

THE

SPIRIT-FILLED

LIFE

30 DAYS OF OPERATING IN PENTECOSTAL POWER

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The Spirit-Filled Life: 30 Days of Operating in Pentecostal Power

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PREFACE

Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He did two main things in regards to the Holy Spirit; first, He breathed the Spirit into the disciples to be born again in John 20:22 and second, Jesus promised He would send the Spirit to give the disciples power in Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit was an important factor in Jesus’ post resurrection dialogues because the Spirit was the initiator and empowerment for the Kingdom of God.

After being born again according to John 3:3, the greatest experience one can have with the Holy Spirit is to be endowed with power as Jesus taught in Acts 1:8. The endowment of power that the first church experienced in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost was to enable the disciples to have the same kind of power Jesus received at His baptism when the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove in Luke 3:22.

When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Luke recorded in Acts 2:4, *“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”* From this point forward in Acts (and in the epistles) the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” became synonymous with, “endowed with power.” And this endowment of power was consistently marked with the evidence of speaking in unlearned languages/tongues (see Acts 10:46 & 19:6).

Though much controversy has surrounded being filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues; the truth is the Spirit-filled church has produced more genuine disciples around the world than any other church movement in history. It is estimated that there are over 500 million Spirit-filled disciples around the world today and the great majority of all church growth is attributed to this lifestyle. Such countries as China, Nigeria, India and Brazil have been set ablaze by Spirit-filled disciples because the heart of the Holy Spirit is to empower disciples to be living witnesses for Jesus Christ.

This thirty-day devotional is intended to not only introduce you to the experience of being filled with the Spirit but also encourage you to speak in other tongues with the purpose of continually being filled with power to be a

witnessing disciple for Jesus Christ everywhere you go. The heart of Pentecostalism, established in the early 1900's during the time of the Azusa Street revival, has always been to win souls and make disciples of the nations by preaching the gospel with signs following.

Jesus said in Mark 16:15-18, “15 *‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.’*” Likewise Mark ended his gospel in Mark 16:19-20 and stated, “19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*” Mark’s ending perfectly harmonizes with the beginning of Luke’s account in Acts; the church was a spiritual powerhouse for Jesus!

Therefore, let us be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the first disciples were and do what they did; work with Jesus to win the world for the Father’s glory!

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

1. Read a lesson each day consistently for 30 days.
2. Prayerfully consider the reflection at the end of each lesson.
3. Put into practice the three actions listed each day.

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DAY 1: BORN AGAIN BY THE SPIRIT

John 3:3, *“Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’”*

Man is a spiritual being with a soul that lives in a body. What makes man so special is that unlike angels, man has a body with five senses. And unlike animals, man has a self-conscious soul (mind, will and emotions) that connects him both to the spiritual and physical world. Mankind’s unique nature is called the “image of God” or in Latin, the “imago dei.”

Moses wrote in Genesis 1:27, *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* The image of God in mankind thus is three-fold, (1) Mankind (both male and female) was created to have dominion over the physical world, like how God has dominion in the spiritual world (Genesis 1:28), (2) Mankind was created to be fruitful and multiply in procreation, like how God multiplies in creation (Genesis 1:28) and (3) Mankind was created to have self-awareness and free will as God himself has freedom of choice and self-awareness (Genesis 2:17).

When Adam sinned and brought spiritual death to the world, Jesus came to be the “Second Adam,” born without sin, to die for the sins of mankind (1 Corinthians 15:45). As a result, when Jesus said to Nicodemus in today’s passage, *“no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again,”* He was referring to mankind being restored to the fullness of God’s image in their spiritual soul. Charles Hodge wrote, “The proximate result of obedience to God is inward conformity to the Divine image.”

The Spirit-filled life starts when someone is born again in his or her spirit, restored to the image of God and then their soul is filled to overflowing with God’s power.

Though the body will not be made perfect until the resurrection, the spiritual soul (mind, will and emotions) is made perfect at rebirth. The author of Hebrews wrote, *“For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy”* (Hebrews 10:14 ESV). We don’t have to wait

until heaven to receive our new soul; we can have it now once we are born again by the Holy Spirit. Peter said, “*for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls*” (1 Peter 1:9).

Remember, since we are spiritual beings that need to be born again in our spirits, and renewed in our souls, the Holy Spirit is the only one that can do such a miracle. Jesus said in John 3:6, “*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*” By God’s grace, mankind can procreate fleshly bodies, but only God can recreate spiritual souls. Therefore, if you haven’t been born again, make the decision today. Then join with all of Jesus’ disciples and ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit!

REFLECTION

Are you born again?

ACTION

1. Place your faith in Jesus to save you and make you new.
2. If you are born again ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
3. Get ready to live a Spirit-filled life!

DAY 2: BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT & FIRE

Matthew 3:11, *“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

In today’s verses, John the Baptist gave a clear prophecy to what Jesus the Messiah was going to do for His people. John the Baptist was called “the Baptist” because he baptized (submersed) people in water for repentance. In other words, when people came to John and confessed their sins, they were baptized in water as a sign of their repentance and initiation into the covenant God made with Moses and the Jewish people.

Jesus, however, wasn’t only going to do water baptisms in relationship to repentance and salvation (Matthew 28:19), but He was also going to baptize (submerge) people with the Holy Spirit and fire. The fire is believed by scholars to be a reiteration of the Holy Spirit, just as when Jesus said in John 3:5, *“no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit;”* the water is a reiteration of the Spirit. Both water and fire give different descriptions to what the Holy Spirit is like when it acts in relationship to our spirit.

In John 3:5, the Spirit is attributed with the act of birthing a new spirit in man, so water is used as an example of a woman’s water breaking in childbirth. And in Matthew 3:11, the Spirit is related to fire because fire was used to purify metals and its power could mold and bend swords for battle.

Jesus didn’t only come to make sinners into saints in rebirth; He came to purify and empower disciples to establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven!

William Seymour said, “The baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire means to be flooded with the love of God and power for service.” Love and power are to work together for the glory of God in our lives. Remember, the baptism of water is related to repentance, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit

is for the work of the ministry. And just like how everyone is commanded to be baptized with water, everyone is also commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. As a result, John the Baptist felt he wasn't even worthy to carry Jesus' sandals because Jesus' baptism is so life changing and full of power! Therefore, every believer should honor Jesus and seek His spiritual baptism.

REFLECTION

Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire?

ACTION

1. Ask Jesus to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
2. Confess any sins, doubts or fears you may have that can keep you from receiving.
3. Ask others to pray with you for God's power.

DAY 3: RIVERS OF LIVING WATER WITHIN

John 7:38-39, “38 ‘Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

Can you imagine being alive during the time of Jesus when He spoke these powerful words? The Jewish people were celebrating the “Feast of Booths,” which was a festival to remember the time of wandering in the desert in tents. On the last and greatest day of the festival, they had a tradition of pouring out water on the altar in Jerusalem and would proclaim Isaiah 12:3, “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*”

While this water was running down the altar Jesus stood up and said the verses above for all to hear. He was basically saying, “Your time of wandering in a spiritual desert is over, I will now make you the temple of God and flow the rivers of the Spirit through you and you will never be thirsty again!” Jesus was teaching them the principle of “in and through.” What God was going to do in them was going to go through them.

The Holy Spirit was given to us, to go through us. Just like how a river flows water to a certain location and changes the places it goes through; God wants His rivers to flow to you and through you, changing the world around you!

The first purpose of the rivers of living water in our souls is to refresh and satisfy our inner thirst. Everyone is looking for true satisfaction that is only found in the rivers of God. Second, not only do rivers provide drinking water for the people around them, but they also provide power. People for generations have been utilizing the power of water with such things as water wheels and dams. The Romans and surrounding people in the Mediterranean used water wheels in their mills to grind flour. Today, the Hoover Dam, built around the Colorado River, can produce more than 4 billion kilowatt hours

in just one year! That much power from just one river is capable of serving over 1 million people for 365 days. Now try to imagine the spiritual power God's rivers (plural) can produce in your life and the world around you!

God's rivers flow from heaven to our spirit, in our soul (mind, will and emotions) and lastly, they go through our body to the people around us. Since the early 1900's, the Pentecostal movement has been used to flow God's rivers across the world, now with over 500 million adherents. But it started in America with unknown leaders holding services in a house and then in an old horse stable.

Read an eyewitness account of what happened during that time, at what was known as the Azusa Street Revival, as recorded by Eddie Hyatt; "The power of God now has this city agitated as never before. Pentecost has surely come and with it the Bible evidences are following, many being converted and sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues as they did on the day of Pentecost. The scenes that are daily enacted in the building on Azusa Street and at Missions and churches in other parts of the city are beyond description, and the real revival is only started, as God has been working with His children mostly, getting them through to Pentecost, and laying the foundation for a mighty wave of salvation among the unconverted."

Remember, Jesus never considered the Spirit-filled life an "optional upgrade," it was and is His best life for all disciples. I challenge you today to be filled to overflowing with the Spirit's rivers of living water!

REFLECTION

Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit's rivers of living water?

ACTION

1. Ask God to fill you with His rivers of living water.
2. Receive the refreshing rivers of God's love, as well as the power that comes from their flow in your life
3. Let God's rivers of living water flow through you to the world around you!

DAY 4: RECEIVE POWER

Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Right before Jesus ascended into heaven He gave today’s powerful verse as His parting words. He wanted to make sure His disciples received all that He intended them to have, so they could be His witnesses around the world. In other words, for Jesus’ disciples to effectively make new disciples they would need the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word Jesus used for “power” was, “*dunamis*” and it means, “mighty strength and ability.” Jesus wanted His followers to have the same Holy Spirit ability that He had been given at His baptism when the Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove (Luke 3:22). Jesus never wanted one disciple to have anything less than His best. He wanted to multiply Himself in His followers and having God’s power was fundamental for the task of building the church.

Being a Holy Spirit empowered witness for Jesus was never meant to be optional or looked at as “radical.” Rather, it was the normative experience that Jesus wanted all His disciples to have, in order to bring forth His gospel with power.

Today, as we read the book of Acts, named after the “Acts of the Apostles,” we can understand that Jesus’ main purpose for the disciples being endowed with power was to be His witnesses. The main purpose wasn’t to have entertaining church services, hold self-empowerment conferences, write expensive books or sing touching songs. To be a witness for Jesus means to testify to others about who Jesus is and what He has done in your life. All Christians are commanded to be disciples that are filled with the Holy Spirit’s power to be Jesus’ witnesses; no exceptions.

Jesus let His first disciples know that their calling to be witnesses wasn’t going to just be local but global. Jerusalem was their starting point, Judea and Samaria were outlining areas of Jerusalem that they were to go to next and then they were to spread out to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts records that the disciples kept Jesus’ commands; first they witnessed in

Jerusalem in Acts 2-7, in all of Judea and Samaria in Acts 8-12 and then the church went to the ends of the earth in Acts 13-28.

As the disciples went out preaching the gospel in power, they shared it with all who believed. New disciples were saved and received the same power of the Holy Spirit that they did on Pentecost. Luke records in Acts 10:44-46 what happened at a Roman soldier's house, "*44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.*"

Douglas Jacobsen recorded this same kind of multiplication of power in the U.S. during the revivals that broke out in the early 1900's, "The baptism of the Spirit compelled believers to share their spiritual gifts and powers with those around them." Now it's your turn to be filled with power and take the gospel to every part of your world!

REFLECTION

Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit's power?

ACTION

1. Ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit's power.
2. Receive the endowment of power from the Holy Spirit.
3. Be a witness for Jesus wherever you go.

DAY 5: SPEAKING IN NEW TONGUES

Acts 2:4, “*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*”

Luke records in today’s verse that the initial sign that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit’s power, was that they spoke in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit enabled them. This supernatural ability to speak in new languages wasn’t an expression of learned vocabularies but rather a spontaneous utterance of divinely prompted words for the purpose of glorifying God (Acts 2:11).

The Greek word used for “tongues” in the passage means, “languages.” On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were all given the supernatural ability to speak in new languages as evidence they had received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. As chapter two of Acts continues, we learn that some of the supernatural languages the disciples spoke were even understood by people from different countries (Acts 2:8-11).

This does not mean that all of their languages were understood or that every time someone speaks in tongues they speak in an earthly language. Paul wrote that there are times when disciples speak in tongues and, “*no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 14:2). The point is not whether the languages can be understood, but the point is that new languages are spontaneously given.

Speaking in other tongues is a spiritual experience for the disciple. They are communicating in new and spontaneous languages to God that others can sometimes understand because it is a known dialect or because of the spiritual gift of interpretation. Most of the time it’s not meant for people to know what is being said, because the gift of tongues is evidence that disciples are being endowed with God’s power.

Today’s passage is also clear that “*all of them were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other tongues;*” no one was left out of this Holy Ghost outpouring. Sometimes modern scholars and pastors try to discourage Christians from speaking in spiritual tongues because they believe that only

a “select few” will be given this sign or that these kind of gifts passed away with the apostles. However, in the time of Acts, everyone present received the gift and was able to be used by God. Plus, Peter said it was for everyone that the Lord our God would call, “*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call*” (Acts 2:39).

Remember what William Seymour said regarding our motives in seeking the gift of tongues, “Beloved... we are not seeking for tongues, but we are seeking the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. And when we receive it, we shall be so filled with the Holy Ghost, that He Himself will speak in the power of the Spirit.” Today, we in the modern church should look to the example of the first disciples and ask God to do the same thing in our lives that He did in theirs. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in new languages as the Spirit enables you.

REFLECTION

Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in new languages?

ACTION

1. Confess and remove all fear, sin and doubt.
2. Ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
3. Begin to speak in new tongues as the Holy Spirit enables you. Be patient and wait, the new languages will come to you by God speaking to your heart; just like He does in your prayer times. As you hear the new sounds of heaven in your heart be obedient to speak them out. God will not force His gift on you or take control of your mouth. Simply repeat out loud what you hear in your heart.

DAY 6: A PROMISE FOR ALL

Acts 2:38-39, “38 Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”

One of the most beautiful things about the “gift of the Holy Spirit” according to Peter in today’s passage, is that it is a promise for “all whom the Lord our God will call.” In other words, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a promise that God gave without an expiration date to the church.

For as long as God calls people to salvation, He promises to give them the same gift of the Holy Spirit that He gave the first disciples.

Whenever a person is born again by the Spirit they can also be assured that God desires to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. God’s promises do not change. What He said He would do, He will do. Now until Judgment Day, all who receive the gift of salvation are promised to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Peter makes it perfectly clear how everyone can be saved and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in verse 38, “*repent and be baptized.*” The only real prerequisite is salvation, which comes through faith and repentance. Then after being saved, one is baptized as an outward sign of the inner transformation. There are examples such as Peter’s encounter at Cornelius’ house where we learn that people were saved, filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues before being baptized (Acts 11:45-48); however, the consistent pattern is first salvation, baptism in water and then the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12-17 & 19:5-6).

Baptism in water was something the early church would do in the same day of people’s salvation at the nearest body of water (Acts 8:36). And repentance is turning from unbelief and sin with a faith-filled confession that declares, “Jesus is Lord!” Once again, God will not withhold the gift of the

Holy Spirit until you are water baptized, but you should desire to be baptized in water directly after being saved.

According to Peter the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in new languages, was for all of them, their children and for everyone Jesus would call to salvation. Therefore, if you have been called by Jesus and are currently saved, the gift of the Holy Spirit is for you. Don't delay or refuse your free gift from the Father, receive by faith God's great gift today; the gift of the Holy Spirit!

REFLECTION

Have you received the "gift of the Holy Spirit," evidenced by speaking in other tongues?

ACTION

1. Ask God to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. Speak in other tongues as the Spirit enables you.
3. As you preach the gospel, like Peter, let everyone know they too can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Lester Sumrall wrote, "I believe that anything that has been given to us was given to us from God to share."

DAY 7: CONTINUALLY FILLED

Ephesians 5:18, *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”*

In today’s passage Paul gives the believer a choice in what they can choose to find ultimate pleasure in; getting drunk on wine or being filled with the Holy Spirit. The obvious choice is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and please God; not to get drunk and live reckless (debauchery).

What is most interesting about this passage is the meaning of, *“be filled with the Spirit,”* in the original Greek. The *Fire Study Bible* notes, “The Greek phrase translated ‘be filled’ (present tense, passive voice, imperative mood) does not refer to the filling of the Spirit as a one-time, once-for-all experience, but rather an ongoing way of life involving ‘repeatedly being filled.’ Christ’s followers must experience constant spiritual refreshing and renewal by continually being filled with the Holy Spirit.” In other words, this continuation seen in the Greek grammar is a command to keep drinking in the Spirit, as one would continue drinking wine to get drunk.

Paul’s comparison of drinking too much wine versus being filled with the Holy Spirit reminds us that though you can drink too much wine, get drunk and commit more sins; you can never be filled too much with God’s Spirit.

On one hand, you never get closer to God as a Christian than the day you were saved; once you have the Holy Spirit you have as much of God that you will ever have because you are united with Christ. There is no such thing as being partially in Christ, as Paul teaches elsewhere in Ephesians, you’re either in Him entirely, or entirely separated from Him (Ephesians 3:11-13). On the other hand, God’s Spirit is only active in your life to the degree that you desire for Him to be.

For example, as a Christian if you don’t desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit’s power to serve in your church, you will remain powerless in your laziness. Mark recorded at the end of his gospel that Jesus only worked

miracles in the disciple's lives as they were obedient to go and preach; *"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it"* (Mark 16:20). In other words, the Lord is only working with those who desire to work with Him and He is only filling those who want to be filled.

The Spirit-filled life is one that is continually being filled with the Holy Spirit for both internal and external purposes. Internally, the believer is filled for the purpose of living holy and receiving spiritual refreshment. Externally, the filling is for the purpose of giving God authentic worship, encouraging fellow believers, making disciples, doing all things unto God (work, school, etc.) and preaching the gospel with power. Therefore, I challenge you to make time everyday to be filled again and again with the Holy Spirit for God's purposes in your life!

REFLECTION

Are you daily being filled with the Holy Spirit?

ACTION

1. Make time every day in prayer to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. As you are being filled with the Holy Spirit let God cleanse you of any sin, inspire your heart to worship Him and lead you to be a powerful witness for His Kingdom.
3. Take another drink of the Holy Spirit right now, cheers!

DAY 8: A PATTERN TO FOLLOW

Acts 10:46, *“For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”*

After the Day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 in the upper room, the disciples began to preach throughout the whole region as Jesus had commanded (Acts 1:8). One of the biggest internal questions the Jewish disciples dealt with while preaching was, “Does God want the Gentiles (non-Jews) to be saved and baptized with the Holy Spirit, in the same way as the Jewish believers?”

In Acts 10:11-16, Peter received a vision from God that clearly showed him that all people are to be reached the same way and that he shouldn’t call “unclean” (the Gentiles) what God calls “clean” (Acts 10:15). Afterward, Peter went to the home of a non-Jewish man named Cornelius and preached the gospel to him and his household (Acts 10:24-48). Cornelius was a Gentile centurion in the Roman army and a “god-fearer,” which meant he practiced the Jewish religion but hadn’t yet fully converted to Judaism.

Cornelius also had a vision the previous day where an angel visited him and commanded him to get Peter to come and preach to his whole family (Acts 10:2-7). Amazingly, after Peter’s vision men were waiting for him at his door to take him to Cornelius’ house. While Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in tongues and praise God (Acts 10:44-46). What a glorious sight this must have been!

After the Holy Spirit’s outpouring at Cornelius’ house the Jewish disciples had their question answered concerning the role of Gentiles in the Kingdom of God; “Yes, God wants to save and fill the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit just like the Jews!”

Although these new disciples spoke in tongues just like they did on Pentecost, no one was reported to understanding the languages as they did at Pentecost, yet Peter said, *“They have received the Holy Spirit just as we*

have” (Acts 10:47). Therefore, they were endowed with power and given the evidence by speaking in unlearned languages just like the first disciples, but they weren’t used in the “gift of tongues.”

Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 that all people who are baptized with the Holy Spirit speak in tongues, but not all of their tongues are meant to give messages to others. The “gift of tongues,” with the “gift of interpretation,” is meant to be understood for people’s benefit, but the “prayer in tongues” is only meant to be understood by God (1 Corinthians 14:2,27).

Directly after seeing Cornelius and his household get saved and filled with the Holy Spirit Peter said, “*Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have*” (Acts 10:47). Therefore, we now know the following things are true, (1) The gospel is for all people, (2) The baptism of the Holy Spirit with the physical evidence of speaking in other tongues is also for everyone in all times and (3) God can pour out His Spirit anywhere and anytime if people are willing!

William Seymour wrote, “I can say, through the power of the Spirit, that wherever God can get a people that will come together in one accord and one mind in the Word of God, the baptism of the Holy Ghost will fall upon them, like as at Cornelius’ house.”

REFLECTION

When was the last time you preached to someone and prayed for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

ACTION

1. Preach the gospel to the lost whenever you can, wherever you can.
2. If someone you’re preaching to is already born again, ask them if they have been filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Make time everyday to speak in tongues and praise God!

DAY 9: HAVE YOU RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Acts 19:2, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”*

The book of Acts is named as such because it is the record of the “Acts of the Apostles.” After the four Gospels (Matthew-John), the book of Acts is the fifth history book in the New Testament. God used Luke, a doctor and traveling companion of Paul, to write the book as a first rate historical record. Today it serves as the primary book that gives the details of the early church established by the first disciples.

Today, the book of Acts serves the modern church in two very important ways; (1) *Description*: It gives us insight into the lives of the first disciples and how the church was established and grew, and (2) *Prescription*: God gave it to us to teach us how to continue to grow and develop His church around the world. Therefore, the book of Acts can clearly answer some of the biggest theological debates among Christians, within its 28 chapters and give us a framework to know how to make disciples that make disciples.

For example, since Acts doesn’t mention Peter as a “Pope-like-leader,” Christians should reject the idea of a “Roman Catholic Pope” and believe in a plurality of elders leading the church, known as a “Presbytery” (Acts 15:2). Also, because the book of Acts doesn’t mention the “baptism of infants,” “praying to dead saints” or exalting Mary to the status of “Queen of Heaven;” disciples should reject these “man-made” religious add-ons.

At the same time, the book of Acts gives us clear patterns to follow because it records how the first disciples preached the gospel and the methods they used to make new disciples. One of the patterns that followed their ministry was “speaking in new tongues.” Jesus said this would be a sign that would follow their preaching, *“15 He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my*

name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues..." (Mark 16:15-17).

The book of Acts confirms that Jesus' promise of the disciples speaking in new tongues came to pass. First, on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4, then at Cornelius' house in Acts 10:44-48; and with John the Baptist's disciples in Acts 19:1-6.

Today's passage records the time when Paul met some of John the Baptist's disciples and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since believing in Jesus. When they confessed they hadn't, Paul laid his hands on them and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. Note that this was not for salvation but for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is no record in Acts or in the entire Bible where someone lays hands on another person and prays for them to be saved.

After Paul prayed for this infilling of the Spirit, Luke records, "*The Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied*" (Acts 19:6). Therefore, from beginning to end in the book of Acts, the descriptive and prescriptive pattern is clear; whenever a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit, they speak in new tongues. The ole' timers used to say, "If it was good enough for the early church, it's good enough for me!"

REFLECTION

Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit since you believed in Jesus?

ACTION

1. Study the pattern in the book of Acts concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
2. Teach others that speaking in tongues is for everyone because it is a sign promised by Jesus.
3. Whenever you meet someone that is saved, ask him or her, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?"

DAY 10: DON'T BE UNINFORMED

1 Corinthians 12:1, *“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.”*

Who would you rather learn to fly a plane from, an experienced pilot or someone who has never even been in a plane? And better yet, who would you trust your life with if you had to take a flight in a plane, the pilot or the inexperienced person? Everyone would say the pilot because they have far greater knowledge and experience. But what if the inexperienced person had read a book about flying, would that change your choice? No, because having the information without the experience of actually flying a plane would still be insufficient, compared to the professionally trained and experienced pilot.

Those who have information and experience are always better off than those who just have information.

The same is true with spiritual gifts. Paul wrote in today's passage, as an experienced disciple with spiritual gifts, that he didn't want the Christians in Corinth to be “uninformed” about the proper usage of these gifts. Now whose advice would you rather follow about spiritual gifts, Paul or an inexperienced Christian? Sadly, there are actually some Christians today who don't have the spiritual gifts, but they try to teach Christians who have them, that they don't use them the right way. This would be the same idea as someone who has never flown a plane trying to teach a pilot how to fly!

There are many people alive today (approx. 500 million) who have actually experienced and witnessed the gifts of the Spirit in action. Therefore, it is pride for people who don't operate in the gifts of the Spirit to try and teach people like myself about spiritual gifts. How could an inexperienced person have any real understanding of flying compared to a trained pilot? It doesn't matter what arguments they come up with, if God's Word says it and disciples have experienced it; that settles it! Anthony Freeman once said, “The person with experience is never at the mercy of a person with an argument.”

I urge you to follow Paul's advice when it comes to spiritual gifts and not be uninformed or live in ignorance. Read the book of Acts and passages like 1 Corinthians 12-14 and ask yourself, "Do I want all that God has for me?" Then humbly accept and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and operate in the gifts, as experienced leaders train and equip you. I'd rather trust the Word of God than anyone who contradicts it. The spiritual gifts are for you and they're for today!

REFLECTION

Are you experienced or uninformed about the spiritual gifts?

ACTION

1. Pray to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit if you haven't spoken in tongues yet.
2. If you have already spoken in tongues, describe what other spiritual gifts you have been used in, "prophecy, word of wisdom, etc." (See 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 for the full list).
3. Whenever someone tries to dissuade you from your beliefs about spiritual gifts, remind them of the pilot example and say, "I'd rather fly high with the Holy Ghost, than stay on the ground with a failed argument!"

DAY 11: TO EACH ONE

1 Corinthians 12:7, *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*

Paul began his training passage on the nine spiritual gifts with today’s verse on the “inclusive” nature of all the gifts. Paul taught that each one of the disciples at Corinth was given the manifestation (visible effect) of the Holy Spirit for the common good of the church. Paul knew that each one of the disciples in the Corinthian church could be used in the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit because they had been each baptized in the Holy Spirit, with the sign of speaking in other tongues (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, with speaking in other tongues, is the initiation into the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. When someone is baptized in the Spirit, they’re equipped to be used in all the gifts as the Spirit leads.

The Bible teaches that both the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues and the nine spiritual gifts are for everyone; God doesn’t discriminate by gender, culture, education or age (Acts 2:39). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:6, *“There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”* It couldn’t be clearer; God is at work through the nine spiritual gifts in everyone that is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the initial endowment of power and the nine gifts are the “day-to-day” operation of the Spirit. Therefore, we as Spirit-filled disciples must always be willing and ready for the Holy Spirit to operate in us the gift that He wants to use. When we’re willing vessels, God will use us everywhere we go to display His love and power. Whether in church, out evangelizing or in the grocery store; God wants the world to know He is both willing and able to change people’s lives.

Think about the Holy Spirit as a construction site manager. He gives the right gift, like a tool, to each of His workers to build the church of Jesus Christ. God is in the disciple-making business and business is good! All God asks of us, is to have faith in Him and be eager to be used for His glory. God

has always brought forth His Kingdom with signs and wonders and today He wants to use you.

For example, when you're in church the Holy Spirit might give you the gift of healing to pray for the sick and see them recover. In the same service, He might give another person the gift of prophecy and to another the gift of faith. The Holy Spirit will give to each one of Jesus' disciples the right gift, at the right time, to do the right things for the church's common good.

Lester Sumrall wrote, "Each one of us has a right to every gift of the Holy Spirit, without exception. Each believer in Christ has the right to any and every gift of the Spirit. When we leave ourselves out, it is through unbelief. We say, 'That is for someone else. It can't be for me.' But the gifts are for you! They are provided for the total body of Christ, and you as a believer are a part of His body." Always remember, you're an "each one," so be ready for the Holy Spirit to use you!

REFLECTION

Do you desire God to use you in the gifts of the Spirit?

ACTION

1. Ask God to use you in the spiritual gifts.
2. Talk to your church's leadership to understand the basic protocol of operating in the gifts of the Spirit at your church.
3. Get ready for God to use you in mighty ways!

DAY 12: THE GIFT OF WISDOM

1 Corinthians 12:8, *“To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom...”*

The first of the nine spiritual gifts that Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is the “message of wisdom.” The message (or word) of wisdom according to Howard Carter is, “a supernatural revelation of the mind and purpose of God communicated by the Holy Spirit. It is God’s wisdom imparted to man... when the Lord specifically reveals His purpose to an individual, that person possesses a word of God’s wisdom.”

The Holy Spirit manifests the gift of wisdom to give people insight on how to act in future situations.

A biblical example of the word of wisdom can be found in Acts 11:28-30 when the Holy Spirit told Agabus that there was a famine coming to the Roman world. Luke records, “*28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*” The Holy Spirit encouraged the disciples to save money and prepare to send relief to those who would need it the most.

Today, some people try to receive a “message of wisdom” by going to psychics or by reading their horoscope. However, these are demonic and superstitious substitutes that are considered witchcraft and bring spiritual oppression to those involved (Leviticus 20:6). At the same time, people’s pursuit of an imitation version of spirituality shows their inner desire for the genuine power of God.

God intended humanity to receive direction from the Holy Spirit, not evil spirits or people’s imaginations. In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke messages of wisdom all the time, most of which became Holy Scripture. Now in the Church Age, God can use every disciple in this fascinating and powerful gift. The major difference between the New

Testament usage of the gift of wisdom and the Old Testament is that it isn't meant to be Scripture, but to help apply the Bible. In other words, when a person receives a message of wisdom it's not on the same level of the Bible. It's simply God speaking to them a personal word for either themselves or someone else; similar to how God speaks in prayer.

Here are some helpful things to remember with the message of wisdom; (1) Never follow a message that is contrary to the Word of God, (2) Test every message by the unique and authoritative Bible (1 John 4:1), (3) If you're the one giving the message of wisdom to another person, always let the person know they shouldn't act on the wisdom unless the Holy Spirit and the Word of God confirms it to them personally, (4) Don't be dependent on others to hear from God for you, learn to hear the Shepherd's direction for your life personally (John 10:27) and (5) Always be in the habit of sharing your messages of wisdom (both received and given) with your church's leadership. They will help you discern whether it is from God and how to proceed with wisdom (1 Corinthians 14:29).

REFLECTION

Have you ever received or given a message of wisdom?

ACTION

1. Ask God to use you to give a message of wisdom.
2. When you're given the message of wisdom for someone, speak exactly what you hear the Holy Spirit saying (don't add to it or change it in anyway). Then humbly follow up with the person you gave the message of wisdom to and see what the results are.
3. Keep a journal of the times God uses you in any of the spiritual gifts.

DAY 13: THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 12:8, *“To another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit...”*

The second gift of the Spirit is the “message of knowledge.” The message (or word) of knowledge according to Howard Carter is, “a supernatural revelation of the existence, or nature, of a person or a thing, or the knowledge of some event, given to us by the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose.” God will reveal His knowledge about someone to correct, rebuke or encourage them with His Word. The message of wisdom and knowledge work together to impart the mind of Christ. The message of wisdom is God’s will regarding the future and the message of knowledge is receiving insight into your past or present circumstances; both are to provide encouragement and guidance.

A biblical example of the message of knowledge was when Jesus sat down and spoke to the woman at the well about the hidden things in her life (John 4:16-19). When Jesus revealed that He had knowledge from the Father about her past (having many husbands), the woman was both confronted with her hidden sin and encouraged to know that God was willing to forgive her. The message of knowledge helped her deal with things she was ashamed of.

Nothing is truly hidden from God, He sees all and knows all. The gift of knowledge is a way God reminds us through other people, that He knows everything about our lives.

The message of knowledge is often used in evangelism to help people know that God is real and that He wants to change their lives (like with the woman at the well). One time God gave me a word of knowledge about a young man I was witnessing to and when I shared it with him, it caused him to stop mocking God and become receptive to the gospel.

Also, the word of knowledge is used to encourage Christians that may be discouraged about something in their life. Many times in church or in home Bible studies, God wants trusted leaders to share a word of knowledge

to comfort and strengthen His people. Sometimes the message of knowledge will be given when you are praying with people. For example, “I sense in my heart that God is wanting me to tell you that He knows what you suffered in your childhood and He wants me to let you know it wasn’t your fault. Is this true? If yes, I’m now going to pray for your emotional healing.”

Two things to remember concerning the message of knowledge; (1) When giving a word of knowledge don’t force people to accept what you believe God is saying. Let them honestly give you feedback as to whether or not it is a word for them and (2) When receiving a message of knowledge, don’t feel pressure to accept something that is not true. Sometimes well-intentioned Christians will manipulate people with “words” from their own imagination. Only affirm and believe what you know to be true knowledge from God.

REFLECTION

Have you received or given a word of knowledge?

ACTION

1. Ask God to use you in the gift of knowledge.
2. When giving a word of knowledge, be humble and willing to hear the person’s honest feedback. After God uses you to give an accurate message of knowledge, be quick to give Him all the credit. Spiritual gifts should always give God glory, not man.
3. When receiving a message of knowledge always be sure to test it with the Word of God.

DAY 14: THE GIFT OF FAITH

1 Corinthians 12:9, *“To another faith by the same Spirit...”*

The third gift that Paul mentions is the “gift of faith.” The gift of faith is, “a supernatural infilling of faith to accomplish the divine will of God.” Lester Sumrall said, “The gift of faith functions on behalf of the believer to bring about what otherwise would not be possible through that person’s efforts.”

Through the gift of faith God gives a person the faith needed to respond to an impossible situation and see a miracle or blessing manifested.

A biblical example of the gift of faith would be when Peter walked on water with Jesus (Matthew 14:27-30). The command from Jesus inspired Peter to do what was impossible. None of the other disciples had the gift of faith given to them, that is why they remained in the boat. Another example is when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow before King Nebuchadnezzar’s idol. They were given extraordinary faith to face the fiery flames of furnace without fear (Daniel 3).

A modern day example of this gift would be the time when our new church was looking for a building to meet in and I was told by God to walk into a neighborhood church and ask to use the building without any money. Within 48 hours we had the keys and were able to start holding services because God had given me the gift of faith to receive His blessing.

The common or normal act of faith is based on hearing and believing God’s Word as Paul taught in Romans 10:17. This kind of “normal faith” is essential to the everyday life of the disciple. The author of Hebrews taught that without this kind of faith it’s impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). However, the “gift of faith” is a spontaneous infusion of boldness to do what one would normally have to pray and work up courage to do.

On one hand, normal faith is common and should be built up by God’s Word and in prayer everyday (Jude 1:20). The author of Hebrews wrote, *“I Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for”* (Hebrew 11:1-

2). On the other hand, we should always be ready for those rare instantaneous moments when God gives us the gift of faith to do something impossible!

REFLECTION

Are you willing to let God use you in extraordinary ways?

ACTION

1. Ask God to use you in the gift of faith.
2. Be sensitive to hear God's voice and be quick to obey whenever He gives you faith for the impossible.
3. Remember, God will never ask you to do something that will harm you, hurt others or break his Word. The gift of faith always results in God's intervention. Don't be weird and try dangerous things and then say, "God told me to do it."

DAY 15: THE GIFTS OF HEALING

1 Corinthians 12:9, *“To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit...”*

The fourth spiritual gift that Paul mentions is the “gifts of healing.” The gifts of healing are, “a supernatural manifestation of God’s healing power.” This gift comes in many forms because it responds to the many ways a person can be sick. The gifts of healing are pluralistic and are able to meet every need. This gift can even be used to cast out an evil spirit that brings sickness or it can be given to heal emotions that have been hurt because of past traumatic events like depression and anxiety. Howard Carter said, “Where all the gifts of healing are in operation, all classes of disease could be healed.”

The entire New Testament, especially the gospels and the book of Acts, are overflowing with examples of the gifts of healing. Both Jesus and the disciples were recorded as healing the blind, cleansing the lepers, making the lame walk and even raising the dead. Jesus said that these gifts of healing would follow all His disciples. He said in Mark 16:17-18, *“17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

Anyone who believes and prays like Jesus taught, can see the same kind of healings found in the Bible; and even greater in number than Jesus did on earth (John 14:12).

Modern day examples of the gifts of healings would be the many times Christians have prayed for others to be healed from sickness, depression, anxiety and blindness; and God answered with total healing. Sometimes people are not healed, but this should never stop our faithfulness to pray for the sick. God didn’t say to only pray when we “feel like it” or “understand everything.” Instead He commanded that whenever we encounter a sick person we should pray for healing. And when the gifts of healing are present people will recover!

God said in James 5:14-15, “*14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.*” The gifts of healing are present whenever the Holy Spirit gives people the power to heal in Jesus name; especially in the church. When it’s your turn to pray for the sick, with the laying on of hands with oil; don’t doubt, only believe!

REFLECTION

Are you willing to ask God for the gifts of healing and pray for sick people?

ACTION

1. Ask God to give you the gifts of healing to pray for the sick and see them recover.
2. Next time you see a sick person, pray for their healing!
3. Give God the glory when you see Him heal people through your obedience.

DAY 16: THE GIFT OF MIRACULOUS POWERS

1 Corinthians 12:10, *“To another miraculous powers...”*

The fifth gift of the Holy Spirit is the “gift of miraculous powers.” The gift of miraculous powers is, “a supernatural display of God’s infinite power.” Howard Carter wrote, “The gift can be used as a sign of the presence and power of God, for the provision of temporal needs, or to confirm the preached word; or it may give evidence of a divine commission, as in the case of Moses and his rod.”

The gift of miraculous powers can come in many different forms but every time the effect is the same; people see God at work!

Most of today’s modern day examples of this gift come from our missionaries and local pastors who reach out to people in dangerous places and where the gospel has never been preached. There are testimonies that the dead have been raised in Mexico, Mozambique and Nigeria; along with miraculous feedings at large gospel meetings where the food didn’t run out, and when people were smuggling Bibles into restricted countries, they were miraculously hidden in plain sight from soldiers.

One of the biblical examples of the gift of miraculous powers was when a deadly poisonous snake bit Paul and he did not die. The local pagans who knew the snake’s deadliness were so amazed at God’s power that they actually thought Paul was a “god” (Acts 28:3-6). Other biblical examples would include Jesus turning water into wine, Peter finding a gold coin in a fish’s mouth and the miraculous feedings of the multitudes with small amounts of bread and fish.

Though the gift of miraculous powers may be rare and less seen in the Western world, we as Jesus’ disciples should always be ready for God to show up and show off His power. I personally watched God spare me from a serious car accident after I prayed and saw cars crash all around me on the highway. Plus, I have heard stories of God splitting a big wooden pulpit into two pieces when a preacher was talking about the presence of God, multiple accounts of church buildings glowing as God was moving in the services

and a man being brought back to life when a pastor prayed for him after he was declared dead in a car accident by the paramedics.

I believe this gift is rare because God is not into “Vegas-style theatrics.” He is not trying to make people believe in Him. God expects people to believe in Him without needing signs. Jesus said in Matthew 12:39 regarding people’s desires for signs, “*A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign!*” We should not seek the sign of God’s miraculous power from an evil heart, but we should believe that God can do the impossible and use us to do it!

REFLECTION

Do you believe God can still display His mighty power like He did in Bible times?

ACTION

1. Recall any times you have witnessed the miraculous powers of God.
2. Ask God to use you for His glory in signs and wonders.
3. Be ready, even in life threatening situations, to believe God can demonstrate His power.

DAY 17: THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 12:10, *“To another prophecy...”*

The sixth spiritual gift is the “gift of prophecy.” Prophecy is “a supernatural message that brings edification, exhortation and comfort.” Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:2, *“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”* Howard Carter said prophecy was like, “the poetry of the Spirit, since the thoughts expressed, and the language which clothes them, are raised above the ordinary level of the person’s natural gift of speech.”

Prophecy is God speaking to His creation in love to share His heart. It is not man’s opinion or thoughts; it is giving a human voice to the divine heart of God.

Sadly, more than any other spiritual gift, prophecy can be abused or counterfeited. Concerning its abuse, the carnal thoughts of the speaker can enter in and distort the message. God may be speaking to the person to give a message to another disciple, but the one being used contaminates the flow. Or with “false prophets,” people can try to usurp their will upon people and use the phrase, “The Lord has said,” when He actually never spoke to them (Jeremiah 23:16-32). Abuse and counterfeits shouldn’t discourage us from believing in prophecy, but it should have us proceed with caution. Abuse and misuse shouldn’t lead to disuse, but rather proper use.

God’s people, in both the Old and New Testaments, had to contend with the problems involving prophecy, but God taught them how to discern His voice through the true prophets. Today in the New Testament, the Bible teaches us that prophecy is to bring a message from God that build’s us up (edifies), encourages us (exhorts) and comforts us (brings peace).

As a result, if the “prophetic word” brings discouragement or turns people’s focus towards man, then you can be sure it is not from God. Always test every prophecy with the Word of God. Any supposed prophecy that contradicts sound doctrine is to be rebuked and considered wicked. Good leadership should humbly judge and discern all the words given in the

church to insure that everyone is actually hearing from God and not another source (1 Corinthians 14:29).

A biblical example of the gift of prophecy would be when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and quoted Joel to the people describing that God was wanting to pour out His Spirit on all flesh, just like He had promised. When the people heard that God was speaking to them about their generation, they were encouraged to draw near to God, receive salvation and be filled with the Spirit. God did exactly what He said He was going to do. Peter was fulfilling Joel's prophecy as he was prophesying (Acts 2:16-21). A modern example of the gift of prophecy would be the time I held a young man in my arms and said, "Jesus wants me to tell you just like I am holding you now, He is holding you in His arms and pouring out His love upon you." The next moment tears gushed down his face as he began to feel the comfort of God heal his many hurts.

Remember, the messages of wisdom and knowledge have more to do with God revealing hidden or secret things; prophecy is more about God giving encouragement and edification. Often times good intentioned disciples do not prophesy a word from the Lord, because they think it is "too simple." They wrongly believe that prophecy has to be like Isaiah's prophecies, but in the New Testament, prophecy is not about writing Scripture or telling the future. It is primarily used for God to convey His heart to His people. Paul taught that everyone should seek the gift of prophecy because it is beneficial for the church and it helps bring unbelievers to Christ. Let us all be obedient to God's word in 1 Corinthians 14:1, "*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.*"

REFLECTION

Are you open to God using you in the gift of prophecy?

ACTION

1. Recall a time you were given or gave a prophetic word.
2. Ask God to use you in the gift of prophecy.
3. Always prophesy according to the Spirit of God (nothing more or nothing less) and follow the order set by your church (1 Corinthians 14:32-33).

DAY 18: THE GIFT OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS

1 Corinthians 12:10, “*To another distinguishing between spirits...*”

The seventh spiritual gift is the “gift of distinguishing between spirits.” The gift of distinguishing (or discerning) between spirits is, “a supernatural revelation about the origin of a spirit and its characteristics.” Consequently, there are four different kinds of spirits in the world, which are, (1) the Spirit of God, (2) angelic spirits, (3) evil spirits and (4) human spirits.

Sometimes Christians believe God is speaking to them, but really it is their own spirit (or imagination). Other times, people have visions and hear voices they think are from God, but they are really evil spirits trying to deceive them (2 Corinthians 11:4). The Bible says that if we’re not careful, we can be deceived by Satan, who “*masquerades as an angel of light*” (2 Corinthians 11:14)!

The gift of discerning of spirits is God’s way of letting you know the source and purpose of every spiritual encounter and message.

A biblical example of distinguishing between spirits would be the time when a young girl who could tell the future followed Paul and kept shouting, “*These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved!*” However, by the gift of distinguishing between spirits, Paul knew that the spirit inside of her was of a demonic origin. As a result, Paul cast the spirit out of the girl and set her free (Acts 16:16-18). Likewise, this gift is used often in association with casting out demons.

Sometimes people confuse the gift of distinguishing (or discerning) between spirits with being judgmental and spreading gossip. Or people think this is the gift of “discernment,” like one uses in apologetics. Both are incorrect. The gift of distinguishing between spirits is not given to slander, nor is it for defending the faith against doctrinal errors; rather the gift of discerning of spirits is meant to help people avoid deceptive tactics from the devil, to know the characteristics of man’s spirit and cast out demons.

A modern example of this gift in action was when I was saw people trying to pray for a demon-possessed man on the streets in New Orleans. They thought the man was drunk, however, God told me he was demon possessed and so I commanded the evil spirits to leave him. At once he was in his right mind and was able to praise God. They thought he was drunk because of his erratic behavior; however, his problems were spiritual in nature. Another time a person with schizophrenia asked me to cast demons out of them because they were hearing voices. However, God told me it was a physical illness affecting their spirit and not an outside demonic attack. After going to see a doctor my insight was confirmed. Remember, we should never assume things that God hasn't told us and even if we believe God is giving us spiritual discernment, we should always act in grace and love.

Lester Sumrall wrote, "The discerning of spirits gives members of the body of Christ insight into the spirit world, a realm that their five physical senses— feeling, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting— cannot enter. The telescope can reveal the amazing stars in space. The microscope can bring to light the intricate mysteries of microscopic life. But it takes the gift of discerning of spirits to penetrate to the dividing of soul and spirit within a person." When the gift of distinguishing between spirits is used properly it can be powerful and life changing both in and outside of the church!

REFLECTION

Do you believe God can use you to discern the different kinds of spirits in the world?

ACTION

1. Recall a time you have seen demons cast out.
2. Ask God to give you the gift of distinguishing between spirits next time you encounter a spiritual battle or situation.
3. Test every spirit and only follow the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1).

DAY 19: THE GIFT OF TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12:10, *“To another speaking in different kinds of tongues...”*

The eighth spiritual gift is “speaking in different kinds of tongues.” The gift of speaking in different kinds of tongues is, “a supernatural message given in an unknown tongue (language) that brings edification, exhortation and comfort.”

The gift or message in tongues must always be interpreted because it is spoken directly to people as a message; it’s not private prayer to God.

The two major differences between “praying in tongues” and the “message in tongues” are direction and purpose. (1) *Direction*: The message in tongues is directed towards man (1 Corinthians 14:13) and praying in tongues is directed towards God (1 Cor. 14:2). (2) *Purpose*: The message of tongues to men is basically used as a prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5) and praying in tongues to God is for intercession, personal edification and worship (1 Cor. 14:14).

Sometimes well-intentioned Christians confuse the prayer in tongues (given at the baptism of the Holy Spirit), with the message of tongues. They’ll say, “We shouldn’t speak in tongues in the church unless it’s interpreted.” However, that is not what Paul taught nor what Luke records in Acts. Paul said the only time spiritual tongues needed to be interpreted was when it was directed to people as a message (1 Cor. 14:19). In Acts 10:46, Cornelius and his family spoke in tongues without any interpretation because it was not meant to be a message to men but rather to God. In regards to praying and worshipping in tongues Paul said, *“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit”* (1 Cor. 14:2). But in regards to a message given in tongues he wrote, *“The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified”* (1 Cor. 14:5).

Paul was very clear to encourage and promote the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. He taught that the church should not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:39), that he spoke in tongues often- even more than those in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 14:18) and that when Christians pray and sing in church to God, they should be given freedom to do it both in spiritual tongues and known languages (1 Cor. 14:14-15).

At the same time, Paul didn't want disciples using their prayer language as a means of communicating with each other. That is why he wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:19, "*But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.*" He didn't want people confusing the direction and purpose of spiritual languages. The gift of tongues is supposed to be interpreted and then function as a prophecy; otherwise, we should keep the tongues between God and us.

Lester Sumrall wrote, "Paul had previously stated, 'I would that ye all spake with tongues' (1 Cor. 14:5). If the Word of God says all of us should have this gift, then without exception all of us should have it." Don't be confused about the usage of tongues, pray to receive a message in tongues and have it be interpreted for the edification of the church!

REFLECTION

Do you desire for God to give you a message in tongues?

ACTION

1. Recall a time you gave a message in tongues or heard one.
2. Ask God to give you the gift of tongues.
3. Whenever you are in church be available for God to use you in this gift.

DAY 20: THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION

1 Corinthians 12:10, *“And to still another the interpretation of tongues.”*

The ninth and last spiritual gift is the “gift of interpretation of tongues.” The gift of interpretation of tongues is, “a supernatural ability to interpret a message given in tongues.” Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:5, *“I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.”* In other words, the message in tongues that is interpreted spiritually is equivalent to prophecy.

Whenever a message in tongues is given to the congregation, it should be interpreted for all to benefit from it.

The Bible teaches that there should be order with tongues and prophecy in the church service. Here are some of the guidelines that are to be used to ensure peace in the church gathering; (1) There should only be two to three spiritual messages given in a service (1 Cor. 14:27), (2) The leaders of the church should approve the words given (1 Cor. 14:29) and (3) The one being used in the spiritual gifts always has the ability to be in control of their actions and compliant with the church’s order. If the person acts disruptive while operating in the gifts and says, “The Spirit is making me act this way and I cannot stop it,” they are either influenced by an evil spirit or being rebellious in their own spirit (1 Cor. 14:32).

The Lord will never give a person a message in tongues without someone present with the gift to interpret it. If no one interprets the message given, the one who was given the message in tongues, should pray and ask for the gift of interpretation to ensure the message is given to God’s people. Like with the message of wisdom, knowledge and distinguishing of spirits; the message of tongues and prophecy will never contradict Scripture or lead to sinful behavior. Therefore, the end result of all the sign gifts is to bring people closer to God and godly living.

Concerning how the message is actually interpreted Lester Sumrall wrote, “The interpretation of tongues is not a translation. If one person gives forth a message in tongues and two different people have the interpretation, each interpretation will be different. The essence of the message, the deep root of it, will be similar; but the phrasing of it will be different because it is not a word-for-word translation. A translation is an exact rendering from one language to another in precise grammatical terms; an interpretation reveals what God wants us to know. This explains why at times a message in tongues might be long while the interpretation is short.”

Oddly, there is no clear example of the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues in the Bible. We see examples of tongues being understood by the hearers on Pentecost, but it doesn’t say they were given a gift to understand spiritual languages. And Luke is clear that the actual languages of the disciples were spiritually spontaneous to them (unlearned), but known to the people. Acts 2:6-8 records, “*6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”*”

As a result, either this gift is not given as an example in the Bible or the above account in Acts involved this gift but it is not mentioned. Some think the hearers might have been given the gift to understand the unknown languages that the disciples were speaking, just as if they were speaking their own language. However, I do not agree with this because it stretches the plain reading of the text too much. Also, many like myself, have been used in a similar way. On two separate occasions, while I was speaking in tongues, people from India have received messages in their dialect. I had never learned their language but I was able to speak it clearly while being used in the gift of tongues.

What we do know for sure is that the gift of interpretation of tongues is taught and given place in Scripture. We should then take it serious and be open to God using us in this powerful gift!

REFLECTION

Do you desire for God to give you the gift of interpreting tongues?

ACTION

1. Recall a time you were used in today's gift or heard it.
2. Ask God to give you the gift of interpretation of tongues.
3. Whenever you hear a message in tongues ask God for the prophetic meaning!

DAY 21: THE OPERATION OF ALL THE GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:11, *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”*

Have you ever watched your favorite band play live music, whether in person or on video? Did you notice how all the musicians had a specific part to play to make the music sound good? The same is true with spiritual gifts in the church. When we as different members of the Body of Christ get together, the Holy Spirit will distribute His gifts to each one of us, just as He determines, to make a beautiful service.

Spirit-filled disciples are like members of God’s band here on earth and the Holy Spirit is like the lead singer in charge of assigning each person their specific role. Even more so, the Holy Spirit even gives us the talents to use the gifts!

Consider the three classifications of the nine gifts of the Spirit made popular by Howard Carter; (1) *Revelation Gifts*: Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge and Distinguishing Between Spirits, (2) *Power Gifts*: Gifts of Healing, Faith and Miraculous Powers and (3) *Inspiration Gifts*: Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues. Now think of these groups like the musical arrangements in an orchestra. The orchestra has four groups of instruments; the woodwinds, brass, percussion and strings. Just as the conductor arranges each group and the music they will play, the Holy Spirit empowers the church with spiritual gifts and conducts the service for the glory of God.

For example, when you’re in a church service and the Holy Spirit gives a person the gift of distinguishing between spirits and another the gift of prophecy, everything will work in perfect harmony for the glory of God. The difference between the spiritual gifts and orchestra example is that most musicians can’t play every instrument because they lack the ability. However, since the Holy Spirit is the giver and enabler of the nine spiritual gifts, every disciple is able to perform each gift perfectly, as He determines.

As a result, there are two important things to remember when it comes to the operation of the nine spiritual gifts; (1) Everyone who is Spirit-filled has the potential to receive and operate in all of the nine gifts and (2) The Holy Spirit is always in charge of distributing the gifts as He sees best. So the biggest question concerning operating in the spiritual gifts isn't, "Does God want to use me?" But rather, "How will the Holy Spirit use me today?"

REFLECTION

Are you willing to be used by God in all of the nine gifts?

ACTION

1. Describe a time you've seen two or more spiritual gifts in one setting.
2. Pray and earnestly desire to be used by God every time you gather with other Christians.
3. Next time you're witnessing, ask God to use you in the spiritual gifts. The lost need to experience God's power, like in the times of Jesus and the disciples.

DAY 22: EAGERLY DESIRE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 14:1, *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.”*

As a pastor I hear the excuses people make all the time to not be used in the spiritual gifts. The most popular excuse I always hear is, “I don’t have any spiritual gifts because God hasn’t given them to me.” It may be true that they haven’t been baptized in the Holy Spirit yet, but the fact of the matter is, it’s not because God hasn’t given them the gifts, it’s really because they haven’t eagerly desired to receive them!

Take for example the topic of salvation. God has made salvation available to everyone according to the Bible. However, only those who believe and accept the gift of salvation are saved. Consider 1 John 2:2, *“He [Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”* No one will go to hell because God didn’t offer them the gift of salvation; people will go to hell because they rejected the gift of salvation. The same is true with the spiritual gifts. God has made them available to everyone through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, however; only those who believe and accept the gifts will be used in them.

Remember what Peter said at Pentecost? Luke records in Acts 2:38-39, *“38 Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”* Salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are both gifts from God that must be received in faith; otherwise, they will never be present in someone’s life.

God has already made the choice for all people to be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit to operate in the spiritual gifts. Now, it’s up to each person to make their own choice; either to accept or reject God’s gifts.

That is why Paul stated what he did in today’s passage. He clearly wrote to “follow love” and “eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit.” Paul couldn’t

have been clearer concerning God's command towards all disciples of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit. God wants us, to want them!

It has always been the heart of God to have a people filled with His Spirit. In the time of Moses some of the Israelites saw new people receive the gifts and they asked Moses if they should stop them but he responded in Numbers 11:29, "*Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!*"

Also, when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the main passage Peter preached from was an Old Testament promise that all people would be filled with God's power. The prophet Joel said, "28 *'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days'*" (Joel 2:28-29). Therefore, rid yourself of all excuses and jump in the rivers of God. Eagerly desire the spiritual gifts and get ready to be used by God.

REFLECTION

Do you eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit?

ACTION

1. Ask God daily to use you in the gifts of the Spirit. Lester Sumrall wrote, "When God makes a promise, He keeps it. You can begin seeking the gifts of the Spirit because the Lord said you could have them. They are for you, for your children, and for every believer. The first way to receive the gifts of the Spirit in your life is by saying, 'The promises are mine.'"
2. Always come to church ready to be used by God.
3. Wherever you go in life ask God to bless others through you with the gifts of the Spirit!

DAY 23: ORDER IN THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 14:32-33, “32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.”

There are generally two opposite opinions concerning the order of the gifts that are both wrongly held in many churches today. First, some people think that for the Spirit of God to move freely, people need to be “Granola Christians” and act like fruits, nuts and flakes. This twisted view of the gifts makes the bizarre and strange the “norm” and stresses human emotion and extremism.

Second, and equally as wrong, but on the other end, is the idea that the Holy Spirit can only move if He is neat, tidy and in perfect order with man’s agenda. Churches like this believe the Holy Spirit is the exact representation of their plans. This kind of man-centered-order grieves the Holy Spirit and quenches His fire. I call these kinds of people the “Frozen Chosen Christians,” because they may be saved, but they have no fire of the Holy Spirit!

The biblical order and proper use of the spiritual gifts is in the middle of wild fire and no fire; which is contained fire. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit did extraordinary things, however, He didn’t draw attention to people being weird but rather to the preaching of the gospel.

For example, the first time the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost the bystanders thought the disciples were drunk because they were acting strange in their eyes (Acts 2:12-13). However, the disciples weren’t speaking in tongues to cause a commotion but rather for the gospel to be preached in every person’s language. The people were the ones confused because at first they didn’t understand what God was doing. When “Granola Christians” try to recreate the event by acting “drunk,” they are actually doing opposite of what happened. The real way to imitate what the disciples were doing is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and go out into the community

and preach the gospel with whatever signs God gives, not what man tries to conjure up.

Likewise, when the disciples went to Cornelius' house, the Holy Spirit came upon his family in an unexpected way; they began to speak in tongues during the preaching (Acts 10:44-48). If Peter would have acted like some of the "Frozen Chosen Christians" that I know, he would have stopped what God was doing and grieved the Holy Spirit. This doesn't mean people can interrupt the preaching whenever they feel the Holy Spirit, but it does teach us that God can change the order of the service. Peter, who was in charge, recognized this and let God have His way!

Here are three things to do to ensure biblical order concerning the gifts; (1) Always remember your gift is subject to the church leadership, don't be a "prophetic rebel," (2) The gifts will always draw people to Christ, not to "fleshly weirdness" and (3) Remember its not about you, it's about God moving in the hearts of people.

We need to be like the leaders of the Azusa Street revival from the 1900's, who saw thousands of people saved and gave birth to a movement that today has hundreds of millions of followers around the world. They said, "We are measuring everything by the Word; every experience must measure up to the Bible. Some say that is going too far, but if we have lived too close to the Word, we will settle that with the Lord when we meet Him in the air."

REFLECTION

Are you a "Granola Christian" or a "Frozen Chosen Christian?"

ACTION

1. Talk to your local church's leadership and submit to their structure on how to use the gifts in their various ministries. If you attend a church that doesn't believe or operate in the gifts, prayerfully meet with the leaders to see if they are willing to learn or seek a Spirit-filled church that does.
2. Make sure whenever you're used in the gifts that people are drawn to Jesus and the gospel, not your personality.
3. Don't be a "Granola Christian" or a "Frozen Chosen Christian," instead be an, "On Fire Disciple!"

DAY 24: THESE SIGNS WILL FOLLOW

Mark 16:17 (KJV), *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues...”*

When God chose Moses to be His representative, He gave him miraculous signs to verify the message to both God’s people and Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-31). The same is true in today’s passage when Jesus spoke to his disciples to go and preach the gospel to all people because He promised to provide them with signs to display God’s power.

A sign is an “indication of God’s power.” Though God doesn’t owe anyone a proof of His power; He uses signs for people to know His mighty hand still moves across the earth.

God told the prophet Joel that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit to, *“show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below.”* These are the very words Peter preached on Pentecost in Acts 2:19. Also, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, *“4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”* The New Covenant message of the gospel was never meant to be preached without the miraculous power of God. Jesus initiated the New Covenant with signs and wonders, and He promised to sustain the church until the end of the age with signs following His disciples.

Here are the four main signs that Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18 would follow His Spirit-baptized disciples; (1) Casting out demons, (2) Speaking in new tongues, (3) Invincibility and (4) Healing of the sick. The passage then ends with these encouraging words in Mark 16:20, *“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.”*

Lester Sumrall said, “For us to be the kind of people God wants in these trying times, we must have the gifts of the Spirit. It is imperative that we be qualified spiritually— that we know about spiritual gifts, understand

them, and be able to use them wisely as the Lord wills.” Certainly, people with wicked hearts demand signs to believe (Matthew 16:4), but these signs are not for them, they are for the genuine seeker to experience God in a powerful and personal way. Therefore, every disciple should seek the spiritual gifts and ask that God would grant them signs as they preach the gospel!

REFLECTION

Have you ever witnessed one of God’s signs?

ACTION

1. Describe a time you saw someone healed, speak in new tongues, be invincible or cast out demons.
2. Ask God to use in the signs of the gospel.
3. Next time you preach the gospel, ask God to display His power for all to see!

DAY 25: CASTING OUT DEMONS

Mark 9:25, “When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. ‘You deaf and mute spirit,’ he said, ‘I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.’”

I’ll never forget the first time God used me to cast demons out of a person. I was a young pastor working in the inner city of New Orleans. One day a homeless man on drugs that often came by the church to receive help, stopped by one night while I was there getting ready to leave with another brother. He was acting very strange compared to our previous encounters with him and we knew something was different. He was saying things like, “I want all this evil to leave me... I don’t want to be like this anymore.”

So we asked him if we could pray for him. He said that we could, then the moment I said the name, “Jesus,” he fell to the floor and began to slither on the ground like a snake and scream in agony. Within moments we placed our hands on him and started shouting, “Satan we cast you out of this man in the name of Jesus. Leave him now! Jesus, set him free!”

Instantly, he let out a loud shriek and became limp on the ground. We felt the atmosphere change and could see he was totally sober. Then he stood up and started praising God with tears coming down his eyes. Afterward he gave his life to Jesus and came home with us. Since that day, I have seen many people get delivered from demons. Whether it was on mission trips to India or outreaches in my church; Jesus always comes in His mighty power when demons are present and casts them out.

Don’t be afraid of the devil now that Jesus is with you. Satan and Jesus are not in an arm wrestling match; they’re not equal in any way. Jesus cast Satan out of heaven and crushed his head on the earth. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus and has been given to us to trample on scorpions and snakes (Luke 10:19)!

Disciples everywhere should always be ready to enforce the authority of Jesus over Satan's Kingdom here on earth. Therefore, if you ever discern a spirit is from the devil, cast it out in Jesus' name. Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world! You may not feel ready but you can be trained in a good church to do the works of God. Lester Sumrall said to church leaders, "Look at Christ standing tall— with faith, with no fear of any kind— before demons, demoniacs, and raging storms. It didn't matter! There was no fear! We are to bring our people up to that same measure— as tall and strong and confident as Jesus Christ. That is our goal!"

REFLECTION

Are you ready to cast out demons in Jesus' name?

ACTION

1. Describe a time you saw demons cast out in Jesus' name.
2. Ask your church how they do deliverance and seek to help them.
3. Next time you sense demons are in someone, cast them out in the mighty name of Jesus!

DAY 26: DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 2:4-5, “4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”

In today’s passage, Paul summarized his mode of operation when preaching the gospel- he came with Holy Ghost power! He fully relied upon the supernatural demonstration of God’s power and not his own wisdom or speaking ability. This kind of “power-based-ministry” is clearly seen all throughout his missionary journeys in the book of Acts.

Take for example the following three passages; (1) Acts 14:3 records that while Paul and Barnabas were preaching the gospel, the Lord, “*confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders,*” (2) Acts 14:10 mentions Paul healing a lame man in Jesus’ name, “*Stand up on your feet!*” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk,” and (3) Acts 19:11-12 states, “*11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.*”

Paul wasn’t going around like most pastors, holding “self-help conferences,” he was bringing heaven to earth through the power of the gospel with signs following. If Paul, the greatest theologian of all time, knew more about relying upon the Spirit than being a good speaker, how much more should every disciple desire to demonstrate the power of God and stop using “human wisdom!”

Therefore, it’s no coincidence, that God used Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-14 to teach the church the doctrines on the operation of the spiritual gifts. First God used Paul to operate in the gifts and then He used him to teach others how to do it. Paul didn’t want to keep the gifts just for him or have people think he alone was “God’s man of power for the hour.” However,

Paul was passionate about encouraging every person in the church to see themselves as a member in Christ's Body.

He wanted everyone to, "*eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit*," because he knew that if God could use him, God could use anyone (1 Cor. 14:1). Lester Sumrall wrote, "Spiritual gifts are not the icing on the cake... they are the weapons of our warfare. The gifts of the Spirit are not designed just to make you different from other people. They are given to equip you for God's service." All disciples today should be like Paul the apostle and not just preach the Word of God with mere words, but with the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit!

REFLECTION

How do you preach the gospel, just with words or with the demonstration of the Spirit's power?

ACTION

1. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit for the sake of the gospel.
2. Be an open and willing vessel for God to use.
3. Next time you're preaching the gospel to someone ask yourself, "Am I just using words or am I depending upon the demonstration of the Spirit's power?"

DAY 27: HAVE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS CEASED?

1 Corinthians 13:8, *“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”*

Some Christians who reject the present day manifestations of the Holy Spirit, try to use Paul’s words against him. They take the above verse to mean that when Paul refers to prophecy ceasing and tongues being stilled, that he is referring to a time in the near future when the Corinthian church wouldn’t be able to operate in the gifts anymore. This belief is called, “cessationism” (the belief that gifts ceased around 100 A.D.), which is opposed to, “continuationism” (the belief that the spiritual gifts will continue until Jesus comes back).

Therefore, cessationists believe that after the church received all the books of the Bible, the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased. They believe Paul spoke about this being the “completeness” that would bring about the disappearing of the gifts. However, please read carefully Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13:8-9 for the true meaning of “completeness,” *“8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness [perfection] comes, what is in part disappears.”*

According to Paul, the word “completeness” (which is “perfection” in the Greek), has nothing to do with the completion of the Bible. Otherwise, when the disciples were finished writing the Bible, “knowledge” itself would have passed away too because they would know everything! Likewise, most scholars today believe “completeness or perfection” is referring to the perfect and complete resurrected body because it fits the overall context better.

Paul supports this interpretation further in the same passage, *“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”* (1 Corinthians 13:12). When all the disciples will be in the presence of the

Lord face-to-face, spiritual gifts and human knowledge will no longer be needed because every believer will know God clearly.

As a result, Paul continued to write in the next chapter to “eagerly desire the spiritual gifts” and “not to forbid speaking in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:1,39). It was obvious to Paul that he believed the gifts were never going to cease until everyone was face to face with Jesus. Dr. Craig Keener in his scholarly work on miracles has noted that there are around 600 million Spirit-filled disciples in the world, with more than half testifying to witnessing miracles; that is over 300 million testimonies! Certainly, we don’t believe something based on popularity, but good doctrine will result in good fruit. Funny but true, many of these Spirit-filled disciples are in countries, like Africa and China, where the anti-spiritual gift missionaries started churches. Once the unreached people were saved, they went on to read the Bible for themselves and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

It’s not only foolish but also unbiblical to believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. The same power the first disciples needed to preach the gospel, is needed today. Thankfully, God has promised that until we’re given a perfect body in His presence, He will give us the spiritual gifts to help us make disciples of the nations!

REFLECTION

Do you believe the gifts of the Spirit will never cease until Jesus comes back?

ACTION

1. Describe a time you were discouraged from using the spiritual gifts.
2. Teach cessationists that the gifts will continue as long as there is knowledge.
3. Continue operating in the gifts of the Spirit until Jesus comes back!

DAY 28: SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND CHURCH HISTORY

Acts 2:39, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off –for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

When Peter preached today’s passage at Pentecost, he did so with total confidence believing that God would keep His promise. He, along with the prophet Joel, believed that the Father was going to keep baptizing and empowering Jesus’ disciples with the Holy Spirit, until He came back to establish His kingdom upon the earth. God’s promise started being fulfilled in the book of Acts and continued through the New Testament.

At the same time, even with all this biblical evidence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, skeptics still ask, “Where have the spiritual gifts been since the Bible times?” They wrongly believe that since they haven’t seen miracles or the operation of the spiritual gifts that they’re not happening anywhere. This over simplistic view basically believes that if they’re not seeing something supernatural, then it cannot be happening.

I personally love to answer this question because it brings to light the beauty of discipleship and how in every generation since Jesus, there have been Christians filled with the Holy Spirit and operating in the power of God! Here is just a brief outline of the church’s interaction with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the last 2,000 years; (1) *The Apostolic Church (33-100 AD)*: The church of the first disciples operated in the gifts of the Spirit as a norm as seen in the book of Acts, (2) *The Ante-Nicene Church (100-325 AD)*: The church before the Council of Nicaea, reported, “women and men who possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” as noted by Justin Martyr.

(3) *The Roman Catholic & Orthodox Churches (325-1517 AD)*: The churches that unified most of the churches for 1,000 years reported amazing miracles by their missionaries, monks and leaders, (4) *The Reformed Church (1517-1900’s)*: The Protestants that broke away from the Church of Rome which had many groups such as the Huguenots, Quakers and the Moravians who operated in the gifts of the Spirit.

(5) *The Spirit-Filled Church (1900’s-Present Day)*: The largest group of Protestant Christians today, numbering over 600 million and have the largest churches in the world, over half of which (around 300 million) have

testified to seeing the miraculous. We are continually receiving reports of signs and wonders from places such as Africa, India, China, Latin America and all throughout the U.S.

Not only is it clear that in “Bible Times” the gifts were active, but also it is just as obvious in “Present Times” that the Holy Spirit is still giving His gifts to whomever the Lord our God will call!

REFLECTION

Do you believe God is still doing the miraculous today?

ACTION

1. Describe a time you witnessed a spiritual gift in action.
2. Ask the Lord to use you like He used the Spirit-filled disciples throughout history!
3. For further study read, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, by Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt.

DAY 29: DON'T GRIEVE THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

Some people in the church forget that the Holy Spirit is just as much of a person as the Father and the Son are. Unfortunately, Christians can sometimes treat the Holy Spirit like He is an "it" or just a "force" rather than a fully divine person. However, the Bible is very clear that the Holy Spirit is not just a "force" but He is a unique person that possesses a mind, will and emotions; and shares the attributes of God (all-knowing, all-powerful, etc.), equally with the Father and the Son.

The Bible teaches us that God is three separate persons, that share one divine being; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This doesn't mean that the Father is 1/3 of God, the Son is 1/3 and the Holy Spirit is 1/3, like three pieces of a pie that together form one "whole God." But rather the Scriptures teach that each person of the God nature is 100% divine and that together they are the one being in the Bible known as "Yahweh or Lord" (Isaiah 45:5).

The Holy Spirit is worthy of the same respect and honor that we give the Father and the Son. He is to be worshipped and adored because He is literally God in us. To love the Holy Spirit is to love the Father and the Son because He is their representative on earth and in the church.

In today's passage, Paul warns us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" because He is our seal until the Day of Redemption (the day when Jesus comes back and gives us our resurrected bodies). Grieve means to "cause sorrow." We grieve the Holy Spirit when we don't follow His guidance. Likewise, along with grieving the Holy Spirit, we're told not to blaspheme Him because it is a sin that cannot be forgiven (Mark 3:29). It is an "eternal sin" because you cannot be saved while believing something false about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who is active in convicting you of sin, birthing a new spirit inside of you and guiding you in

the ways of God (John 3:3-8). In other words, if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit by rejecting Him, you have no hope of being saved.

Lester Sumrall wrote, “You can stop God and grieve the Holy Spirit at any time. You are not under bondage to the Holy Spirit. You work with Him and flow with Him because you want to. You have to keep flowing in the Spirit if you expect the gifts to operate in and through you.” Mark reported once, “*5 He [Jesus] could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith*” (Mark 6:5-6). Therefore, it’s important to honor and love the Holy Spirit, just like you honor and love the Father and the Son. Avoid grieving the Holy Spirit, by asking Him to increase your faith and convict you of your sins.

When you keep in step with the Holy Spirit, you honor God the Father by living like Jesus. Especially when it comes to spiritual gifts, you shouldn’t deny the Holy Spirit His place to move nor try operating in His gifts out of selfish ambition. Be reminded of what Paul wrote in Romans 8:14, “*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*” Don’t grieve the Holy Spirit, but rather be led by the Holy Spirit!

REFLECTION

Do you honor the Holy Spirit like you do the Father and the Son?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have ever grieved the Holy Spirit.
2. Develop a close relationship with the Holy Spirit and ask Him to lead you in life.
3. Remind and teach other Christians that the Holy Spirit is a fully divine person.

DAY 30: THE ANOINTING

Luke 4:18, *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.”*

In the Old Testament, Moses was commanded by God to anoint the priests for service in the Tabernacle by pouring oil over their heads and letting it run down their beards and their robes (Exodus 28:41 & 29:7). The word “anoint” means to “cover or to smear.” Moses was commanded to cover the priests with oil as a sign to the people that the priests were set apart for the work of the ministry. God’s reason behind covering the priests with oil was because He was giving them a physical sign of how His Spirit was going to be upon them and give them the ability to minister in the Tabernacle.

When Jesus came, He was called both the Christ and the Messiah. “Christ” is Greek and “Messiah” is Hebrew, but both words mean the same thing, “The Anointed One.” Therefore, Jesus was the Anointed One sent by God to do great works. The Jewish people had been waiting a long time for the Anointed One to come and display God’s power upon the earth and establish His kingdom. In today’s passage, Jesus quoted the prophecy of Isaiah 61 concerning the Messiah and boldly declared that He was the One they were waiting for!

In the passage found in Isaiah 61:1-3, God said that the Messiah will be anointed to do the following five things; (1) Preach the gospel to the poor, (2) Heal the broken hearted, (3) Bring freedom to the captives, (4) Release the prisoners and (5) Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Praise God because that is exactly what Jesus did for three and a half years during His earthly ministry.

Remember, Jesus was empowered to do miracles because He was baptized in the Holy Spirit at His water baptism (Luke 3:22). The Holy Spirit came in bodily form like a dove and rested on Him in the presence of everyone. From that point forward, Jesus was not only anointed, but He was the Anointed One, meaning He could give God’s power to His followers. After Jesus’ resurrection, He gave the disciples the Holy Spirit so they could be anointed like Him (Acts 1:8).

The same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus in the form of a dove came and anointed the disciples in the form of fire. Today all Spirit-

baptized disciples have the same anointing of God flowing through them to do what Jesus did.

Now you are commanded to go out and do the same things Jesus did. Jesus said in John 14:12-14, *“12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

Lester Sumrall wrote, “In our generation we can do the same works as Moses, as David, as Daniel— and as Jesus. Why? Because we have the same power of God and the same anointing of the Holy Spirit motivating us that motivated them!”

REFLECTION

Do you believe that the same anointing that was upon Jesus by the Holy Spirit is upon you?

ACTION

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to anoint and cover you with His power for service.
2. Walk, talk and be filled like Jesus.
3. Wherever you go in life believe you are anointed by God to do great things in Jesus’ name!

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