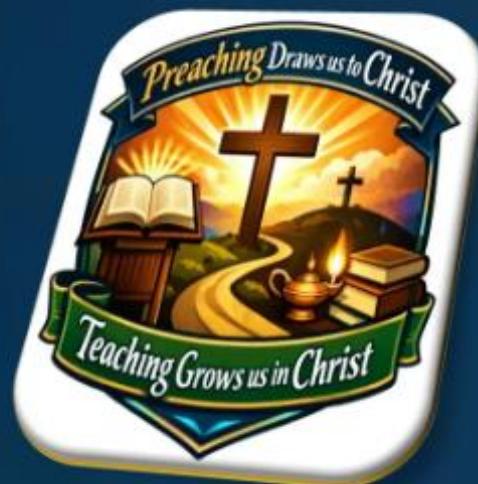


WELCOME TO  
*Wednesday in the Word*  
**BIBLE STUDY**



MEET US IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM AT 7:00PM



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# UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**S**piritual gifts are a necessity in the ministry of every body of believers. All of us, as Christ followers should be working together to strengthen the body, to produce unity, to be lights shining in the darkness, and to bring glory to God. This is done through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, through the gifts that He gives us.

As the preacher A. W. Tozer wrote, “These are not natural talents merely, but gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit to fit the believer for his place in the body of Christ. They are like pipes on a great organ, permitting the musician wide scope and ranged to produce music of the finest quality. But they are, I repeat, more than talents. They are spiritual gifts.”<sup>\*</sup>

Unfortunately, many Christians seem to be unaware of the gifts of the Spirit—what they are, how they are received, or how they are to be used.

In the next six weeks of study you will learn the answers to these questions and more. As you discover a fuller vision for how God intends spiritual gifts to work within the church, your study of this subject will prepare you to tap into God’s agenda and play an active role in His ministry, not only to the body of Christ but possibly even to the rest of the world.

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<sup>\*</sup> A.W. Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 44.

## WEEK ONE

Sometimes the subject of spiritual gifts seems so confusing it can be hard to even know where to start the discussion. There are so many questions. Who has a spiritual gift? All of us? Or are they for super-spiritual people only?

To get the answers, we're going to go straight to the gift giver Himself and let Him explain the gifts. As you read for yourself the straightforward truths of the Bible, we believe you'll find the subject is not nearly as complicated a subject as you may have thought.

First, we'll consider these two questions: what kind of gifts are there, and who qualifies to receive one?

### OBSERVE

Jesus prepared Peter for the world's tribulation; then Peter was to prepare others. So the apostle wrote a letter to the "chosen," the believers scattered throughout Asia during the intense persecution of their day, to encourage them and instruct them in how to live according to God's will (1 Peter 1:2; 4:2).

*Leader: Read 1 Peter 4:10–11 aloud. Have the group say aloud and ...*

- draw a box around each reference to **a gift**, including the pronoun **it**:
- underline the phrase **each one**, which refers here to **believers**.

*As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every*

*occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.*

### INSIGHT

One way to better understand what the text is saying is by asking the “5 Ws and an H” questions—*who, what, when, where, why*, and *how*—about the passage. By asking these questions, you slow down and actually see what the writer is saying.

### DISCUSS

- **Who** receives a gift?
- **What** is this passage about?
- **What** are believers to do with the gift they have been given?
- **How** are they to use what they've received?
- Is the gift to be used for one's personal benefit? Explain your answer.
- **What** two categories did Peter divide the gifts into?
- **What** are those who speak supposed to speak?
- **How** are those who serve to carry out their role?
- **Why** are we to use our gifts in the way described? Look carefully at the end of verse 11 if you need a hint.
- Now let's evaluate what you just read and see how it applies to you. Looking at your experience serving in the church and your desire to do so, which category better describes the way God has equipped you: serving or speaking?
- What have others said to you that confirms this?

## INSIGHT

A *spiritual gift* is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified. Each believer has at least one spiritual gift, no matter what his or her natural abilities.

## 1 PETER 4:10–11

<sup>10</sup>As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

<sup>11</sup> Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

## OBSERVE

The early church experienced growing pains that alerted the apostles to the impossibility of doing all the work themselves.

*Leader: Read Acts 6:1–6 aloud. Have the group ...*

- *circle the words **serving** and **serve**.*
- *draw a box around each reference to **the word**.*

## DISCUSS

- What complaint had arisen within the congregation?
- How did the twelve respond, according to verse 2? What does this tell you about their understanding of their gifts?
- What type of gifts did the twelve have?
- What category of gifts was needed to resolve the conflict?
- Many people today believe the pastoral staff should take care of all the work related to the life of the church. From what you saw in this passage, is this true? Explain your answer.
- How does this relate to what you read in 1 Peter?

### ACTS 6:1–6

<sup>1</sup> Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

<sup>2</sup> So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

<sup>3</sup> “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

<sup>4</sup> “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

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## OBSERVE

In the first three chapters of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul described the awesome reality of our salvation. In chapter 3 he specifically wrote about the fact that faith in Christ brings unity to radically different people groups, such as the Jews and the Gentiles. Writing in light of these things, he opened with the word *therefore* in Ephesians 4:1.

**Leader:** Read Ephesians 4:1–6 aloud. Have the group say and ...

- mark references to **unity**, including the word *one*, with a semicircle, like this: 
- draw a stick figure over the word *body*, like this: 

## DISCUSS

- List the behaviors and characteristics Paul instructed the believers to display in verses 1–2.
- According to verse 3, why are we to behave this way?
- What did you learn from marking *one* in verses 4–6?

- How does this apply to our discussion of spiritual gifts?

### EPHESIANS 4:1–6

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

### OBSERVE

Paul moved from describing what all believers have in common to detailing how they differ from one another. Let's look at what he identified as areas of individuality within the unity of the Spirit.

*Leader: Read Ephesians 4:7–8 and 11–16 aloud. Have the group say and ...*

- draw a box around the words *given, gave, and gifts.*
- mark every reference to *the body* with a stick figure.

**Leader:** Read the passage again. This time have the group.

- say aloud and mark each reference to **Christ**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a cross: 

## DISCUSS

- According to verses 7 and 8, who gave what to whom?
- When did this happen?
- Make a list of the gifts mentioned in verse 11.
- Were all of the gifts given to everyone? Explain your answer.
- Which category of gifts would these fit into: speaking or serving?
- What is the purpose of these gifts, according to verse 12?
- How long are the gifts needed?
- Ultimately, what are we to look like as we walk in the gifts we have received?
- According to verse 16, how are these gifts tied to the health of the church?

## INSIGHT

*Apostle*—one sent forth with a message.

*Prophet*—one with the God-given ability to speak forth a message from God's Word that edifies, exhorts, and/or comforts the body.

*Evangelist*—a messenger of the good news; one who shares the gospel clearly that others may come to faith in Jesus.

*Pastors and teachers* care for and teach local congregations.

*Pastor*—a shepherd; one who feeds, tends, protects the flock

*Teacher*—an instructor who teaches the truth of the Word in a clear and understandable way

### EPHESIANS 4:7–8, 11–16

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8 Therefore it says, "When He [Jesus] ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."...

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

<sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

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## WRAP IT UP

While we will spend the next five weeks studying the topic of spiritual gifts in greater depth, the simple truth from this week's lesson is that you are gifted by God.

As we've clearly seen, "each one has received a *special* gift ..." (1 Peter 4:10). This means that, if you are a follower of Christ, then you have been gifted by God to serve the body of Christ, the church.

That knowledge should be a tremendous encouragement to you. What an incredible privilege!

We also saw this week that, broadly speaking, the spiritual gifts given to believers fall into two categories: serving and speaking. Neither category is more important than the other, because all the gifts are intended to equip the saints and build up the body. Every gift is important.

If you don't already know what your spiritual gift is, spend some time this week reflecting on the ways you're already involved in meeting the needs of others or in fulfilling a particular role within the church. Most people are naturally drawn to areas of ministry that fit their gifting, so this may help give you some insight.

If you're *not* actively involved in your church in some way, we encourage you to consider why that is. If you are follower of Christ, He has equipped you and called you to take an active role in His work. Will you prove worthy of His calling?

## WEEK TWO

We learned last week that spiritual gifts fall into two general categories: speaking and serving. But where do these gifts come from and when did this expression of the Holy Spirit start? What can a person do to acquire these gifts?

This week we will answer these questions and continue to look at the purpose of spiritual gifts.

### **OBSERVE**

Acts 1:9 records Jesus' ascension, an event mentioned in Ephesians 4:8, which we looked at last week. In writing the book of Acts, Luke focused his attention on the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the power the disciples would receive at the Spirit's arrival. This event marked the beginning of the church. The role of the Holy Spirit in the growth and development of the young Christian church is a theme throughout the book of Acts.

In the passage we're about to read, the word *they* in verse 1 refers to the disciples.

**Leader:** Read Acts 2:1–13 aloud. Have the group do the following:

- draw a cloud shape like this  around each mention of **the Holy Spirit** or **the Spirit**.
- mark a big **D** over each occurrence of the pronouns **they**, **themselves**, and **them**, which refer to **the disciples** in this passage.
- underline each occurrence of the words **speak**, **speaking**, and **utterance**.

## DISCUSS

- Keeping in mind the “five Ws and an H,” discuss the events described in this passage.
- **When** did this take place?
- **What** happened in verses 2–4, when they were all together?
- **How** does this relate to what we saw last week in Ephesians 4:8?
- **Who** was present when this happened? In other words, what groups of people witnessed the event?
- **How** did they hear the disciples’ message, according to verse 11? **What** did they hear?
- **What** was the response of these witnesses?
- **What** were they asking in verse 12?
- The word *but* in verse 13 indicates a contrast. What is the contrast?

### ACTS 2:1–13

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

<sup>3</sup> And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

<sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

8 “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

9 “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

13 But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”

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## OBSERVE

In response to the confusion of the crowd, Peter explained that they were

witnessing the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

**Leader:** Read Acts 2:14–21 aloud. Have the group do the following:

- mark every reference to **Peter**, including pronouns, with a big **P**.
- draw a cloud around each occurrence of the phrase **My Spirit**.
- underline **this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel**.

## DISCUSS

- What kinds of gifts were evident as Peter responded to the Jews in Jerusalem? Were they speaking gifts or serving gifts?
- How did Peter respond to the accusation that these men were drunk?
- According to verse 18, what was happening?
- What is the proof of the Holy Spirit's presence in this passage?
- Who was Peter quoting?
- Keeping in mind the two categories of gifts we saw last week, what category does Peter's gift fall into: serving or speaking?

### ACTS 2:14–18

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

<sup>15</sup> “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;

<sup>16</sup> but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

18 Even on My bond-slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.

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## OBSERVE

By way of reminder, let's look at Ephesians 4:8 again. The *He* mentioned here refers to Jesus.

*Leader: Read Ephesians 4:8 aloud.*

- *Have the group say aloud and draw a box around the word **gifts**.*

## DISCUSS

- What did Jesus give to men?
- When did He do it?

### EPHESIANS 4:8

Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

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## OBSERVE

Joel had prophesied that one day the Spirit would come. Jesus Himself had promised to fulfill the prophecy by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people.

*Leader: Read John 16:7 and Acts 2:33 aloud. Have the group say and ...*

- *mark with a cross the pronouns **I** and **He**, which refer to **Jesus** in these verses.*
- *draw a cloud around every reference to **the Holy Spirit**, including the synonym **Helper** and the pronoun **Him**.*

## DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to Jesus?
- What did you learn from marking references to the Holy Spirit?

### JOHN 16:7

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

### ACTS 2:33

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

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## OBSERVE

The Holy Spirit used Peter's sermon to convict those listening of their part in Christ's death.

*Leader: Read Acts 2:37–43 aloud. Have the group.*

- mark **Holy Spirit** with a cloud.
- underline the phrases **with many other words** and **his words**.

## DISCUSS

- What question did those listening ask Peter when they recognized their sin?
- How did Peter respond?
- What action(s) did Peter link to the gift of the Holy Spirit?
- Last week we looked at the following gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Peter was an apostle; what other gift or gifts do we see in him?
- Are these speaking gifts or serving gifts?

### ACTS 2:37–43

<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>39</sup> “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

<sup>40</sup> And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

<sup>41</sup> So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

<sup>42</sup> They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

<sup>43</sup> Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

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## WRAP IT UP

The gift of the Holy Spirit was given initially by God at the feast called Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples of Jesus, and their lives were radically changed. They could not help themselves. They were overcome by the power and presence of the Lord. As a result they proclaimed the “mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:11).

The first outpouring of the Spirit and the first expression of the gifts He gives centered on proclaiming the excellencies of God. The focus of the gift was God. This is vital to keep in mind as we explore the topic of spiritual gifts and their purpose. One mistake some Christians make is turning the focus of spiritual gifts toward ourselves. We get excited about *our* gift and the ways *we* can exercise it, forgetting that the gift is a working of the Holy Spirit in our lives for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

Are you using your gifting to glorify God? Are you always seeking to be sure that God is glorified by your life and your ministry, or are you drawing attention to yourself? Sometimes it’s inevitable that we receive some attention as we serve, but we should always seek to redirect that attention to God.

Take a few minutes and examine the ways you seek to make a difference in your local church and elsewhere. Who is getting the glory?

## WEEK THREE

The believers at Corinth were not really all that different from believers today. They had a lot of questions about spiritual gifts and how the gifts were to operate in the church. Paul's answers to them serve as clear instructions to us, so that's where we'll focus much of our study this week.

### OBSERVE

*Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1 aloud.*

- *Have the group say aloud and draw a box around the word **gifts**.*

### DISCUSS

- What was Paul's concern in this verse?

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

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### OBSERVE

*Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–7 aloud. Have the group say and...*

- *circle each occurrence of the word **varieties**.*

- draw a box around the word *gifts*.
- underline the phrase each one.

## DISCUSS

- Three times we see the phrase *there are varieties of*. What are these three things that come in different varieties?
- According to verse 4 are all gifts the same?
- Will everyone have the same gift?
- Are the gifts earned or achieved, according to verse 7? Explain your answer.
- Who gives the gifts and for what purpose?
- According to verse 5, will everyone have the same ministry?
- Who gives or directs these ministries?
- Will everyone have the same results?
- According to verse 6, who is responsible for the ministry results?
- How would your approach to ministry be affected by knowing who determines the results?
- Verse 7 begins with the word but, which shows a contrast is being made. How does verse 7 relate to verse 6?
- Who is given a spiritual gift, according to verse 7?
- How does verse 7 define a spiritual gift?

## INSIGHT

The Greek word used in this passage for *gifts* is *charisma*, which means “a gift of grace, a spiritual endowment.”

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:4–7**

**4** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

**5** And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

**6** There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

**7** But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

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**OBSERVE**

At one point in his ministry, Paul noted that the Holy Spirit warned him that “bonds and afflictions” lay ahead. Let’s see what compelled him to continue on despite the danger.

**Leader:** Read Acts 20:24 aloud.

- *Have the group say and mark the word **ministry** with a big M.*

**DISCUSS**

- Where did Paul say his ministry came from?
- What did he say his ministry was?
- How does this compare to what you saw in 1 Corinthians 12:5?

**ACTS 20:24**

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

**OBSERVE**

Let's return to 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul continued talking to believers who are given different gifts, have different ministries, and through whom God is still working different effects. The word *for* in verse 8 makes clear that what follows is a further explanation of the preceding verses, 1 Corinthians 12:1–7.

*Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 aloud. Have the group ...*

- double underline the phrases **to one, to another, and to each one.**
- draw a cloud around each reference to ***the Spirit:*** 

*Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 again.*

- This time number each of ***the spiritual gifts*** listed. We have numbered the first two for you.

**DISCUSS**

- List the nine gifts noted in this passage.

- Are all believers given the same gift?
- What did you learn from marking references to the Spirit?
- According to verse 11 how does He distribute the gifts?
- What happens when someone tries to be just like someone else in gifting and ministry?
- Can you ask for or earn certain gifts? Explain your answer.

## INSIGHT

*Word of wisdom*—a clear insight into the true nature of things so that application can be made from that clear insight.

*Word of knowledge*—a seeking to know, investigation, an inquiry of God's revelation and truth; communication of knowledge.

*Faith*—an unusual measure of trust in God. This is more than the faith all must have for salvation.

*Gifts of healings*—ability to restore health.

*Effectings of miracles*—workings of supernatural acts that can only be explained as being of God.

*Prophecy*—ability to speak forth a message from God's Word that edifies, exhorts, and/or comforts the body.

*Distinguishing of spirits*—the supernatural ability to distinguish between spirits

*Kinds of tongues*—supernatural ability to speak an unlearned language

*Interpretation of tongues*—a supernatural ability to translate an unlearned known language

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-11

<sup>8</sup> For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

<sup>10</sup> and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

<sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

## OBSERVE

*Leader: Read 1 Corinthians 12:28–31 aloud.*

- *Have the group say aloud and mark each occurrence of the word **all** with a big A.*

## DISCUSS

- List what God has appointed in the church.
- How would you respond to someone who was teaching that we must all have the same gifts or that a particular gift must be present in one's life as a sign of true faith?
- From what you have seen, who is responsible to assign spiritual gifts?

### INSIGHT

In verse 31 Paul was instructing the whole church, not specific individual believers.

- Does verse 31 contradict what Paul has been teaching up to this point? Explain your answer.
- What have you learned this week about spiritual gifts?
- As you consider the gifts you saw described in this lesson, do you believe any are present in your own life? Explain what evidence leads you to that conclusion.

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:28–31**

**28** And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

**29** All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

**30** All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

**31** But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

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## WRAP IT UP

The implications of this week's study are truly freeing. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts as He wills. We are not responsible to earn them, nor are we invited to pick and choose our favorite. There is no need to worry about whether or not we have the right one, the best one. The Holy Spirit in His sovereign will assigned us our gift, or gifts, at His discretion so that each one of us can fulfill God's unique purpose for our lives.

The Lord Jesus Christ gives us ministries as He wills. We are not responsible to find our own and hope we have the right one, the best one. It is completely up to Him. We receive our appointed ministry at His discretion; we do not achieve a ministry by our own work or skill. The Lord assigns each ministry, and we receive it from His hand. We are not even responsible for the results! It is God who accomplishes His purpose through us and determines the outcome of our ministry efforts.

The creator God does not need us at all, but in His grace and mercy He chooses to use us to accomplish ministry in His church. In a sense He allows us through our gifts and our ministries to become co-laborers with Him in this world. What amazing grace!

We are not to seek "greater" gifts; we seek the gift giver.

We are not to seek the greater ministries; we seek the minister of ministries, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not even to seek after great results; we seek to give glory to the One who provides the results.

Pursue hard after God. He will show you your gift, your place of service, and He will even provide the results. So seek your joy in God; He will accomplish the rest.

## WEEK FOUR

It surprises some people to discover that spiritual gifts—a distinctly New Testament phenomenon that manifests the presence of the Holy Spirit—are only discussed in four different passages in the Bible. This week we will look at Paul’s teaching on gifts in his letter to the church in Rome.

### OBSERVE

Paul’s letter to the Romans is divided into two sections: chapters 1–11 tell us what God has done to bring about salvation, and chapters 12–16 show how we are to live once we have experienced salvation. Let’s look at the first two verses of chapter 12, which provide the transition from the doctrinal passages into the section on practical living.

***Leader: Read Romans 12:1–2 aloud.***

- *Have the group say aloud and circle each occurrence of the words **brethren, you, and your.***

### DISCUSS

- To whom was Paul speaking?
- What are believers called to do?
- How are we to do that, and what is to be our motivation?
- In verse 2 the will of God is described as “good and acceptable and perfect.” What did Paul say is required for one to discern, or be sure of, the will of God?
- How might this relate to spiritual gifts?

**ROMANS 12:1–2**

**1** Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

**2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

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**OBSERVE**

*Leader: Read Romans 12:3–8 aloud. Have the group ...*

- *draw a box around the words **given** and **gifts**.*
- *number each **gift** listed in the text.*

**DISCUSS**

- Do all believers have the same gifts?
- What do verses 6–8 say about spiritual gifts and how each is to be used?
- Is it enough to know what your gifts are? Explain your answer.
- If your ministry is dictated by your gifts and God directs the area of service, should you feel pride in your ministry or gifting? Explain your answer.
- How would identifying your spiritual gift(s) enable you to more effectively serve your church?

- Do you believe you have any of the gifts mentioned in this passage? If so, which one(s) and why?
- Have you ever tried to serve outside your area of giftedness? If so, what happened? Share your story with the group.
- Before we leave Romans 12, let us just ask, have you submitted yourself to the Lord by presenting yourself as a living sacrifice?

## INSIGHT

*Service*—to attend to, serve, aid, minister to

*Teaching*—to instruct, teach the truth of the Word in a clear and understandable way

*Exhortation*—literally, “appeal, comfort, encouragement, urging.”

*Giving*—to give over, share; impart

*Leadership*—literally, “to stand before;” the God-given ability to lead others so that they follow the Lord.

*Mercy*—to demonstrate compassion; to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially sympathy manifested in action; to extend help

## ROMANS 12:3–8

<sup>3</sup> For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

<sup>4</sup> For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

<sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

<sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

<sup>7</sup> if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

<sup>8</sup> or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

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## OBSERVE

We studied this next passage in an earlier lesson. However, let's take another look to see which specific gifts are evident.

***Leader: Read Acts 6:1–6 aloud. Have the group.***

- mark **serving** and **serve** with a big **S**.

- draw a squiggly line under the phrases **word of God** and **ministry of the word**, like this: 

## DISCUSS

- We have seen that gifts can be divided into two broad categories: speaking and serving. How do you see these categories exhibited in this passage?
- What gifts seem to be evident in this passage?

### ACTS 6:1–6

<sup>1</sup> Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

<sup>2</sup> So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

<sup>3</sup> “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

<sup>4</sup> “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

<sup>5</sup> The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and

Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

**6** And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

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## OBSERVE

Let's spend the rest of our time this week looking at an example from Scripture of one of the gifts in action.

**Leader:** *Read Acts 4:36–37 aloud.*

- *Have the group say aloud and mark each reference to **Barnabas**, including the name **Joseph** and the pronoun **who**, with a big **B**.*

## DISCUSS

- What was the meaning of the nickname the apostles gave Joseph?
- What spiritual gift or gifts do you think Barnabas had? Explain your answer.

### ACTS 4:36–37

**36** Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

**37** and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

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## OBSERVE

The man named Saul in this next passage later became known by his Greek name, Paul, the apostle.

**Leader:** Read Acts 9:22, 26–28 aloud.

- *Have the group say and mark **Barnabas** with a B.*

## DISCUSS

- Discuss how Barnabas exercised a gift of exhortation in this passage. (If necessary, look back for a reminder of what it means to exhort.)
- What difference did Barnabas make in the life and ministry of Paul by putting his spiritual gift into practice?

### ACTS 9:22, 26–28

22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ....

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that

He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

<sup>28</sup> And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

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## OBSERVE

**Leader:** Read Acts 15:36–39 aloud.

- *Have the group say and mark **Barnabas** with a B.*

## DISCUSS

- How did Barnabas exercise the gift of exhortation in this passage?
- What difference do you imagine the encouragement from Barnabas would have made in Mark's life?
- How have you seen this gift put to work by someone in your church or ministry? Share an example with the group.

### ACTS 15:36–39

<sup>36</sup> After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”

<sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

<sup>38</sup> But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

<sup>39</sup> And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

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## WRAP IT UP

It is no accident that in Paul's letter to the Romans the discussion of spiritual gifts follows the call to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. That act of surrender provides the basis for understanding God's good and acceptable and perfect will for how we are to carry out our giftedness and purpose in the body of Christ. Unless we are totally surrendered to the will of God, we will never be effective in carrying out the work He has planned for us.

Are you wondering how God has gifted you for ministry in the body of Christ? The first step is total surrender to His will and death to your own. God normally reveals His will when we have already committed to obey it. When you say to the Lord, "Whatever you have called me to do or be, Your will be done in my life," it is then, at the moment of surrender, that He moves to reveal His gift in you, and His ministry through you.

When you have surrendered your life as a "spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1), you are not swayed off course by the opinions or criticisms of others. Barnabas serves as a powerful example of faithful perseverance in the face of opposition. When the other believers refused to accept Paul after he declared his faith in Jesus, Barnabas came alongside him and stood with Paul against popular opinion. Later, when Paul became upset with John Mark and wanted to leave him behind, Barnabas stood with the young disciple against his old friend Paul. It is clear he exercised his gift in surrender to God, not subject to the influence of others.

What about you, friend? Are you seeking to exercise your spiritual gift in your way and your time? If so, you will never be effective. The first step is accepting the will of God for your life, and then walking in the gift and ministry He reveals. The results you'll see will come directly from Him.

Have you presented your body as a living sacrifice?