain to, make mistakes and errors.

Learning to Use the Gifts of the Spirit

Believers learn to operate in the realm of the gifts of the Spirit more perfectly as they do it. This is not to say that a person can learn to use a spiritual gift by natural ability; but a person can learn more perfectly how to yield to the Spirit, how to be led by the Spirit, and how to discern what the Spirit is saying. In fact, a part of learning these things is making mistakes, for a person who makes a mistake learns how the Spirit does not lead or work.

The writer of Hebrews suggest that we grow in expertise as we use what we have been given: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14, NKJV). We recognize that practice and use perfect other gifts of God. For example, the pastor is a gift of God (Ephesians 4:11). But no one expects a young man's pastoral work to be perfect from the first moment he begins; as he practices the gift he has been given, he learns what to do and what not to do, how God leads and how God doesn't lead. A teacher is also a gift of God, but we expect a teacher to grow more adept at teaching with study and experience. If a person called to be a pastor refused to pastor until he was sure he could do it without error, he would never pastor. So it is with the spiritual gifts of I Corinthians 12.

There is no need to fear that God will be angry with any believer who sincerely desires, and in good faith attempts, to be used in spiritual gifts. Instead, God will reward the faith of any person who attempts to yield to God in this area. Like a toddler learning to walk, the believer must learn to more perfectly exercise the spiritual gifts. When he stumbles, God will pick him up and send him on his way again. His weak attempts do not displease God; it pleases the Lord to see his children attempting to walk in his Spirit.

When a person believes the Holy Spirit is moving on him to operate in some gift, it is important that he respond immediately, within the boundaries of decency and order (I Corinthians 14:40). The more he hesitates, the more unlikely he will be ever to move, for the natural mind will begin to supply many reasons why the prompting could not be of God. Pride will enter in, the fear of being embarrassed. "What if I am wrong?" the procrastinator will wonder. The more quickly a person responds to the leading of the Spirit, the more frequently the Holy Ghost will move on him, and he will probably note that the operation of the gifts will

increase in significance. For here, like in every other spiritual area, those who are found faithful in few things will be rewarded with authority over many things.

But while a person should respond immediately to the moving of the Spirit, it is also important not to rush. It is impossible to rush the Holy Ghost. The person who does this will soon move into the area of the flesh. The best policy is to relax and not to be distracted.

There is great value in keeping one's eyes open while one ministers to others. Nothing in the Scripture suggests that the gifts should operate with the eyes closed. A person who keeps his eyes open and who asks the recipient of the ministry to look on him as he ministers, will be able to observe the effect of the ministry and of the Holy Spirit on the person to whom he is ministering. Indeed, just as did Peter and John in Acts 3, it is good to have the recipient "look on you." Much can be discerned by looking into the eyes of the person receiving ministry. Is he receiving it in faith? Is he skeptical? The light of the body is the eye, Jesus said, and much of the inner man is communicated through the eye gate.

Those who have experienced the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in their ministries over a period of time have observed that the Holy Ghost prompts or leads often in three basic ways.

(1) A revelation may be seen.

This can occur in a variety of ways. The person operating in the gifts of the Spirit may "see" something in the Spirit. If he is to give a prophecy or an interpretation to a message in tongues, he may "see" the words he is to speak, as if printed on a scroll or on a page from a book, or in any number of other ways. If he is operating in the discerning of spirits, he may "see" an unclean spirit, perhaps in the shape of an ugly creature, sitting on a person's shoulder or elsewhere. If he is to operate in the gifts of healings, he may "see" the diseased part of the body, perhaps like a dark area over the diseased area. If he is to operate in a word of knowledge, he may "see" the person to whom he is ministering in a certain situation, or involved in a specific act, or in a certain place. The word of knowledge may take the form of describing what is seen. This is certainly not an exhaustive description, but this will help to show a general way in which the Holy Spirit often gives revelations.

(2) A revelation may be heard.

In the same way a person may "see" something in the realm of the Spirit, he may "hear" it. This may take the form of an audible voice, but it is probably more usually an "inner" voice. That is, words or thoughts may come unbidden into a person's mind to give him ministry direction. If he is to operate in a word of knowledge, a name, or a place, or other information may just suddenly appear in his mind. If this occurs, it is best to act on it immediately. As that information is given, the Holy Spirit may supply additional information. A person will never know for sure if the information is of God until he actually steps out by faith to act on it. If he feels uncertain enough, he may want to say something like this: "I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the Lord is saying . . ." If it is of God, it will be confirmed. If not, nothing is lost, and a lesson is learned. If a person is to give a prophecy or a message in tongues or an interpretation of a message in tongues, he may "hear" the words, either audibly or mentally. If he is to minister healing, the names of diseases may suddenly come to mind. There is no doubt an infinite variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit can cause a person to "hear" his voice, but the more readily the recipient responds to these messages, the more clearly and easily he will be able to distinguish

the voice of the Spirit.

(3) A revelation may be felt.

This seems to occur most commonly when ministering the gifts of healings. The person ministering may “feel” the pain of the individual to whom he is ministering. This may enable him to pinpoint the location and nature of the ailment, which will tend to build faith in the sick person. Or when ministering to someone under great depression, the person ministering may suddenly, unexplainably, feel depressed. The person ministering should not be quick to accept any physical symptoms as his own; they may very well be the Holy Spirit’s way of giving him information about the person to whom he is ministering.

CHAPTER NINE

The Four-Pronged Key to Success in Ministry

To Timothy, Paul said, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (I Timothy 4:13-15).

A careful examination of this passage will show that Paul encouraged Timothy in the following areas:

(1) Reading

Reading is extremely important, for it fills our minds with information, understanding, and challenge. If we hope to operate in the gifts of the Spirit, it is essential that we guard our reading carefully. The first thing we should read is the Bible itself. Next, we should read material that is faith building and encouraging. We should be hesitant to read anything which casts doubt on the supernatural or which explains away the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

(2) Exhortation

The word “exhortation” speaks basically of “encouragement.” The minister should give himself to exhorting, or encouraging others, daily (Hebrews 3:13). This should be the main thrust of ministry.

(3) Teaching

A bishop must be “apt to teach” (I Timothy 3:2). What is the difference between preaching and teaching? Someone suggested that preaching is proclaiming, while teaching is explaining. This is probably a fairly accurate description. In order to teach one must first study. In this, he is to be concerned about being approved of God (II Timothy 2:15).

(4) Exercising one’s spiritual gift.

Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift that was in him. This indicates that Timothy was to use this gift as the Spirit of God led him. We would do well to heed the same counsel. A neglect of the gift within us will surely limit our ministry, just as would a neglect of reading, exhortation, or teaching (doctrine).

Speaking of these four things, Paul said, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (I Timothy 4:15).

If a person will meditate (think deeply upon) his reading, exhortation, doctrine (teaching) and the exercise of his spiritual gift, if he will give himself wholly to these things, the spiritual success of his ministry will be evident.

CHAPTER TEN

The Nine Spiritual Gifts of I Corinthians 12

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 (I Corinthians 12:8-10).

For the sake of identification, these spiritual gifts are often divided into three groups of three:

The Revelation Gifts

Word of wisdom
Word of knowledge
Discerning of spirits

The Power Gifts

Faith
Gifts of Healings
Workings of Miracles

The Vocal Gifts

Tongues
Interpretation
Prophecy

While this organization of the spiritual gifts is helpful in identifying something of the nature of each gift and in remembering what they are, it is also somewhat artificial. The person who begins to operate in the spiritual gifts will soon discover that in practical operation, various of the gifts will work together to accomplish common purposes. For example, a person operating with the gifts of healings may discover that the word of knowledge works in conjunction with that gift, giving him information about the sick person's condition. After healing has been ministered, he may find the word of wisdom in operation to give the healed individual direction as to how to stay healed.

If we remember that the gifts of the Spirit are given to those who are members of the body of Christ to give them their specific function in the body, and how this is compared to a human body, it will be readily seen that all of the gifts must operate together, complementing each other. It would be of little use to be able to identify the eye, or the ear, or the arm, or the leg, or the hand, or the foot, if all of these members were severed from one another and if there were no cooperation among them. There is a great deal of difference in the abilities of a dissected corpse and a living human being. For there to be spiritual life, and for the body of

Christ to accomplish his purposes, the spiritual gifts must operate in harmony, just as the members of the human body operate to mutual advantage.

As we discuss the gifts, we will use illustrations, as appropriate, from the Old Testament, from the ministry of Jesus, and from the early church. We understand there could be some debate as to whether various events in the Old Testament or in the ministry of Jesus were actually the operation of spiritual gifts, but we should remember that it was – at least – the same Holy Spirit in operation in that specific situation as in the New Testament church. We understand there is debate as to whether Jesus ministered as God himself or as an anointed man. We know there were many times in his life on earth in the flesh when he did indeed act as a man. It is our belief that even in his ministry he willingly limited himself to that which could be accomplished by an anointed man fully yielded to the Spirit of God.² (See John 5:19-20.) This does not at all, of course, detract from his full deity. It was simply his choice as to how he would minister. But let us not allow differences here to prevent us from grasping the larger picture: Whatever supernatural work was performed by men of God of old, or by Jesus himself, was done by the power of the same Holy Spirit which dwells in us. We can therefore learn a great deal about the operation of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit, by observing his work in the lives of others.

Now let us consider each of the nine spiritual gifts.³

² An excellent book exploring this idea is Gerald F. Hawthorne's *The Presence and the Power: The significance of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus* (Dallas, Tex.: Word Publishing, 1991).

³Some of the material in the section on spiritual gifts is influenced by a series of messages by Derek Prince: "The Nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Gift of the Word of Wisdom

The gift of the word of wisdom is a small portion (a word) of God's total wisdom supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit.

The first thing we should note is that this is the gift of the word of wisdom. It is not the "gift of wisdom." Indeed, there is no such gift as the "gift of wisdom." Any believer may apply himself to the pursuit of wisdom and gain this valuable quality (Proverbs 3:13-20; 4:5-13). He may pray and ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). But this is not the supernatural gift of the word of wisdom.

We must distinguish between "wisdom" and "knowledge." Knowledge is information. Wisdom is knowing what to do with that information.

Wisdom is profitable to direct.

If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct (Ecclesiastes 10:10).

If the axe is blunt, the workman may still be able to chop down the tree, but it will be a slower process and it will require more strength and effort. If the axe is sharp, the task can be accomplished much more quickly, cleanly, and easily. Likewise, it may be possible to accomplish a spiritual task without wisdom, but it will be a much more difficult process, requiring more effort, and having the possibility of more damage. But the supernatural gift of the word of wisdom will tend to get the job done quickly, smoothly, with a minimum of fleshly effort, and with the smallest possible amount of damage.

Wisdom and knowledge depend upon each other. Wisdom needs knowledge to work with; knowledge must be directed by wisdom. It is, after all, possible to use knowledge unwisely (Proverbs 15:2).

The Word of Wisdom in the Ministry of Jesus

There are several examples of the word of wisdom at work in the ministry of Jesus. These would include:

- Directions as to where and when to fish (Luke 5:4-10). This resulted in the conviction of the fishermen.
- Directions as to where to find the donkey and the colt (Matthew 21:1-7). This worked in conjunction with the knowledge of Scripture.

The Word of Wisdom in the Early Church

The word of wisdom was greatly needed in the days of the early church, and the Holy Spirit supplied it.

- Recognition of the need and direction for the method of appointing men to serve the widow's needs (Acts 6:1-7). This resulted in unanimity and progress.
- Direction for Philip's ministry (Acts 8:26-29). This resulted in an open heart on the part of the eunuch.
- Direction for Peter's ministry (Acts 10:9-16). This resulted in an open door.
- Direction for the solution of the problem relating to Gentile converts (Acts 15:13-29). This was based on knowledge of Scripture and resulted in unanimity and progress.
- Direction for the ministry of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:6-10). This resulted in an open door.

The word of wisdom seems many times to be associated with knowledge of Scripture. It tends to produce conviction, unanimity, progress, open hearts, and open doors.

The word of wisdom is the supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit of divine purpose. It is the supernatural declaration of the mind and will of God. It is the supernatural unfolding of his plans and purposes concerning things, places, and people.

By virtue of this gift being the word of wisdom, it will most often operate by means of the spoken word. In this sense it has some similarity to the word of knowledge, to prophecy, and to the interpretation of tongues.

How will a person know that God is moving him to speak a word of wisdom? While there are differences in the way the gifts are administered and operated (I Corinthians 12:5-6), most people report that the vocal gifts usually originate in an impression or in thoughts or words which spring unbidden into the mind. Many people do not receive the complete message in advance, but as they speak what they do have, the Holy Spirit supplies more of the message until it is complete. Some report seeing the words as if they were on a scroll, or on a screen in their mind. Some see a visual picture, which they then describe in their own words.

It is important to remember that there must be endless variety in the manner in which the Holy Spirit can impart his messages. He may deal with two people in entirely different ways.

One thing for certain is that none of the gifts are forced upon a person. God will not override a person's freedom of choice. The person who waits until God forces him to operate in the spiritual gifts will never be used in this ministry. At some point, the believer must take what the Holy Ghost has given him and give expression to it.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Gift of the Word of Knowledge

The word of knowledge is a small portion (a word) of the total knowledge of God supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit.

Like the gift of the word of wisdom, this is the gift of the word of knowledge. It is not the “gift of knowledge.” An individual can gain knowledge by study and research. He can gain great knowledge of the Scriptures. But this he can achieve largely by his own determination and efforts, as God gives him the strength and ability. But this is not the supernatural gift of the word of knowledge.

Neither is this a gift of psychic ability. At best, psychic phenomena are satanic counterfeits of the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit. The two have nothing in common. Christians are to avoid all occult activity. (See Isaiah 8:19; 47:13.)

The word of knowledge is information about which the believer has no personal knowledge, which is imparted to him by the Holy Ghost. It is not suspicion or guesswork.

God does not impart the sum total of his knowledge to any man. No man is equipped to handle such knowledge. But, as it befits his purposes, God does communicate small portions of his knowledge to his people so they, in turn, can minister to others.

The word of knowledge in the ministry of Jesus

- Jesus revealed that he saw Nathanael under the fig tree before he saw him with his natural eye (John 1:47-49). This resulted in conviction.
- Jesus knew about the Samaritan woman’s five husbands (John 4:16-19). This resulted in the conviction of the Samaritan woman, making it seem that her whole life was an open book before Jesus, and in the conversion of many in that town.
- Jesus knew how long a woman was blind (Luke 13:16).
- Jesus knew Zacchaeus’ name (Luke 19:5).

The word of knowledge in the early church

- Peter knew of the deception attempted by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). This resulted in the deaths of these two and conviction coming on the whole church.
- Ananias knew Saul’s name and address as well as additional information about his future ministry (Acts 9:11-12). The result was that Saul had an open heart to receive the message from Ananias.
- Peter knew about the three messengers from Cornelius (Acts 10:19-20). This was a confirmation of the message of the angel to Cornelius.
- Paul was warned of the things which awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-11). This enabled him to prepare for those events.

It seems, then, that the word of knowledge produces conviction, confirmation, and preparation.

We have experienced the word of knowledge in the form of names of individuals who had a specific need. In one case, the name “Fred” came to us. We asked if that name meant anything specifically to anyone in the room. One of the ladies present said she had come that night especially to have prayer for a sick little baby in a distant state. The baby’s name was Frederick. We were then able to pray intelligently and with faith for the child. Within a couple of weeks we had a picture of the child and a testimony as to how God had touched the baby.

On another occasion, the name “Gilbert” came to us. We asked if the name had any special significance to anyone in the room. A husband and wife immediately raised their hands. They said they had a friend named Gilbert who had resisted all their efforts to win him back to the Lord. He had drifted far from his relationship with God. We told them to tell Gilbert that God had his number, and that he had best get right with God immediately. The next week, Gilbert attended the meeting with them and prayed through to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. That has been nearly a year ago, and he is still walking with God today.

As in the case of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge often comes as an impression, a thought or as words unbidden to the mind. It can also take the form of a visual picture on the “screen” of one’s mind, wherein a person sees someone engaged in some activity, and he then describes what he sees. A person ministering healing to another may “feel” the other’s pain in his own body, or he may “see” the affected portion of the body in some way so as to understand that it is diseased.

The fact that God speaks to you through a word of knowledge, or through any other spiritual gift, does not eliminate your responsibility to do all you can in faithfulness and obedience. God still honors the free will he has given you. In other words, even if God says he will do a thing, you may negate his will by disobedience or unfaithfulness.

It is also important, even if God gives you a promise, not to attempt to force doors open. At the right time, he will open the door he wants you to enter.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Gift of Discerning of Spirits

The gift of the discerning of spirits is the ability to discern or recognize what spirits are at work in a given situation. This ability is supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit.

Since not every spirit is of God, it is necessary to test spirits (I John 4:1). One of the ways this is done is by use of the gift of discerning of spirits.

This gift is sometimes mistakenly identified as the gift of “discernment.” It seems that those who so identify it have it confused with the gift of the word of knowledge. There is no gift of the Spirit called the gift of “discernment.” It is the discerning of spirits.

The word “discern” means “to recognize and distinguish between.” The person being used in this gift will discern or recognize what spirits are at work in a given situation. It is helpful to recognize that there are several categories of spirits in existence:

1. The Holy Spirit
2. Faithful angels (Hebrews 1:14)
3. Fallen angels (i.e., demons or evil spirits)
4. Human spirits

Scriptural examples of the discerning of the Holy Spirit

- John the Baptist discerned the Holy Spirit upon Jesus in the form of a dove (John 1:32-33). This was a confirmation to John that Jesus was the Messiah.
- The believers in the upper room discerned the Holy Spirit upon them like cloven tongues of fire (Acts 2:3). This may have signified to them the beginning of a new dispensation, just as the fire on Sinai signaled the beginning of a dispensation.

Scriptural examples of the discerning of faithful angels

- An angel appeared to Jesus as he prayed (Luke 22:43).
- Mary saw two angels at the sepulchre (John 20:11-13).
- An angel appeared to Paul on board ship (Acts 27:23-24).

Scriptural examples of the discerning of human spirits

- Jesus discerned the guileless spirit of Nathanael (John 1:47).
- Jesus discerned the wrong motives of James and John (Luke 9:51-55).
- Peter discerned the wrong motives of Simon (Acts 8:20-24).
- Paul discerned a “spirit of faith” in a lame man (Acts 14:8-10).

Scriptural examples of the discerning of evil spirits

- Micaiah discerned a lying spirit (I Kings 22:20-23).
- A dumb spirit (Matthew 9:33-34).
- A spirit of blindness and dumbness (Matthew 12:22-24).

- A dumb and deaf spirit (Mark 9:17-27).
- A spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:11-17).
- A spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18).

Those who are used in this gift often report that the discernment is in the form of a “vision,” where spirits are seen in the form of animal creation. For example, the Holy Spirit has been seen as a dove (John 1:32), and unclean spirits have been seen as frogs (Revelation 16:13).

Sometimes the discernment takes the form of seeing people as they are spiritually: crooked, unclean, with satanic features, etc.

More commonly, however, it seems that this gift operates simply as a spiritual interpretation of what the natural senses show.

Many people have reported seeing angels. This was a recognized possibility in both the Old and New Testaments, and it occurs frequently today.

But while many are used in this gift by “seeing” visible representations of the spirit world, others do not see, they simply know what spirit is at work. In other words, they know there is an angel in the room, or what spirit is at work in the life of another, or the nature of the evil spirit troubling a person who needs deliverance.

We should remember that, when God allows us to have information supernaturally, it is so we can do something about it. Often as we step out on the basis of the information we have, the Holy Spirit will continue to supply additional information or direction until we have accomplished his purposes in that particular situation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Gift of Faith

The gift of faith is the sudden assurance or certainty that God will without question do a thing. This certainty is given by the Holy Spirit.

It may at first seem strange to think about a “gift of faith,” since faith has such a predominate role throughout Scripture. All men are required to have faith to come to God (Hebrews 11:6), so what is the difference between this and the “gift of faith”?

Three Kinds of Faith

There are three different kinds of faith referred to in the New Testament. They are:

1. The faith that comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). This faith is essential to salvation (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 4:5; Hebrews 11:6). Every believer is given a measure of this kind of faith (Romans 12:3).
2. The faith that is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). There is, of course, a great difference between fruit and a gift. Fruit is a natural outgrowth, due to the nature of the tree. It is cultivated by care and labor (II Timothy 2:6). A gift, on the other hand, is not something that grows over a period of time, but something that is given, intact, freely. Fruit reveals a great deal about a person's character; a gift says nothing about the character of the receiver, but it does reveal something about the character of the giver. The faith that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit could perhaps be described as “continuing quiet trust” or “faithfulness.”
3. The gift of faith which is given by the Holy Ghost. *The gift of faith is a sudden assurance or certainty that God will without question do a thing.* It can be operated only under God's control.

How the gift of faith can be exercised

- You can speak words to God on behalf of a person, object, or situation. Elijah's word controlled the rain and dew (I Kings 17:1; 18:41-45; James 5:16-18).
- You can speak words to a person, object, or situation on behalf of God. Joshua spoke to the sun and moon (Joshua 10:12-14). Jesus spoke to a tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20-24). He said that we could speak to a mountain (Matthew 17:20). In fact, Paul seemed to identify faith as a “mountain-moving” gift (I Corinthians 13:2). Like all Scripture, Mark 11:12-24 must be balanced with everything else the Bible says about faith and prayer. Some, taking these verses alone, have practically equated faith with a vocal confession or wishful thinking. But Jesus elsewhere taught that we should pray for God's will to be done (Matthew 6:10), as did he (Mark 14:36). To understand these verses, we must correctly understand the nature of faith. It is not positive thinking, wishful thinking, or anything we can generate within ourselves by will power or human effort. Faith is a gift of God (Romans 12:3). Even Jesus could do only those things the Father showed Him

(John 5:19). Human responsibility is not to generate faith, but to accept and act on the faith God gives. Unbelief is the result of the rejection of this gift of God. The only prayers God answers are those prayed according to his will (I John 5:14-15).

New Testament examples of faith in action

- Jesus calmed the storm (Mark 4:39-41).
- Jesus raised the widow's son (Luke 7:12-15).
- Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:54-55).
- Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb (John 11:43-44).
- Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9:40).
- Paul pronounced judgment upon Elymas (Acts 13:9-12).
- Paul commanded a spirit of divination to leave (Acts 16:16-18).

Those who are used in this gift testify that a sudden dramatic assurance will come upon them that some miraculous thing can indeed occur. There is suddenly no doubt, only confidence and conviction. Along with this may come even a physical sensation of well being and joyous abandon. Often the gift is operated by short, even one-word commands: "Rise!" "Walk!" "Be healed!"

Jesus said loudly, "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43).

Peter said, "Look on us!" (Acts 3:4).

As with any other gift, the gift of faith is not operated by the decision or whim of the individual. It will not be forced. Rather, just as the other gifts operate by the leading of the Holy Spirit, so with the gift of faith, a sudden and deep assurance, or supernatural trust, comes upon a person.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Gifts of Healings

The gifts of healings enable a person to minister healing for specific sicknesses, diseases, or problems.

While there are similarities between healings and miracles in many cases, there are also important differences.

A healing many times occurs gradually, almost imperceptibly, relieving the body of disease. A miracle, on the other hand, is almost instantaneous, usually perceptible, and may go beyond healing. For example, a leg may be lengthened, missing eyeball created or internal organs replaced, even when they have previously been removed by surgery.

This spiritual gift is actually the gifts (plural) of healings (plural). This is important to recognize, for there may be different gifts for various diseases. Some seem uniquely gifted in the healing of specific problems, for example, deafness, blindness, back problems, and so forth. It is possible that a person with a gift in one area would have less success in another area.

Sometimes this gift works through physical contact.

- The little woman who touched Jesus' clothes was healed (Mark 5:30).
- A whole multitude sought to touch him, for all who touched him were healed (Luke 6:19).

Sometimes a physical touch is not involved, but a point of contact is.

- Many were healed as Peter's shadow passed over them (Acts 5:15).

Scriptural examples of healings

- Jesus laid his hands on every one and healed them (Luke 4:40).
- Jesus touched and healed a leper (Matthew 8:1-3).
- Jesus healed a man of deafness and a speech impediment (Mark 7:32-35).
- Jesus healed a man of blindness, in two stages (Mark 8:22-26).
- Paul healed the father of Publius (Acts 28:8).

While all believers have the promise that they may lay hands on the sick and see them recover (Mark 16:18), the gifts of healings go beyond that, somewhat in the same way that the gift of divers kinds of tongues goes beyond the speaking with tongues which occurs as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In other words, the phenomenon is similar, but it is different as to purpose and function.

Again, the person with this gift may be uniquely gifted to pray for specific types of diseases. He may find a certain methodology works best for him in his exercise of the gift.

In our experience, we have found the following to be valuable insights:

As far as possible, lay hands specifically on the area of the body that is affected.

Nothing in the Scripture indicates that we should always lay hands on the afflicted person's head. While we must practice modesty and decorum, we have found it best many times to place our hand precisely over the troubled area. If this is not possible, ask the sick person to place his or her own hand over the place, then touch his or her hand as you minister healing. Or you may have another person of the same sex as the afflicted person to place his or her hands directly over the afflicted area.

We may not understand why this works better, but Jesus many times touched the specific afflicted area, whether it was the eyes, tongue, or whatever.

Minister with your eyes open.

Nothing in the Scripture indicates that you must pray for the sick with your eyes closed. Indeed, if you do that, you will often miss seeing the way the Holy Spirit is moving on the afflicted person. As you observe the moving of the Spirit on the person to whom you are ministering, you will often gain further insight as to how to minister. Remember, Peter told the lame man, "Look on us!"

Don't think of your ministry so much as "praying for the sick"; think of it as ministering healing.

Jesus did not say, "You shall pray for the sick, and they shall recover." He said we would lay hands on the sick. There is without question a place for praying over the sick (James 5:14-16), but this seems to be in the case of a sinning brother or sister whose sin has caused their sickness. But ordinarily, men of faith in the New Testament did not pray for the sick; they ministered healing to the sick.

Jesus did not so much pray for the sick; he healed the sick.

The apostles and disciples in the Book of Acts did not so much pray for the sick; they healed the sick.

Indeed, Jesus told his twelve disciples to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils" (Matthew 10:8). The power to heal is not, of course, inherent in any believer. But the one who is able to heal the sick is resident in the believer, and he has commanded us to do his work.

It is thus important for us, as we are moved in this gift, to pronounce healing rather than to pray for healing:

"Rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6).

"Tabitha, arise!" (Acts 9:40).

"Stand upright on thy feet!" (Acts 14:10).

"Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him" (Acts 20:10).

". . . Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him" (Acts 28:8).

Make no mistake; there is a time and place for prayer. But often prayers for the sick, if we are not careful, degenerate into substitutes for faith. Sometimes we are tempted to make up for our lack of results by praying even more loudly and longer.

As a rule, when going to minister healing, we should, like Paul, pray in order to enter into the presence of God and to invite him to come and confirm his word with signs following, then we should place our hand upon the afflicted part of the body and command sickness and disease to go and healing to come.

We have found that the more specific the prayer, the greater the result. It is helpful to speak directly to the afflicted part of the body and to command it to be made whole. If you are praying for someone with back problems, it is helpful to place your hand precisely where the pain is, and to command the vertebrae, the disks, the spinal cord, the muscles, the ligaments, the tendons and the skeletal structure to be healed. It is also important to speak to the pelvis and sacrum to command them to be healed. If you are praying for someone with diabetes, it is useful to speak directly to the pancreas to command it to be healed.

While there is no need to try to master the anatomy at the level of a medical doctor, it is helpful to know basic things about the anatomical structure so as to pray more intelligently and specifically.

It is also helpful to ask the afflicted person where the pain is and what the problem is. Ask if he or she has been to the doctor for diagnosis or treatment. If so, ask what the doctor said. All of this will give you additional information to help you pray more intelligently. Jesus himself interviewed many who came to him for healing, asking such things as how long they had been afflicted.

It is often helpful to move the afflicted part of the body after healing is ministered.

Jesus commanded the man with the withered arm to stretch forth his hand. He commanded the blind man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Peter and John took the lame man by the hand and lifted him up.

The moving of the afflicted part is often a demonstration of faith, and it is often at that precise moment that healing is effected. A person who has had a back problem should be invited, after receiving ministry, to bend or twist. A person who had a neck problem should be asked to rotate his neck. Those with arm or shoulder problems should be asked to lift their arms. Those with leg, knee, ankle, or foot problems should be asked to walk.

We have also found that it is helpful, if possible, to move the afflicted part while healing is being ministered. That is, if a person has neck problems or headaches, we will often gently rotate their head in our hands while we command the vertebrae and disks to be healed, the blood vessels to open up to allow blood to flow properly, and the pain to go. We have seen many healed this way, instantly.

One example out of many would include the man who suffered intense pain in his neck at the base of his skull. He would be especially troubled when it rained or when the weather was cold. He was in pain the night we ministered to him, and he was healed instantly. About six months later we saw him again, and, with a big smile on his face, he testified, "I'm still healed!"

Ask, "What happened to that pain?"

It has become a joy to us to pray for people who are suffering at the time healing is ministered. If they are hurting, they can tell instantly if they are healed.

When we finished ministering to a person, we have found it useful to ask, "What happened to that pain?" Many times, with a look of astonishment, the formerly afflicted person

will say, "It's gone!" This is then the cause of great rejoicing both by the person who is healed and by others who are observing the ministry.

This may be important because so much negativism, skepticism and unbelief surround us. It is at least possible that some people are healed, but because of their reluctance to claim it until they are sure the problem is solved over a long period of time, they lose the healing. Skepticism is the enemy of the supernatural. You must do everything you can to encourage those to whom you are ministering to have faith and to expect their healing.

If a person says, "Well, I feel some better, but there's still a little pain there," remember that even Jesus ministered to a blind man twice before he was completely healed. Minister again. We have found that some people are completely healed only after two or three sessions of ministry.

In one healing ministry where careful records were kept, it was discovered that 20% of those who are prayed for the first time are healed, while 80% of those who are prayed for ten times are healed! While we may not fully understand why this happens, we should persist in ministry until the healing comes.

Be alert to information supplied by other spiritual gifts.

The person ministering healing will find often that other spiritual gifts will come into operation at the same time to give specific direction as to how to minister, or the cause of the disease, or other information which may have a bearing on receiving or keeping healing. For example, sometimes diseases and disorders come on people following a major tragedy, loss, or trauma. This is what happened with Job. First he lost his family and wealth, then his health. When you are ministering to a sick person, the Lord may give you a word of knowledge as to the cause of the disease so you may minister more specifically and effectively. If you share the word of knowledge with the recipient of your prayers, it will also tend to cause faith to spring into the heart of the sick person.

Important Advice

There are some mistakes commonly made by those who wish to minister healing to the sick. These should be completely avoided.

- Do not give medical advice. If you are not a medical doctor, you should never offer medical advice to those for whom you pray. Besides being unethical and tampering with another person's life and well being, this is illegal. It is possible to be imprisoned for practicing medicine without a license; this has happened to some "faith healers" in the past.
- Do not tell people to stop taking medicine. If a person is healed, he will know it, his doctor will know it, and the same doctor who prescribed the medicine will take him off the prescription. You have no authority to do this.
- Do not tell people not to believe the doctor. Medical doctors are not inherently evil. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mark 2:17). Some 28% of the New Testament (Luke and Acts) was written by a medical doctor, Luke, who still practiced medicine after he became a Christ (Colossians 4:14). Although medical doctors are fallible human beings, most of them are in that profession out of a genuine concern for the welfare of people, and they do not

intentionally deceive anyone. A denial of a medical doctor's report is not faith; it is simply a refusal to accept the truth.

- Do not tell people not to go to a doctor. In addition to the observations under the previous point, the Bible teaches that medicine is a good thing (Proverbs 17:22). Every person must make his own decisions about a doctor's care. It is not ethical for anyone to abuse a position of trust to influence the decision of another person regarding medical care.
- Do not "prescribe" something for people to do to get well. Even if what you suggest is not medicine, it is unethical and dangerous for anyone but a medical doctor to diagnose a disease and prescribe a cure. At best, this is not far from the fraudulent practices of quack doctors and snake oil salesmen of a bygone era. If a person is genuinely healed, it will be unnecessary to attempt to cover up a lack of healing by prescribing something to be done and promising the cure will come at some point in the future. If a person is not healed, all the psychological manipulation in the world will not produce a genuine healing.
- Do not try to lift people out of wheelchairs. Although it is possible that God may give specific perception and direction to lift a person up, as Peter and John did in Acts 3, ordinarily a healed person can stand of his own accord (Acts 14:9-10). If God is present to heal, a person in a wheelchair can rise and stand on his own; if God is not present to heal, it will not help to attempt to force a healing by pulling the person out of the chair.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Gift of the Working of Miracles

A person with the gift of the working of miracles is used by the Holy Spirit to do things differently than they are ordinarily done.

As mentioned under the discussion of the gifts of healings, miracles, while having some similarity to healings in many cases, go beyond healings. They may involve the replacement of a body part that is missing, or a visible and almost instantaneous change in some bodily part. Of course, a miracle may not involve a human body at all. It may involve an object, like the tree Jesus cursed or the sun and moon Joshua commanded to stand still, or a situation which is in need of divine intervention.

Basically, miracles are works contrary to the ordinary order of things. They are the accomplishments of the “impossible.” They involve sudden reversals of the order to which we are accustomed. When he does a miracle, God does something differently than he normally does it. For example, it is God who causes all wheat to grow, from which bread is produced. But when Jesus multiplied the loaves, it was a miracle because the bread was produced in a way not ordinary.

The Greek word translated “miracles” is the plural of the Greek *dunamis*, which is also translated “mighty works,” “wonderful works,” or “mighty” or “wonderful” “deeds.” (See Matthew 13:54; Acts 2:22; II Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 3:5; and Hebrews 2:4.) It is sometimes used in reference to casting out devils. (See Mark 9:38-39; Acts 8:7, 13.)

Special miracles were worked by the hands of Paul (Acts 19:11-12). This involved handkerchiefs or aprons taken from his body and placed on those who were afflicted, resulting in diseases departing and evil spirits going out of them.

It was clearly a miracle when Jesus turned the water into wine (John 2:6-11). It was also a miracle when he multiplied the loaves and fishes (John 6:8-14).

There are, of course, many stories of miracles throughout the Scriptures. The basic thing to keep in mind is that miracles tend to be instantaneous and observable.

As dramatic as the gift of the working of miracles is, it finds its place in the body of Christ after the ministry of apostles, prophets, and teachers (I Corinthians 12:28). This is not at all to belittle the gift, but to show that it is to be operated in submission to the spiritual authority of the church.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Gift of Prophecy

Prophecy is the ability to speak in a language understood by the speaker words given by the Holy Spirit.

It is important to recognize the difference between the ministry of the prophet and the person who has the gift of prophecy. Prophets will tend to have the gift of prophecy, but not everyone with the gift of prophecy is a prophet.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel's prophetic promise that "your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17). The evangelist Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). But there is no hint that any of these are "prophets."

The prophet is an ascension gift given to the church (Ephesians 4:11). Essentially, a prophet is a spokesman for God (Exodus 7:1). In the case of the prophet, the person himself is the gift to the church. Every aspect of his ministry makes up the gift, and character is involved. In the case of the person who is not a prophet but who has the gift of prophecy, the gift is given to and through the believer (the believer himself is not the gift). The gift is a brief supernatural manifestation, rather than involving every aspect of a person's ministry. Character is not involved; it is a gift. Prophecy is the act of prophesying (I Corinthians 14:31). A prophet is a person.

Like all of the vocal gifts, the gift of prophecy is in some measure placed under the control of the believer. Paul therefore gave regulations as to their proper use (I Corinthians 14:1-33).

The three vocal gifts are singled out for special treatment in I Corinthians 14. Prophecy is the only one of the gifts said to be most desirable of all (I Corinthians 14:1). It is to be used for three purposes (I Corinthians 14:3):

1. Edification
2. Exhortation
3. Comfort

Edification speaks of building up, of strengthening. Exhortation has to do with encouragement. Comfort has to do with cheering up one who is troubled.

Genuine prophecy will never discourage or condemn. It may be used to confirm the ministry to which a person is called, and later to strengthen that person in the ministry (I Timothy 1:18; 4:14).

I Corinthians 14 offers important insights into the ministry of prophecy:

- Prophecy is to be especially desired (v. 1).
- Prophecy is unto men (v. 3).
- Prophecy edifies the church (v. 4).
- Prophecy is a greater gift than either divers kinds of tongues or the interpretation of

tongues, alone.

- Prophecy will profit those to whom it is ministered (v. 6).
- Prophecy can reveal the secrets of the heart (vv. 24-25).
- One prophecy at a time is to be given (v. 31).

Insight on Judging Prophecy

- Prophecy is to be given in direct relationship to one's faith (Romans 12:6). There will be many times a temptation to override one's faith and go beyond the leading of the Holy Spirit into fleshly prophecy.
- Prophecy never compels a person to speak apart from the consent of his own will (I Corinthians 14:29-33). This is just the opposite from the operation of evil spirits, which compel the possessed person to act in certain ways or to say certain things.
- Prophecy must be in harmony with the Scriptures (I Corinthians 14:29; I Thessalonians 5:19-21).
- Genuine prophecy always exalts and glorifies Jesus Christ and gives him preeminence (John 16:13-14; Revelation 19:10; Colossians 1:18).
- Genuine prophecy will produce fruit in character and conduct that agrees with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 7:15-16). False prophecy is also identified by its fruit: pride, arrogance, boastfulness, exaggeration, dishonesty, covetousness, financial irresponsibility, licentiousness, immorality, addictive appetites, broken marriage vows, and so forth (Matthew 7:21-22; II Peter 2:15-16).
- Unfulfilled prophecy did not come from God (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).
- Even if prophecy contains correct predictions and supernatural revelations, it is not from God if its effect is to promote disobedience against God and the Bible (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Acts 16:16-18).
- Genuine prophecy produces liberty, not bondage (II Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:15; I Corinthians 14:33; II Timothy 1:7).
- Genuine prophecy will always inject fresh life into a meeting and harmonize with the overall purposes of God (II Corinthians 3:6).
- Genuine prophecy will be attested by the Holy Spirit within each believer who hears it (I John 2:27).
- Since it is possible to have the gift of prophecy without love (I Corinthians 13:2), it is important to be alert for any signs that prophecy is being used to dominate other people. The spirit of domination, which attempts to overrule the free will of others, is not from God. The person who prophesies from a motivation of love will never attempt to manipulate others for his own advantage.

As with the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, the gift of prophecy will often begin to work in an individual as he receives impressions, thoughts, or words into his mind that did not originate with him. Or he may "see" the words or a mental picture that he will describe. Some receive the entire prophecy in advance, but it seems more common to receive only the leading portion of it. Then, as the believer steps out by faith to deliver that which he has received, more of the message comes to him until it is completed.

It is not uncommon for those upon whom the Holy Ghost is moving to prophesy to

experience unusual physical sensations. These may include a rapidly beating heart, a sense of unexplained excitement, a feeling that one will “burst” if he does not speak out, or some other sensation out of the ordinary. It will, however, be possible to contain the prophecy until an opening in the service provides a place for it.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Gift of Divers Kinds of Tongues

The gift of divers kinds of tongues is the ability given to a believer by the Holy Spirit to speak in languages not understood by the speaker.

The gift of divers kinds of tongues, while similar in sound, is not to be confused with the speaking with tongues which occurs as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Some teach that the 120 on the Day of Pentecost received the gift of divers kinds of tongues. There are, however, distinctions between the tongues in which a person speaks at the culmination of the Holy Spirit baptism, and the gift of divers kinds of tongues, which is one of the spiritual gifts given to selected believers subsequent to the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

- The Holy Spirit baptism is for all (Acts 2:39; 5:32; John 3:5; I Corinthians 12:13). The gift of divers kinds of tongues is not for all (I Corinthians 12:11, 28, 30).
- The speaking with tongues in Acts 2, 10, and 19 does not fit the divine order of I Corinthians 14:27. God does things right the first time. Acts 2 is God's pattern for those receiving the initial Holy Spirit baptism; I Corinthians 14:27 is God's pattern for those who, having previously been Spirit filled, have received the gift of divers kinds of tongues. The gift of divers kinds of tongues is to operate by one person at a time, in order, and there is to be an interpretation. In Acts 2, 10, and 19, all believers spoke with tongues at once and no one interpreted.
- Evidence points to the fact that the believers on the Day of Pentecost spoke in only one tongue each (Acts 2:8), but the gift of divers kinds of tongues, by definition, enables the believer to speak in more than one language.

The believer should continue, after the initial baptism of the Holy Ghost, to pray, sing, and worship in tongues, but this is not the gift of divers kinds of tongues. There are several purposes for speaking with tongues, apart from the gift of divers kinds of tongues.

Speaking with tongues is a sign to unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:20-25; Isaiah 28:7-13).

In Isaiah's time, the priests and prophets had erred through strong drink. They were not able to learn knowledge or understand doctrine. In an attempt to teach them, God used a slow, primitive, and repetitive style of teaching (line upon line, etc.). Even this tedious, careful attempt to salvage them from their erroneous ways did not produce the desired fruit. Instead of the word refreshing and resting them, it was boring tedium and resulted in their being snared. The Lord warned them about captivity by saying he was going to speak to them (teach them) by another method: stammering lips and another tongue. When the Israelites were in captivity, every time they heard the foreign tongue of their captors, it was a grim reminder of lessons they had refused to learn.

Today, tongues are a sign to unbelievers (those who simply refuse to hear) in the same

way: the sincere person admits that God is working through this “strange tongue,” but the skeptic refuses to believe it. Many Jews were humbled down by the captivity and realized it was the hand of the Lord; many others passed it off as fate.

Supernatural prayer and communion with God (I Corinthians 14:2, 4)

The person who speaks in a tongue speaks to God (I Corinthians 14:2). He speaks mysteries, or things not understood by the human mind. He edifies himself.

The born again spirit prays direct to God apart from the understanding of the mind (I Corinthians 14:14). The spirit is the deep inner area of man, capable of direct communion with God (spirit to Spirit). The spirit “knows” things which the mind does not know, and receives direct revelation from God (I Corinthians 2:11-15; 6:17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

To pray with an unknown tongue is “praying in the spirit” (i.e. apart from the understanding).

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also (I Corinthians 14:15).

The ability to pray in the spirit makes it possible to pray always (Ephesians 6:18). It is the God-appointed way to build ourselves up in faith and to keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 20-21). The Holy Spirit gives supernatural help in prayer (Romans 8:26-27).

On two occasions at Christian Life College, a student prayed in a tongue of which she had no knowledge, but which was understood by other students who knew the language. The first time this occurred, the American student prayed in the Japanese language and a student from Japan understood the words, which were words of praise and glory to God. On the second occasion, the American student prayed in a high form of the French language, which was understood by an American student whose parents are missionaries in France and who speaks the language, having lived there for several years. In this case, the words were words of direct encouragement and confirmation to the student who spoke French, confirming something that God had just previously spoken to her alone.

I Corinthians 14 offers considerable insight into the operation of this gift:

- In order for the church to receive edification, the operation of this gift should be accompanied by the interpretation of tongues (v. 5).
- Speaking with tongues alone will not profit the body of Christ (v. 6).
- The person who speaks in tongues should pray that God would allow him to interpret (v. 13).
- Praying in tongues is helpful to the spirit (v. 14).
- We should not only pray with tongues, we should sing with tongues (v. 15).
- Messages in tongues should be given one at a time, in order, by two or three people, and each message should be interpreted (v. 27).
- If there is no interpreter present, the person with the gift of divers kinds of tongues should hold his peace, speaking only to himself and to God (v. 28).
- Speaking with tongues is not to be forbidden (v. 39).

When the gift of divers kinds of tongues begins to operate through a believer, he may experience unusual spiritual and physical sensations that alert him that something is coming. He may become aware well before the time comes to give the message that a message is to be given. He should wait until there is an appropriate opening in the service to deliver the message.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Gift of the Interpretation of Tongues

The gift of the interpretation of tongues is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to speak in a language understood by the speaker the meaning of words previously spoken in a language he did not know.

It is important to realize that this is the gift of interpretation of tongues, not the gift of translation of tongues. This simple truth will help remove much skepticism concerning the operation of this gift.

Two different people may interpret the same phrase in a very different way, and yet both may impart the same meaning. A message may be quite long, and the interpretation relatively short. Or the message may be short, and the interpretation quite long.

None of this discredits the operation of this gift. His vocabulary and his customary way of speaking will influence the person with the gift of interpretation of tongues. God will not override his vocabulary to give him words he has never learned. The interpretation will be accommodated to the person through whom it will be delivered.

Some may interpret in a very matter of fact way; others may be quite emotional. Much of this will depend upon the interpreter.

Many will use English similar to that of the King James Version, for this is the language with which they are accustomed to associating the voice of God. There is nothing wrong with this.

I Corinthians 14 offers insight into the operation of this gift:

- The gift of divers kinds of tongues coupled with the interpretation of tongues is equivalent to prophecy (v. 5).
- The aim of interpretation of tongues is to be the edification of the church (v. 26).
- Interpreters should work with those who have the gift of divers kinds of tongues to interpret their messages (v. 27).

Some who have this gift will be given only an introductory phrase and they will launch out in faith. Another may “hear” words or “see” them as if on a screen. Another may have a general thought that he clothes with words of his own choosing. Another may see a vision or mental picture and relate what he sees.

The person being used in this gift should take care to speak plainly and loudly enough for all to hear. If he is in a large auditorium, it would be wise to obtain a microphone over which to give the interpretation. When the Holy Spirit ceases to lead him, he should stop speaking, or he will quickly get into a fleshly area.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Summary

Faith is the basis for all successful service for God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23). Any other positive attribute, even though required by God, will not please him apart from faith. God responds to faith, not to needs. If he responded to needs, no one in the world would be sick, hurting, in want, or lost.

Faith is available to any believer (Romans 10:17). But the believer must cultivate hearing the word of God, for he will be tempted to think he already knows what is going to be said by any preacher or teacher, or by any passage of Scripture he may be reading.

The proper exercise of spiritual gifts brings glory to God (I Peter 4:10-11) and edifies men (I Corinthians 14:4-5, 12, 26).

It is unquestionably the will of God for each believer to exercise spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:7).

There is no conflict between love and gifts (I Corinthians 12:31; 14:1). Love is the proper motivation for the exercise of the gifts, and it completes the gifts.

God ordained that the gospel should be preached with signs following, and the way this most often occurs is through the operation of the gifts of the Spirit (Mark 16:15-20). These signs follow those who believe. Remember that you can't follow a parked car! For the gifts to follow you, you must go, stepping out by faith in the operation of the gifts.

Mature use of the spiritual gifts comes by learning and using (Hebrews 5:14). Rarely does anyone use the gifts perfectly from the very first.

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