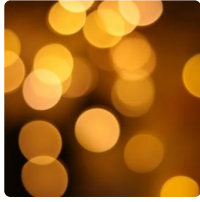


# OpenTheo

## Intro to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Part 1)



### **Charisma and Character** - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg gives an introduction to the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this talk. He discusses the language of Scripture around gifts, emphasizing that charisma means "gift of grace." Gregg references Paul's list in Corinthians and mentions that diversities of gifts, differences in ministries, and diversities of activities are not necessarily an exhaustive list. Gregg also urges listeners to appreciate these gifts, explaining that they are crucial for the well-being of the body of Christ.

### **Transcript**

This is the third in our series that we're calling Charisma and Character, the normative work of the Holy Spirit. Charisma and Character are two categories that I think really summarize basically what the Holy Spirit is supposed to be doing in the life of the church. Charisma speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Charisma is the Greek word for the gift. The plural is charismata, and so the term charismatic would be a Christian who believes in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are non-charismatics who do not believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit for today.

They do believe in the miraculous, and they do believe that God did have gifts of the Spirit in former times, but they don't believe they're present today. And there are people who believe that some of the gifts are still with us and some have passed. But the charismata, the Greek word is the gifts, and charisma is the singular.

And character, the other part of the title of this series, has to do with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and gentleness and meekness and self-control and patience. And these things really are a description of character, Christ's character, to be formed in us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

So there's really two things that the Bible emphasizes as the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. One is for power and the other for holiness. The gifts for power and service, the fruit for holiness of character.

Not necessarily in that order. As a matter of fact, I believe both the gifts and the fruit of

the Spirit are important. But if I were forced, and I would not wish to be, but if I were forced to live with one or the other, I think I would probably have to ask for the fruit.

Because the fruit of the Spirit makes you like Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is character. The fruit of the Spirit is stuff that is forever.

Paul, after talking about the gifts for a little while in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, he said, prophecies, they're going to fail. Tongues are going to cease. Knowledge is going to vanish away.

The gifts are temporary. But he said, these things abide, faith and hope and love. These things fall more in the category of fruit.

And so the things that are eternally going to be ours for benefit are the fruit and the character that God works in us in our lifetime. So, as I said, I wouldn't wish to be without either fruit or gifts. But I think if anything, the character is perhaps, I hesitate to say this, more important, because actually a church that has a lot of character but no power isn't worth an awful lot either.

I don't really hope that we would ever have to take our pick between the two. There's no reason in the world why we shouldn't have both. Tonight, I'm going to just sort of introduce from all the major passages of Scripture, what the Bible says about the gifts collectively.

In the series, as it goes along, we're going to take gifts individually and then eventually the fruit of the Spirit. After we finish talking about the gifts, we're going to talk about the fruit. I don't know how many weeks we'll be doing this.

It'll take us a while. But next week, if we finish tonight what I hope to finish tonight, and my students here know that that's not always, it certainly is not a given that I will finish what I intend to finish. It may be that we'll take two weeks on what I'm hoping to do in one night.

But whenever I'm finished giving this overview of the gifts collectively, I'm going to talk about the gift of tongues and interpretation. That'll be the first thing we'll discuss. Partly because it's one of the most controversial.

We'll talk about prophecy after that and then we'll end up talking about all the gifts and all the fruit eventually. Now, that doesn't mean we'll have a separate talk on each one because that would take us until next June or later to finish the series and we don't really want to take that much time on it. Let me just introduce you first of all to the language of Scripture on the gifts.

There are four words in the Greek New Testament that are associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. By far the most common is the word charisma, which I already

mentioned. Charisma is derived from the word charis, which is the ordinary Greek word for grace.

It's just the word throughout the New Testament that is used, it means grace, charis. And when you add the particle, the suffix ma at the end, it means the product of or the result of. So really, a charisma is the result of grace or we've come to call it a gift of grace.

It is by nature the result of grace will be a gift because grace is generosity. Grace is God's unmerited favor bestowed in tokens, many times tangible and spiritual tokens as well. And when God bestows grace, the result of that is that you receive something and what you receive you got for free because it's grace and therefore what you got is a gift.

And so the word gift is the most common translation in the Bible. In fact, I think the word charisma is always translated as gift. The word is used only by Paul in his epistles, except for one exception, Peter uses it one time.

Apart from that, it's found only in Romans and 1 Corinthians, numerous times in each of those books and then one time in 2 Corinthians and once each in the two epistles to Timothy. After that, it's found only in one non-Pauline epistle. It's found in 1 Peter 4.10. We will have opportunity in the course of our series to look at most of these, the more important cases.

But charisma is the most common New Testament word for gifts and it does not always have to refer specifically to what we in our parlance call the gifts of the Spirit. You know, the expression gifts of the Spirit or spiritual gifts, these terms have been used a great deal in modern Christian circles and they're good terms. They're found in our Bible, but they're not really found that often in Scripture.

More often, just simply the unmodified word gift is used or gifts. And this word charisma doesn't only refer to these supernatural endowments. It is, for example, used in some very well-known scriptures about gifts, as, for example, Romans 6.23, which many of you certainly must know.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. The word gift, there's charisma. The charisma of God is eternal life.

And Paul says to the Romans in Romans 1.11, he says, I have desired for a long time to come visit you that I might impart some spiritual gift to you. It could be that he's referring to the spiritual gifts. He used the word charisma there.

But he might also be simply referring to some spiritual benefit to the church, some result of the grace of God working through him in the church. We don't know. The word is somewhat flexible.

And, in fact, there's even one case in Scripture, 2 Corinthians 1.11, where the word

charisma refers to God's deliverance of Paul from a deadly situation, a life-threatening situation. He was delivered, and he calls that deliverance a charisma from God. It's a result of God's grace.

God has graciously delivered him. So we should not think that the word charisma always must refer to endowments and abilities, but most frequently it does. It does when Peter uses it the one time, and it does one of the times in Romans and virtually all the times in 1 Corinthians that it's used.

So it's the most common word for what we're talking about, the gifts of the Spirit, charisma. The second term I want to acquaint you with is not as frequently used, but it's fairly frequent, and it's doria. Doria.

Not all of you are taking notes, but if you want to write that down, that's D-O-R-E-A, with the accent on the last letter. Doria. That word simply means a gift, and it is used three times in the book of Acts in this connection, in this phrase, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now, of course, in that case it's not talking about what we call the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the gift of the Holy Spirit. In each case, it's referring to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One of those times is in Acts 1.38, where Peter is asked by the people, what shall we do? And he says, well, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And twice more in Acts, the same expression, the gift of the Holy Spirit is used. And it's not talking about the gifts, plural, but the Holy Spirit himself is the gift in this case. Jesus used this same word in Matthew and Luke.

Actually, the passage in Matthew and the one in Luke are parallel to each other. The one in Matthew is Matthew 7.14, and the one in Luke is Luke 11.13. But Jesus said, if you earthly fathers being evil know how to give good gifts to your children. And from that point, Matthew and Luke render a little differently.

Matthew says, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him? But in Luke it says, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Well, the word gift there, you fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, is doria. And that is, you know, if you fathers know how to give good doria to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit? Again, the gift of the Holy Spirit is what is here implied by this word, but not always. There are two times in Ephesians that Paul uses the word doria, modified by of grace, the gift of grace.

Now, as you know, I mean, I said a moment ago, the word charisma means gift of grace. But the word doria is twice modified by the phrase of grace, the gift of grace, according to the gift of grace given to me. And that's in Ephesians 3.7 and Ephesians 4.7. But there

it's quite clear that doria is somewhat interchangeable in its concept with charisma.

In fact, it is used interchangeably with charisma in one place. Just so we'll know that we're talking about the same thing. See, when we look at several passages in a few moments, all of them will have the word gift or gifts in them, but they won't always be the same Greek words.

And I want to make sure that we're not doing something illegitimate here by speaking of each of these as the same thing when it's different Greek words. I want to make it clear to you that these are interchangeable words. In Romans chapter five, we have a case where both charisma and doria are used interchangeably.

And in neither case are they talking about what we call the gifts of the spirit. They're talking about actually salvation as a gift to us. In Romans 5 verses 15 through 17, Paul is comparing and contrasting Adam with Christ and the effect each of them had on the people that were in them.

And in verse 15 of Romans 5, he says, Verse 16, Verse 17, Now in the English version, we just run into the word gift five times and always used in the same sense. I mean, there's no reason to believe there's some subtle difference between the meaning of gift in these different places. And yet, twice it's the word charisma, three times it's the word doria.

And what we see there is that Paul simply uses these words interchangeably. Therefore, we should be aware if we find the word doria, that it doesn't necessarily have to be distinct in meaning from a charisma. Although it may be, it can be interchangeable.

A few other words, I said there were four. Actually, there's altogether five. There's one that's only used in one case of use to us.

Doma, D-O-M-A, is a Greek word that's used in Ephesians 4, verse 8, which says, This is actually a quote from a psalm that Paul gives, but he's referring to Jesus ascending and giving gifts to the church. And Paul goes on from there and says, These are gifts of the Spirit, and the word doma is used there in Ephesians 4, verse 8. So we can see that that is a word that also can refer to the same thing we're talking about here. A word that's used only once with reference to the gifts is merismos, which some of you couldn't care less probably about writing these down, and you don't need to.

You don't have to memorize this, but it's M-E-R-I-S-M-O-S. M-E-R-I-M-E-R-I-S-M-O-S, and the accent of the last symbol, merismos. Now, this word is used one time with reference to the spiritual gifts.

That's in Hebrews 2, verse 4, which talks about God confirming the gospel of signs and wonders in spiritual gifts. We'll see that verse in a moment. Finally, there's a word that's used twice of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 12, verse 1, and 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1. 1 Corinthians 12, 1, and 1 Corinthians 14, 1. Both of them have the same word, and in our English versions, you'll find it usually translates spiritual gifts. However, in your Bible, you'll find the word gifts is in italics because it's not in the Greek. It's just spiritual, in the plural, spirituals.

This is actually just the Greek adjective, spiritual, which is used in a variety of contexts, like the spiritual man, or spiritual mindedness, or whatever. In other contexts, the word spiritual is an adjective, but twice in the New Testament, it's used, in the Greek, we call this as a substantive, where an adjective is used as if it's a noun. As, for example, when we say the dead.

Well, the dead, we're using that like a noun, as if it refers to someone in particular, but the word dead is an adjective. Many times, we use adjectives as if they were nouns, and twice this word spiritual is used as a noun. And it's, in the plural, spirituals.

And it implies spiritual gifts, because Paul uses this word in 1 Corinthians 12, 1, and 1 Corinthians 14, 1, in the context where he frequently also uses the word charisma, or charismata, interchangeably. So, obviously, he means gifts of the spirit when he uses this word. This word in the Greek is pneumaticos, and it's spelled with a P at the beginning, which, in English, would be silent.

In Greek, they'd pronounce it P-N-E-U-M-A, pneuma. That's the Greek word for spirit. And then, the suffix I, let me get this right, no, excuse me, T-I-K-O-S, pneumaticos, means spiritual.

And so, a couple of times, the gifts are called spirituals. Okay, now we've got the vocabulary. And the reason I went to all the pains of that, and some of you think, Jan, you know, who cares, I'm never going to read the Greek New Testament anyway.

But I'm very, it's important to me that if I'm trying to sort out a controversial subject in Scripture, and I'm going to use a proof text that uses the English, the right English word, I want to make sure I'm not using something that doesn't have the right Greek word. Because we get a lot of strange doctrines sometimes just based, you know, our studies on an English New Testament. And if you look up in the Greek, sometimes you find, you think you've got the same word there, and you've got totally different ones, and sometimes different concepts in the Greek.

So what I want you to know, these five words are different words in the Greek, but they all are used in the New Testament of what we call the gifts of the Holy Spirit, although some of them are used otherwise as well. It's not restricted. The word charisma, the word doria, these are not restricted to discussions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but they are used of that frequently enough, and in many contexts we'll find that to be so.

Now, there's some, I want to structure this discussion around some basic questions. Over

the years, I'd say 25, 26 years, I've been acquainted with the spiritual gifts, and I was raised for years in a church that didn't ever talk about it, so I didn't know anything about it, but for the past 25, 26 years, I've been acquainted with the subject. Though I must say, my first impressions and the first things I learned about it, I've had to modify over the years because I picked up initially some ideas that I now would regard as charismatic traditions or Pentecostal traditions.

I don't think they're necessarily hurtful traditions, but they are traditions, and they're not necessarily provable from Scripture. And I, over the years, especially many years ago, I used to be in conflict occasionally because I still had a lot of friends from my old church that didn't know or believe in these things, and I would get in some arguments with them. And so I'm acquainted with a lot of the issues that rise in discussions about this, and I'd like to structure this study around addressing those issues.

I want to start out by talking about what the gifts of the Spirit are, biblically. What they are for. Are they for us today, or are they not for us today, or are some of them for us today and not all of them? What are the specific spiritual gifts? How many of them are there? And what are they called, and what do their names mean? Are some gifts more prestigious than others? This is another question I want to ask and answer.

Has everyone got only one gift? Should we seek the gifts? Some people say, no, just seek the giver, don't seek the gifts. Well, we'll ask that question and see what the Scripture says in answering it. And then finally, I'll give you a clue.

We affirm that in the positive, yes, we should seek the gifts. The last question is, how do we seek the gifts? And we're going to look at Scriptures in detail on all these points. So that's where we're going.

We may not get all the way through it tonight, but that's where we're going tonight. Partway through anyway, if not all the way. Let's turn, first of all, to the premier passage in the Bible on the spiritual gifts.

And if you've been around and you're conversing in this subject, you already know what passage I'm talking about. We're talking about 1 Corinthians 12. There is very, very little space devoted in the New Testament to the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And perhaps that should be instructive to us. The Holy Spirit does not omit teaching on the subject, but it does not focus on the subject very much. It has a place for the gifts, but it does not give priority of place to the gifts.

We should not exclude the gifts from our studies and from our lives. But we also should not become so infatuated with them that there's hardly anything else that we use as a gauge of proper spiritual life. Now, the passage that is most important on this, simply because it has the most to say on it, is actually three chapters long.

It's 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, an extended, unbroken discussion, broken only artificially by the chapter divisions, which Paul did not place there. But it's a prolonged discussion Paul gives in only one place on the subject. He speaks more briefly a few other places on the subject.

And so starting at the beginning of chapter 12, I'd like to read a portion of this and try to get what Paul is saying about this. And we're going to address the question right now, what are the spiritual gifts? What are they? What are they about? First, let's read the first 11 verses, if you'll bear with me and read along if you have your Bible. Now, concerning spirituals or spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.

You know that you were Gentiles carried away by these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed. And no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are diversities of ministries or differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit. To another, the word of knowledge through the same Spirit.

To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healings by the same Spirit. To another, the working of miracles.

To another, prophecy. To another, discerning of spirits. To another, different kinds of tongues.

And to another, the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills. Now, there's many sub-points to this that I could get into and analyze it in detail, but there's a principal point I think Paul's making in these verses.

And he introduces it early on. And that is, you Corinthians, you come out of a pagan background. You're Gentiles.

Before you were Christians, you worshipped these idols, these statues, you know, and you thought they were gods. But you may have noticed they never talked to you. You might have cried out to them, you may have prayed to them, but they never talked back.

They were dumb idols. And by dumb he doesn't mean that as a pejorative, like, boy are they ever dumb. But he means that they don't speak.



They're mute. And as Gentiles, not so long ago, converted out of a pagan background where it was customary to worship a god that you could speak to, but it would never speak back. They had to learn the ropes of a new concept.

You now have a god who's really alive. A god who really relates with you. He really is in touch and he communicates with his people.

He communicates to the church. A new concept for Gentiles. Now, because it was a new concept, and by the way, I'm not saying the Corinthians didn't know this.

They knew that the god they now serve communicates, but they were so new at this they had not yet sorted out how to recognize when it's him communicating and when it's something else. And by what means he would normatively communicate. So Paul says, listen, I want you to know, first off, if somebody says Jesus is a cursed, well that's not God.

That's not the Holy Spirit speaking. No one can say that by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, if someone says Jesus is Lord, that is the word of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the way Paul actually words it, he says no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Certainly we should not understand him in too strictly a wooden fashion. That means that no one can enunciate those syllables, Jesus is Lord, unless they are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Because even demons can say that. And certainly people who are not regenerate can say that. It doesn't take inspiration of the Holy Spirit to utter those words, but to say it and mean it.

To say that and have that be an expression of your true conviction can only have such conviction and express it if the Holy Spirit were giving you that conviction and giving you that understanding. Now, what I understand Paul to be mainly concerning himself with here is probably prophetic utterances and other utterances, perhaps a tongue's interpretation, where a person purports, or word of knowledge or word of wisdom, where a person purports to be giving God's word, a straightforward word from God, this would be distinct, I would say, from just preaching the gospel or teaching, but a person is giving inspired oracle from God, that the content of that oracle, the content of that message can be discerned to be really from God or not really from God, depending on the place that that oracle gives to Jesus. If that oracle demeans Jesus, if that oracle obscures Jesus or curses Jesus, to put it the way Paul does, if there's some sense in which the word does not lift up the Lord Jesus Christ, then that is no way the Holy Spirit, he's not interested in talking without glorifying Jesus.

On the other hand, the word that is truly from the Holy Spirit will exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and declare him to be Lord. And by the way, we might just say before going any

further, there's a whole bunch of stuff going on in the body of Christ in various places that is purported to be the Holy Spirit's doing. And some of it, I'm sure, is, maybe in some cases, some very strange things may yet be the Holy Spirit's working.

But it really shouldn't be too awfully difficult to discern whether something is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit or not, because of the net result. Is Jesus glorified? Or is Jesus obscured in favor of some other goal, some other focus? If something is happening in a meeting, if something is happening in a movement, and the focus is on having good vibes, the focus is on having an experience, and the focus is not on the Lordship of Jesus and further establishing the claims of Lordship of Christ on your life, resulting in a walk of obedience to Jesus more solidly and more truly, then it's hard to believe the Holy Spirit had much to do with the phenomenon. Since Paul says this is the very fingerprints of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus' Lordship is pressed and exalted and emphasized.

Whereas, if Jesus is kind of on the sidelines, or He's given a lesser position, a lesser focus, this is not likely to be the Holy Spirit's work, because He's just not interested in that. And when people ask me, do you think all this falling down and laughing and barking and so forth is the work of the Holy Spirit, I say, hey listen, the Holy Spirit can do whatever He wants. I will not seek to put boundaries on what He can do, but I would say there are probably boundaries about what He would do.

And He can do whatever He wants, but the question is, what would He do? The question is, what does He want to do? Is it the Holy Spirit sent here to make me act like an animal, or to make me act like Jesus? I mean, that's the question. And so, I'm not saying that to put down all phenomena that's of an unusual sort. I'm just saying, whatever it is, something new is going to come up next week, or next year, or next decade.

You're going to live long enough if you don't backslide. You'll be in the body of Christ. You'll see some stranger things than you've seen yet, believe me.

And when they come, there's going to be someone saying, this is the new move of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of God. And you need to have some basis for saying, well, is it or isn't it? I don't want to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

I don't want to speak evil of the work of God. I don't want to fight against God. But I also don't want to be gullible, and think that every work of the flesh is a work of the Spirit.

Especially if the question is whether I'm going to get into participating with it. I mean, if someone's trying to say, you've got to get involved in this thing. This is the cutting edge of what God's doing today.

I say, well, if it is the cutting edge, I really want to be there. But if it's just flesh, I'm not sure I want to pay any attention to it. So Paul, fortunately, says, listen, you guys out of

your pagan background, you're not used to having a God communicate with you.

Now you've got one who does. God communicates. He's a living God.

He's a talking God. He's a communicative God. And he does so through certain normative channels.

I don't mean channel in the New Age sense, but normative avenues, normative ways that God communicates. And the litmus test of whether a particular phenomenon or word or oracle that purports to be from God is genuine is, well, let's take our eyes for the moment off the utterance, off the phenomenon, and see. Let's stand back and say, where is Jesus in this? Where do we see Jesus? Is he really in the front row here? Is he the one who's put up forward? Is any man being exalted here? Is any experience being exalted? Or is Jesus being exalted? That's pretty much a test that never fails.

Now in verse 4 and 5 and 6, I'll tell you the truth. I don't have much enlightening to say about these verses. Paul mentions diversities of gifts, differences of ministries, and diversities of activities.

And I've never yet been able to discern with certainty whether there's a significant difference in Paul's thinking between a gift, a ministry, and an activity. As a matter of fact, hi Cindy, good to see you. As a matter of fact, it's such that different commentators will say mutually contradictory things trying to show what the distinction is in these things.

You will perhaps notice that in listing these three things, different gifts, different ministries, and different activities, he mentions the Spirit, God, and Jesus the Lord. So he mentions the triune God. Perhaps he's using the word gifts and ministries and activities more or less interchangeably, or maybe they're linked in some way that's hard to divide.

But his main point being that the activity of God, the Holy Spirit doesn't do something that's not like what the Father or like what Jesus does. I mean, whatever God does, it's the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit acting in harmony in it. There may be different gifts.

There may be different varieties of activities and phenomena and so forth. These things, we don't probably have a complete list of all the things we can expect the Holy Spirit to do. But we can say this, it's the same Spirit.

It's the same Jesus who walked here in Galilee. You know, so many times when I'm trying to examine the contemporary religious scene in Christianity, and I don't even mean the charismatic stuff that's going on, like phenomena and signs and wonders and stuff. Not that alone.

But even just typical plain church kind of stuff. You know, I mean just religiosity. I like to stand back and say, well, wait a minute.

If this is what the Holy Spirit wants me to do, it should be seen in the life of Jesus too. I should be able to look back at the gospel and say Jesus was playing like this. Or Jesus said the disciples should play church like this.

Or Jesus said that this was important or did this kind of a thing. And if I don't see it in the life and teachings of Jesus, I really have reason to wonder, why then would I have any interest in it? Why then would it become a part of normative Christian behavior if Jesus neither taught it nor did it? Because the same Spirit that we're professing to be looking to for these gifts and so forth is the Spirit who operated through Jesus. It's the same Lord.

It's the same God who gifted Jesus. It's not like the Holy Spirit has his own far-fetched set of things that he does that are not anything like what God did in the Old Testament or what Jesus did in his lifetime. The same Spirit is one with the Father and the Son.

And you can expect a congruence in the activities of the Holy Spirit and those that we know to have taken place in the life of Jesus and of course in God's activity in the Old Testament as well. Now Paul gives a list of gifts. Now there are nine things he lists here.

And some people I think have made the mistake of saying, therefore there are nine gifts of the Spirit. I remember in days past, especially in the Jesus movement, there was a wide range of charismatic emphases in different sectors of the Jesus movement. Some were really into it, some less so.

I remember meeting people, new Christians who were not all that humble yet, who boasted of having all nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now to tell you the truth, I don't think anyone has all nine gifts of the Holy Spirit except Jesus. And I'm not even sure he had them all because he didn't speak in tongues to my knowledge.

It's kind of hard to speak in unknown tongues if you know everything. But anyway, Jesus did exhibit a great number of the gifts, a wide variety. Probably all of them except tongues and interpretation of tongues.

But the worst of this claim, just to have all of the nine gifts, is that there aren't just nine gifts. It just happens that nine gifts are listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. But he does that as a sampling to make a certain point.

He doesn't say, now here's the comprehensive list of every gift that God ever gave to his church or will give to the church. There is another list in Romans 12, we'll see it later on. And in Romans 12 he lists seven gifts there.

And there's only one gift that's on both lists. In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, that's the gift of prophecy. All the other gifts in Romans 12 are different than the ones here.

So if you want to do the numbers, you've got 15 gifts listed when you combine the lists.

And even there, there's no way of being sure that that's a complete list if you combine them. Because neither 1 Corinthians 12 is a complete list, nor Romans 12 a complete list.

Therefore, we don't know how many might be on a complete list. And if you combine the two, you still might not have a complete list. There might be any number.

You never read, for example, in the Bible of anyone having a gift in music. In music ministry, there's no gift like that listed. Or a gift of children's ministries, or something like that.

And these lists don't even list a gift of evangelism. Now you might say, well, that's because every Christian is supposed to be evangelism. Well, no.

In Ephesians 4, Paul said he gave some evangelists. And some pastors and teachers and so forth. And not everyone has a gift in that area.

I think everyone should be able to speak up and testify for Christ. But some people are gifted. I mean, I know some people are so anointed for evangelism, they can hardly go outside without people getting saved.

And they're not even trying. The guy who ministered to me when I got baptized in the Spirit was an anointed evangelist. He was, I say, because he's dead now.

He evangelized some homosexuals. He got raped. He got AIDS.

And he died recently. But he was a very famous leader in the Jesus movement. And when he got saved, he could hardly read.

He'd use so much LSD, his mind was practically liquid. And he couldn't read, but he could preach. He could barely even talk.

But when he spoke, people got saved. And there was powerful anointing. And he was kind of a flaky kind of guy, I have to say.

He died saved, I'm sure of that. But there were times that he kind of seemed to fall away and come back and fall away and come back. I knew him over a period of about 15 years, I think.

And during that time, one time he fell away. He was backslidden. And he was living with a woman.

His wife had left him earlier, and he was lonely. He moved in with a lady. Anyway, he was a friend of Katharine Kuhlman, the late Katharine Kuhlman, who was a television evangelist.

And he was living in sin in this situation, backslidden. And he got up one morning, turned on the TV, and Katharine Kuhlman was on, his friend. And to tell you the truth, I never had much attraction to Katharine Kuhlman's ministry.

And I'm not sure I would have gotten convicted watching her, but he knew her. And he got real convicted. He was getting real glum.

And this lady he was living with came out of the room and said, What's wrong with you? And he started sharing how he was a backslidden Christian. She got saved. He was backslidden, and she got saved.

I mean, his anointing in evangelism was just kind of irrepressible. He just, he could hardly speak without people getting saved. And he didn't even come back to the Lord yet at that point.

She got saved, but he didn't. And so, I mean, the gifts and the callings of God without repentance, I guess. There is, I believe, an anointing and a gift in evangelism, but it's not listed in the list.

So what I'm saying is there are truly a larger number of gifts than those that are found in the lists. But Paul gives a sampling. He gives nine sample gifts to make a certain point.

And the point he's making is they're different from each other, but they're all of the same spirit. That is, even though there's a great deal of diversity, there's a unity in the spirit because the same spirit applies to each. He says there are diversities of gifts.

Well, let's look down at verse 7. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. To one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit. To another, the word of knowledge through the same spirit.

To another, faith by the same spirit, and so on. He lists these different gifts, and his emphasis is it's the same spirit. Same spirit, same spirit.

Different gift, different manifestation of the spirit, but the same spirit. Now, this is an important thing to note. He refers here to the individual gifts as manifestations of the spirit.

The word manifestation means a revealing or an exhibition or making visible. The Holy Spirit is in the believer. But the Holy Spirit doesn't manifest himself exactly the same way in every believer.

When you have a particular gift, that is the way the Holy Spirit manifests his presence and his operation in you. But another person will have a different manifestation of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit through another gifting. And yet, Paul's saying, you know, appreciate diversity here.

You know, you don't have to say, well, he goes on later and says, listen, I can't say to the hand I have no need of you because he's not a, you know, we're different parts of the body. But that's the beauty of it. You know, if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were an ear, where were the smelling? Paul says.

So there's a need for diversity. We need to learn to appreciate it. And it's all from the same spirit.

Now, you'll notice in this list of gifts, it's heavily weighted with gifts that have something to do with talking. Now, in Romans 12, there's a few of those kinds of gifts too, but there's others like helps and showing mercy and administration and things like that. But here you've got the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues.

These are verbal kinds of activities. And I think probably the reason that in this list, Paul is weighting the list heavily with talking kinds of gifts, verbal kinds of gifts, is because he's talking about how God talks to the church. You Gentiles used to worship dumb idols, never talked.

God talks. God will talk to you. God will have something to say to you.

He wants to communicate with you. And he communicates in some of these ways. He'll give a word of wisdom.

That's him talking to you. A word of knowledge, a prophecy, a tongue. And these are some of the ways that you can expect God to talk to the church.

So in these 11 verses, Paul is saying that the gifts of the Spirit, at least some of them, are God's way of communicating to his people, continuing to communicate. Now, by the way, I do believe the gifts are still for today. I've often marveled at the people who do not believe that.

I'll give you reasons scripturally why I believe that in a moment. But I've marveled at people who think that God doesn't talk anymore. And I've met good Christians who love the Lord, who ridicule the notion that God would speak to you.

I had some friends over visiting once, not very close friends. It was the first time they'd ever been in our house. But we were friendly toward them, and they were friendly toward us.

And they were non-charismatic type folks, and that's okay with us. We don't require that our friends be charismatic types. Sometimes non-charismatics are a little more bearable than some charismatics are.

But these happened to be non-charismatic folks, but they were talking about someone

else who wasn't present, and kind of sneering and mocking. And they thought that God speaks to them. They said, God told me so-and-so, and so forth.

And then I got a little uncomfortable. I think God talks too. It's kind of hard to imagine why He wouldn't.

One of the first things you ever record on record of God is God said. The earth was formless and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. And God said, let there be light.

And then God said, let there be a division between the waters above and below. And God said, let dry land appear. And God said, let the plants and grasses and fruit trees and so forth.

And let, let, let, let, let. God does all the talking here when no one else is even there listening. And so God is talkative.

God is communicative. And of course we know, it says in John chapter 1, in the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God.

The Word was God. Everything was made through Him. And the Word was made flesh in Jesus.

Jesus is God talking. And so the writer of Hebrews says in his opening lines in the book of Hebrews, he says, God, who at sundry times in diverse manners spoke in times passed by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. In the past He spoke through the Old Testament prophets.

Now He's spoken through His Son. And, and since the Son went away, He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. And that's evident in the book of Acts, clear enough.

But the question is, why is it that when the apostles died, some people think God who had been speaking from the first day of creation all the way up through the entire recorded history of God in the Bible, from Genesis 1 to the last page of the New Testament, God's speaking, but all of a sudden when the apostles died, God got a sore throat or something and decided that He'd have said enough. He decided that relationship was not His bag or something. He didn't want to talk to people anymore.

That is, to my mind, a strange view of God to have. And not a biblical one. And I believe that to say that, you know, those gifts by which God reveals His mind directly to the church, that those are no longer for today, that kind of thinking is without biblical warrants, certainly.

And I'll show you in a moment what scriptures are used to try to make that point and try to prove it. And then I'll tell you why I don't think it proves it and what scriptures I think



prove that they are for today. I think we'll get there tonight.

We'll see. We might not. Okay, let's read a little further in 1 Corinthians 12, if we could.

I'd like to read now verses 12 and following. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. Now, that's an interesting statement.

As your physical body... I should have read the whole passage and then go back to this. But as your physical body is one body with many members, He says, so also is... And you'd expect Him to say, so also is the body of Christ. So also is the church.

It's a body with many members. Like your body is a body with many members, so also is the church. So also is the body of Christ.

But He doesn't say, so also is Christ. Christ is, not was, but is a body with many members. Jesus is the head of the body.

We are the members. And it is impossible to disassociate successfully the head from the body. You can't have the head have one identity and the body a different identity.

The head can't be Christ and His body not be Christ too. When I walked into the room, those of you who know me and saw me, didn't say, oh, here comes Steve and his head. Or here comes Steve and his body.

My head and my body came together and both of them are me. And if you would disassociate the two permanently, there wouldn't be me at all. And so we cannot say that the church is not one with Christ.

That's the very point Paul is making. As a body, your physical body is one body, it has many members, and all the members are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit.

For in fact, the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I'm not of the body. Is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I'm not of the body.

Is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased, and if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body, and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather those members of the body which seem the weaker are necessary, and those members of the body which we think to be less

honorable, on those we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts have the greater modesty. We take greater care of those unrepresentable parts to make sure they're covered in public.

And He's saying therefore, even the parts of the body that are not visible, obscure, they nonetheless have importance and are given special attention. But our representable parts have no such need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism, that means division in the body, but that the members should have the same care, one for another.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now, you might feel that we've kind of gotten a little bit off field of our main topic of the gifts of the Spirit here with all this discussion of the body, but not so. This is essential to Paul's discussion of understanding what the gifts of the Spirit are.

Just like your eye has a function, and in order to perform that function, it has been given a certain ability. Its function is to direct the body so it doesn't bump into things, so it's been given the ability of translating light images into, breaking it down into nothing really, randomness passed by cones and rods through an optic nerve in the brain and reassembling them into sensible pictures that you can make sense of. That's what the eyes, it's a miraculous ability almost, you would think, that the eyes have been given because it has this function.

Now, the hand can't do that. The hand can't take those images, although a blind person can use his hand somewhat to replace the eye, but not perfectly. The hand is given different gifts because it has a different function.

Now, what Paul is saying here is the reason the Holy Spirit has given one person the gift of the Word of Knowledge and another person the gift of healings and another person the gift of faith and another one the gift of discerning of spirits is because we're different members of the body, and the differing abilities define the different functions of the different organs and members of the body. Now, what he's really getting at here, he starts that discussion, verse 12, by saying, as your body is one body of many members, so also is Christ. So he's not just talking in a general term that the church is like a body, and these gifts are sort of like the different abilities that a body has.

Yes, he's saying that, but it's not just a body, it's the body of Jesus he's talking about. And what he says is these gifts are the continuing functions of Jesus through his body today. Now, when Jesus was on earth, he was in a body.

And then he went away from the earth and he became the head of another body. He sent his spirit, the same spirit that empowered him while he was on earth, to work miracles and do things he did, to prophesy, to teach, to heal. And by the way, Jesus

acknowledged it was the spirit by which he did this.

He said in Matthew chapter 12, If I through the Holy Spirit cast out demons, and in Acts chapter 1 verse 1 it says, Jesus instructed the apostles through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enabled and gifted Jesus. You know, Jesus never did one supernatural thing on record before the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove.

And from that day on, he had a charismatic ministry. He had gifts of the Spirit in evidence. And when he was filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit empowered him to do things that he never did for the first 30 years of his life.

Now, you might say, but isn't he God? Couldn't he do those things? Yes, he was God, but he humbled himself, took on himself the form of a man, emptied himself of divine prerogatives. For example, on earth he was not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent. These are some of the traits that he had to surrender to become a man and live under our handicaps.

But he was a man of God who operated through the Holy Spirit and did so successfully. And that's what he still does. Only he has more members to his body now.

We are his hands, we are his feet, we are the members of his body. As such, we are given the same Spirit and the Holy Spirit, just like when Jesus was a carpenter, his hands had certain abilities, his eyes had other abilities, his feet had yet other abilities. So now his body is made up of millions of members and each has its own distinct ability.

But as the members work together in the thing they are made to do, just like his body on earth pounding nails or healing the sick or whatever he did in a single body, his corporate body does still. And the gifts of the Spirit are not anything other, as near as I can tell, not anything other than the continuing of the ministry of Jesus through his present body. So that again, the gifts of the Spirit are not there for fun, they are not there for sensation, they are there to do the very same thing that Jesus did when he was on earth with the same gifts.

So what Paul is saying is that the gifts define the functions of individual members of the body. And this body is not just a body that's sort of a metaphor to help us understand unity, it's the body of Jesus himself. Christ is a body with many members, Paul says in verse 12 there, and we are them.

Okay, now this is my attempt, using Paul's discussion here, to answer the question, what are the gifts? They are God speaking to his church, they are the continuing ministry of Jesus, the continuing supernatural ministry of Jesus in the world through his present body. Okay, let's go on to the next question, what are they for? Well, that's partially been answered, but there's three things that we can answer biblically that question with. The first thing is, not necessarily the most important or the most frequently employed

purpose of the gifts, but the first for our discussion is they are for signs.

They are for signs. Look at Hebrews chapter 2, and the purpose, by the way, of these signs is to confirm the word of God to a doubting audience. It says in Hebrews chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. That is, God confirmed the gospel once we heard it. God confirmed it by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So, no doubt, the particular gifts of the Spirit may be the gifts of miracles or whatever they're talking about, but we know also that in his discussion in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul said, If an unbeliever comes into the church, everyone speaks to us and they're going to think you're mad, but if everyone's prophesying, they're going to be convicted, and they're going to say, Wow, God is in this place, and it'll be something that convinces them of the legitimacy of Christianity. So, not only signs and wonders, but prophecy and other things. On the day of Pentecost, what gift was it that was assigned to the unbelievers? It was the gift of tongues.

They heard everyone speaking in their own language, and these people from all over the world. The gift of tongues was assigned to them. In fact, Jesus said the gift of tongues and others would be assigned to confirm the gospel.

Look at Mark chapter 16. Mark chapter 16, starting with verse 15, Jesus said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

By the way, if you don't have these verses in your Bible, it's time to get a new Bible. There are Bibles that omit them. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

He who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe. Signs, notice.

It's associated with the preaching of the gospel. There will be signs. Among them, in my name they will cast out demons.

They will speak with new tongues. They will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them. And they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Now, we don't read the word gifts here in this passage. There's no reference to gifts by that name. But we do see speaking in tongues.

We do see what would apparently be working miracles, drinking poison without deadly effect, being bitten by vipers and not dying. That's a miracle. Laying hands on the sick could be identified with the gift of healing.

Casting out demons is not one of the things listed in any of the lists of the gifts. But since it appears here with other gifts in this list, it may be that we should include it, the ability to cast out demons. But Jesus said, these will be signs that will follow the preaching of the gospel.

If you look at the last verse in verse 20, it says, And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. They preached the word, and God confirmed the word through accompanying signs. Notice it says, the Lord was working with them.

The Holy Spirit was empowering them to continue the work of Jesus. Jesus was working with them, confirming the word as he had in his own lifetime. He confirmed his own word with signs.

You know, there's times when Jesus said to his skeptics, If you don't believe me, then believe the signs. Let the works I've done be witness enough. Now, I want to say something about the gifts of the Spirit as signs, and then go on to another function of the gifts in this.

I believe the function of gifts as signs principally operates in pioneer evangelistic missions. I know that we've all no doubt heard of stories of tremendous miracles taking place in parts of Africa and China and Indonesia, and various places that aren't here. People being raised from the dead.

Back in the 70s, we read the story, Like a Mighty Wind, by Miltari. Missionaries were walking on water from island to island, turning water into wine for communion, raising the dead. And I had friends who went to Indonesia and saw some of those things, saw blind eyes open, saw if this was going on.

In 10 years' time, 10 million Muslims were converted to Christianity in Indonesia through these signs. Now, this was in the 70s. I don't know if it's still going on.

You don't hear as much about it now, but the point is, we hear those things and say, Wow, I want that to start happening in my church, here in the good old U.S. of A. I'm going to get these things happening, I'm going to start walking on swimming pools for practice. Now, let me just say something. The gifts of the Spirit working as signs, I believe, are there to give a skeptical audience legitimate grounds to believe in the supernatural character of the gospel.

Now, you and I were raised in a country where there's a widespread belief in the gospel. And even before you were a Christian, you probably had a hunch once in a while that probably Jesus was real and that the Bible was maybe probably true. Those impressions probably hit you from time to time, at least.

But when you go into total virgin territory, and there's never been any gospel preaching there, all they know is they worship demons, and the witch doctor can do a lot of interesting things. And you come and say, well, your religion's all wrong, man, that's really inferior. I mean, Jesus is the Lord over all those demons, and I mean, he's not the Lord of the demons, but he's the Lord of everything, and he's over the demons, too.

And he's a lot more powerful, and the message I have is much more compelling, much more supernatural. I mean, after all, Jesus rose from the dead, how much more supernatural can it get? And they say, oh yeah, why should I believe you? I see what my witch doctor can do. You're telling me I should believe a message about a man who rose from the dead? Never seen that happen.

Well, let me show you here. You've got a dead person around here, and raise him from the dead. Or something else, walk on the water, whatever.

I believe that the signs and wonders kinds of gifts, when they function as signs, they are largely for the benefit of unbelievers. And I believe unbelievers have every right to expect Christians to demonstrate the supernatural character of their message. The gospel doesn't advertise itself as simply so much information.

You know, just a road map to heaven, follow these steps and you'll get there. It professes to be a supernatural message about a supernatural rescue mission that is conducted by a supernatural God in intervening in his project day by day. There's powers of the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is overtaken. In other words, you can't see the kingdom, that's invisible. You can see people getting delivered from demons.

And you can deduce, therefore, that this supernatural kingdom is invading your territory. Now, this, I think, biblically and historically in the church, is principally where you'll find the gifts operating as signs. This is where you will most often see the particular gifts of miracles and healings more abundant.

And I used to wonder about that. You know, how come God did all these miracles in Africa? What's that? Okay. How come all these healings and miracles happen in Indonesia and Africa and Asia and places? How come they're not happening here in my church? Why aren't they happening here in my school? And I used to think, well, it's just because we don't have faith.

Well, maybe that's part of it. I believe a lot of times we don't have enough faith. But I can tell you, when I was young, I was capable of great faith.

I think I still am. I think I still can trust God for miracles. But I know there were times when I prayed for people to rise from the dead or to stand up and walk and things like that.

And I had plenty of faith. There was no deficiency in faith there. I practically was going to stand back so they didn't hit me on the head when they bounced up out of their wheelchair.

And it never happened. I mean, I shouldn't say it never happened. I've seen a case where I prayed for someone that came out of a wheelchair.

But most cases, they didn't. I haven't raised the dead before. Although we've seen a person rise from the dead outside here.

We had a child hit by a car and killed a few years back. And one of our staff members went out there. She was an ENT.

And there were no vital signs. The kid was dead. He wasn't breathing.

His heart wasn't beating. And she prayed and called out to the Lord. And he coughed up a clot of blood.

And he's okay today. I mean, there are miracles that happen. It still happens.

But it doesn't seem like it's happening as often. It seems like it happens at these big revival things happening in the third world. My guess is, partly, it's not just lack of faith.

A lot of times, it's not lack of faith. I think a lot of it is just that we don't need those particular miracles for the confirmation as much as the frontier missions need them. Now, I'm not saying we don't need confirmation of the gospel.

We do. But once the gospel has arrived, once the gospel has been accepted by a community of people, Jesus said, By this, all men shall know that you are my disciples. If you have loved one from another, that's a big miracle.

And Jesus prayed that they might be one, that the world may know that you sent me. This is a sign, too, when Christians love each other and they're one. But you can't have that particular sign where there's no Christians yet.

So, these other signs and wonders principally function, I think, on the cutting edge of evangelistic missions. I'm not saying they're exclusively found there. They're found elsewhere, too.

But that's where they really are big time happening. Where missionaries trust God for them, they happen. But I think once the gospel has been established, there's a gospel community, a community of Christians, God expects the changed lives of the Christians to be the principal miracle to convince their friends.

And the love that they have one for another and the way they lay down their lives for one another to be the principal supernatural evidence of the truthfulness of the gospel. There may be others, too. But that's the principal one, I think, based on what Jesus said and prayed for.

So, the gifts can be for signs. And one thing that really concerns me, you know, for a long time, the church was really dry and dead. No one knew about gifts.

And around the turn of this century, the Pentecostal outpouring happened. And then the gifts of tongues and healings and prophecies started happening. And then a lot of us heard about them considerably later.

And now we all know about them and so forth. And in some cases, the churches that have newly discovered them have decided this is the greatest thing since sliced bread. This is, you know, we need to have this happening at every meeting.

We need to really, we need to see some miracles happening here every time we gather. And it's like the miracles that God did to convince unbelievers have become the infatuation and the playthings of believers who don't need that confirmation anymore. And we're still playing like children around the things that were necessary.

When I was a child, I thought as a child that I put away childish things when I became a man. Now, I'm not suggesting that childish things are miracles. And that to be a man spiritually, you don't want any miracles.

I want miracles. I want to see the gospel confirmed. I don't want to see us going out and preaching the gospel with no power.

I want to see signs and wonders. I want to see God working with us, confirming the word with signs following. I want that.

But I don't want, every time Christians come together, they say, I wonder what goosebumps I'm going to get today seeing something really wild here. You know, I mean, there's other order of business for Christians when they get together, like growing up, like being disciplined, like being taught how to do the things Jesus said to do in our lives and to love one another and to do that stuff. There's just more important things than getting together to have a miracle service for ourselves.

And I don't think that God just wants to dominate every time Christians get together with some kind of a miracle meeting. But that's what's supposed to be going on, I think, in



evangelism. Now, there are still, I still expect miraculous things to be legitimately happening in the church, but not in the sense of signs.

There's two other things the Bible says that the gifts of the spirit are for besides signs. When we call them signs, I think it's referring to the unbeliever. The unbeliever needs a sign.

Jesus said a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. Christians shouldn't be seeking after signs. But since unbelievers seek them, we should be able to produce them, as God should be able to produce them through our faith and through our obedience.

Now, but there are some things that do concern us at our meetings and in our Christian community. And that is that the gifts are for ministry to the body. That is service.

The word ministry means service. And they are there to enable us to serve the needs of one another as Christians. Now, not all of these gifts are sensational, by the way.

There's a gift of teaching, a gift of exhorting, a gift of administration, a gift of helps, a gift of giving. None of those things are very sensational, but they are very helpful. And they are there for the edification and ministry to the body of Christ.

Ministry principally at this point is what I want to look at. Look at 1 Peter chapter 4. Yeah. Are the signs that follow in Mark 16 closely related to the manifestation of the spirit in 1 Corinthians 12? I believe it's identical.

I mean, I think they're just different terms talking about the same thing there, pretty much. With the exception that the manifestation of the spirit is not always functioning as a sign to the unbeliever, but rather may be functioning as a ministry ability to the body of Christ. And that's what we're looking at right now here.

Right. Not only encouragement, but actually meeting real needs, okay, like physical needs even, you know. Look at 1 Peter, if you would, chapter 4, verses 10 and 11.

This is the only verse outside of Paul's writings where the word charisma is found in the New Testament. Peter uses it here in verse 10. He says, as each one has received a charisma, as each one has received a gift, minister it, or minister means serve, to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers or serves, let him do it as of the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever on men. Now, Peter says, as everyone has a gift, what are you supposed to do with it? Well, you're supposed to serve one another with it, minister it to one another.

It's for serving your fellow members of the body. You see, the members of my physical body cooperate with each other for the common good. The blood vessels and the lungs and the digestive system and all that stuff, the muscles and the nervous system, they're not just there for themselves.

They are there so that the whole body can have what's needed for a regular functioning body. Every member of the body really benefits from the activity of every other member. That's why Paul said, when one member suffers, all suffer.

He said that in 1 Corinthians 12. And when one is exalted, all rejoice. That the whole body is an organism that is its well-being.

Every member's well-being is tied up in the well-being of the others. And each one, functioning as it should, should be ministering supernaturally to the real needs of the body of Christ. Now, what are those needs? I believe Peter divides the gifts into two categories here in verse 11.

Now, I've heard people break the gifts into three categories and five categories and so forth. But in the Bible, there's really only breaking into two categories. I'm not saying for the sake of discussion you can't break it into other categories.

But there's a divinely inspired division of the gifts into two categories here. He says, as everyone has a gift, minister to one another. If anyone speaks, that's one category.

And if anyone ministers, that's serves. Speaking and serving. Now, it's quite easy when you read the list of the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 to see that some of those gifts are about talking.

Prophecy, teaching, exhortation, tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of wisdom, word of knowledge. That's talking. That's speaking.

And he says, those who speak should speak as the oracles of God. Now, they shouldn't just get up there and think that because they have everyone's attention, they can just waste everyone's time by pouring out their own opinion about things. Sometimes I've sat in huge churches and listened to pastors who I really hope to get something from God from, and they just spend the whole time talking about their own opinions without biblical warrant for any one of them.

I think, does this man, is he such a megalomaniac that he's got 5,000 people sitting here listening? They have nothing better to do with an hour of their day than to listen to him spew his opinions? Maybe they'd like to tell him their opinions for an hour. Will he listen to them? Why should they even be there? There's 5,000 man hours wasted listening to this man. If he would speak as the oracles of God, there'd be no waste of time.

The people of God need to hear the word of the Lord. But if anyone speaks, let them

speak as the oracles of God. And sometimes people think, I'm just the professional preacher around here, so I say people should listen to.

After all, that's what they pay me for. Tell them what I think. Now, as far as I'm concerned, pay has nothing to do with it.

Being a professional has nothing to do with it. If anyone speaks to the body of Christ, they should speak with a conviction that they are speaking the word that God has given them to speak. It doesn't always have to be a prophetic word, but it needs to be that they're convinced that they are saying precisely what Jesus would say if he was standing behind the same pulpit at that moment.

And nothing less. Now, the other category is those who minister. He says what those who have speaking gifts should do.

Now, those who minister or serve. Now, there's a category of gifts like that. I already mentioned helps.

That's helping people. Showing mercy. That's probably hospitality or generosity of some sort.

There's giving. That's another kind of generosity, giving money and substance. There's other things.

Those are kind of broad categories I just mentioned. And those are service kinds of gifts. The people who have the gift of helps might never get up and talk to the church or who give or who show mercy.

They may never get up in front of the congregation. It's not necessary that everyone do so. But they have a gift and a function nonetheless.

And what they do, they meet the physical needs of the body. You know, the body of Christ has two sets of needs, physical and spiritual. And God has not left any set of needs uncared for in the distribution of the gifts.

Some have gifts that are for the spiritual needs of the church. And there's those that speak to the church, the word of God, that builds up the church spiritually. There are those who help, serve, give, show mercy, show hospitality.

These people are meeting the physical needs of the body of Christ. And both are equally important. You know, some people think, well, I just have a gift of helps.

And I don't have a high-powered preaching ministry. Well, high-powered preaching ministries get a lot of attention. But they wouldn't get any attention if the preacher dropped dead because no one was giving.

And he starved to death. And, you know, it may be that the person who keeps that man alive, their name is never known by the visitors in the church. But Christ's name is known because that man's preaching and because someone's giving and helping and supporting and so forth.

In my own case, I used to work partially for my own living and preach on the side. I've been in ministry for 26 years. The first 12, 13 years, 12 years, I worked self-employed as a window cleaner on occasion.

I lived real cheap. Lived in a VW bus some of the time. And I would just go out and work a few hours a week to feed myself and put gas in my tank.

And I wouldn't work anywhere. I'd just read my Bible and go out and preach and teach and witness on the street. I just like doing that.

But when I, about 12, 13 years ago, when I started this school, I didn't have time to go out and work. And I really was, as all of you know who've been around, I don't ever tell anyone if we have needs. If we do, we don't tell them what they are.

No one here knows if we have needs. No one but my wife and God knows what our particular needs may be at any given time. And it's just been our policy never to tell or suggest.

And yet we have survived for 13 years without going out and generating income in the normal fashion, just trusting God because there's people in the body who have gifts of helps and have gifts of giving. And you know, it's a funny thing. I was accused by a friend, a fellow preacher from Australia a few years ago of being independent, an independent spirit.

Well, there are some things in my ministry I can suggest that label. But not bad things, I don't think. What's wrong with an independent? Paul was pretty independent too, as far as I'm concerned.

But the point is, he said, you know, you just, you're so aloof. And I am not. But he didn't know me very well.

But he said, you're so aloof, it's like you don't need anyone else in the body of Christ. I wrote back and said, man, have you got it wrong? I need the body of Christ more than anyone I know. Because I can't do anything for myself.

Everything that I have. When my car breaks, when a window breaks, when my toaster breaks. I don't know what to do.

But someone in the body of Christ always is there. I don't even have to ask. I mean, God just sends them my way.

When we don't have money, God sends money. It's like I'm totally dependent for my very survival on the body of Christ. But it's members of the body of Christ whose ministry is not so well publicized.

In fact, what they do is so natural, it seems, that they might not even realize it's a ministry. They might not even think of it as a gift. And that's why Peter says, those who serve, those who minister, let them do it as of the ability which God gives.

So that God might be glorified. You know, if a person has a gift of giving, sometimes all it takes is that they have money. Hey, a person can have money before they're saved.

Does that mean they have the gift of giving? Well, it means once they are saved, they have an obligation to give. But they should not just give in the flesh. They need to give as God guides.

They need to give as God allows. People who have a gift of fixing cars, or cleaning things, or fixing things, or building things, or whatever. Those people might have had those skills before they were saved.

But now that they're Christians, God, if He calls them to function in that area, He anoints that thing so that it becomes an edifying service to the body of Christ. They might have built houses before they were saved, but it didn't edify anyone. It didn't build up the body of Christ.

But now, they are functioning by the grace of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they're doing it as of the ability that God gives. And believe me, if you don't know what I'm talking about, I do. I do know.

I know people who have an anointing to fix cars. I know people who have an anointing in plumbing. I actually knew a friend, I had a friend who was a general contractor, but he didn't know how to do anything.

This was many years ago in Oregon. You didn't have to know anything to be a general contractor. You just had to pay \$500 and get licensed, and then you go out and find jobs.

And this guy had two other guys working for him who also didn't know anything, and they were all Christians. All they knew was that they needed work, and so they got work. They got a job building houses from the ground up and didn't know how to do it.

And you know, these guys literally prayed, God, how do I do this? I mean, when they came to a plumbing problem that baffled them, they just said, God, show us. And I mean, you may not believe this, they got dreams from God showing them how to fix the plumbing, or how to build that. Now, I don't know if the county inspector will agree with the dreams as to how it should be done, and I'm not sure how they got around that, but I guess God knows what the inspector is looking for too.

But the point is, I'm not saying that you have to get dreams to know how to fix things or build things to do it in the power of God, but I'm saying that people who do things that we don't usually think of as spiritual things, just ordinary helpful things, these are as necessary as the spiritual ministry, because the body of Christ's physical needs are as real and as truly needs as the spiritual are. And you know, as soon as the physical needs of the body stop being met, the spiritual needs of the body are going to stop being met too, because those who are supplying them are going to be dead. And they need those who meet the physical needs too.

Both are essential. One works more undercover. One doesn't get as much attention and honor in the sight of man, but none is any less essential than the other.

Peter says there are two kinds of gifts. And as everyone has received a gift, they need to minister to one another with it. If you have a great gift, in some way, it's not your task with this gift to make a name for yourself, to make a great living for yourself.

It's to minister to other people, to do it as a service. And this is why I've got such a dislike for professional ministry. I'm not saying I dislike professional ministers.

Some of them I like very much. There are some professional ministers I think are real men of God, and I love them, and they probably are more spiritual than I am, and probably far more pleasing to God in many areas of their life than I am. But I still have a distaste for the concept of professional ministry.

You know, a guy who is under contract to do a certain amount of ministry and he'll get paid so much for it. I mean, it's like a contract laborer. Now, I'm not saying Christians can't make a living doing things helpful for people, but I think that makes it a business, and that's different than a ministry.

Now, they might do it cheaper for Christians, or give Christians a break, or do more for the money, and see that as a ministry, and that's fine. But the idea is that the gifts you have are there for serving, like a servant, not like someone who is bartering for money or for goods, but like someone who has something to offer to someone who has a need. And that's true whether your ministry is supplying spiritual needs, or whether it's supplying physical needs.

Both are what your gifts are for, are for ministry. Superstitious about Bibles. Okay.

Let's go on to one other point here. The third thing that the gifts are for, besides signs and besides service for one another, is for the edification of the body of Christ. And that's, of course, it's closely connected.

It's also a ministry of the body. But this is a little different. Serving the needs of the body is one thing.

Building up the body is another. And building up the body is done by, A, bringing new members in, and, B, helping those new members to become personally built up as godly Christians, discipling them and functioning together, bringing them into harmony with each other so that they function as a body, as a witness to the world and to be sort of a ministry organism. The body is like, and not only to a body, the church is like, and not only to a body, but to a building under construction.

Paul said he laid the foundation of the church in Corinth, and others came and built on it. He says you're the temple of the Holy Spirit. He says you are built up into a spiritual house.

Peter said you are living stones built up into a spiritual house. And so, Paul also talks about the need for the gifts to be used for edification. Let me turn to one other passage, and that's all that we're going to have time for tonight to finish up, I think.

This will be Ephesians chapter 4. And having looked at this, we will have looked at all the most important passages. We'll come back next time and make some other of the points that I said I'm going to cover. But the most important passages, you ask anyone what the most important passages are, well, wait, there is one we didn't cover, and that's Romans 12.

But 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter chapter 4, and Ephesians 4 are the principal passages in addition to Romans 12, which we didn't look at specifically tonight, but we'll have a chance as we go along. Just look with me at Ephesians as we wind this down here tonight. Chapter 4, verse 7 and following.

Ephesians 4, 7, But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. This is a quotation from the Psalms, Psalms 68, 18.

It speaks of Jesus ascending and giving gifts to the church, gifts to the Holy Spirit. It says, Now this he ascended, what does it mean, but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

Verse 11, And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect or mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now, one thing I want to make clear, Paul didn't say we're all going to come to mature men, but till we all, plural, come to a mature man, singular. You see, two chapters earlier, in chapter 2, Paul said that Jesus took Jews who believed and Gentiles who believed and broke down the middle wall of partition between them and made in himself one new man.

That new man is the body of Christ, the church. Paul is seeing the church as a corporate individual. Now he says the church needs to become a mature man, corporately, in unity.

He doesn't say that these things happen until we are all individually mature, but till the body is mature corporately, until we all come in unity to a mature man, to the fullness and measure of the stature of Christ. Now, he says that God gave apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Now, this is a little different than ministering to the saints to their needs.

I mean, if you're starving for encouragement, somebody who's got the gift of exhortation is going to minister to your need. If you're starving for food, somebody who's got the gift of eating is going to minister to your need. Like I said, one of the purposes of the gift is to minister to needs, to serve.

But there's another one, and that is to equip Christians, not to meet their own needs, but to go out and do the work of the ministry for outreach, not only to the world, but also to one another, to build up younger Christians, to get them to a place where they're mature enough to minister, and so the whole body is doing what it's supposed to do, so that the body corporately grows and builds up into a place of corporate maturity. So, God has a vision for the body of Christ. Just like when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he had to grow up.

He was a baby. He couldn't fulfill his purpose unless he matured. Likewise, the body of Christ, if it is infantile, if it is immature, it can't really perform its ministry effectively.

Paul said this about the church in Corinth. He says, you are babes, you're carnal. As long as you're saying, I'm of Paul, or I'm of Apollos.

He says, are you not talking like babes and carnal? Aren't you talking like mere men? So, there's a mark of carnality when you're divided into camps, and you have favorite leaders and teachers that you, you know, identify yourself with. That's immaturity. That's carnality.

He says, I couldn't even speak to you as to mature people, but I had to speak to you as to carnal people. The carnality of the church is seen in its divisiveness. Now, the gifts of the Spirit are supposed to help us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a mature man.

Now, what's that going to look like? Well, I don't know. Some people would say, well, for the body to be united, we have to get rid of all these divisions. I don't think so.

I mean, for one thing, if we do, we're not anywhere near to where we're supposed to be going, and that may be the case. But at the present time, in terms of numbers of denominations, the number is not shrinking. It's increasing.



Every week, there's several new sects that separate from some previously existing group and start a new denomination or something. I mean, there's tens of thousands of independent individual denominations in the body of Christ in the United States alone. Tens of thousands.

Now, and that's increasing all the time. If we're going to have to have the end of these organizations in order to have unity, we're in big trouble. I mean, we just better not hold our breath.

But at the same time, I could say unity can be had without the dissolution of these organizations. The organizations can exist, and Christians can still be in unity. But what has to change is the idea of identifying oneself as being exclusively part of one of these organizations.

Another thing I've sometimes been criticized for, hey, I could give you a long list. But another thing I've been criticized for is that I'm not a member currently of a local church. I used to have them between churches.

I was planning to join a church sometime, but I got discouraged and stopped looking. But now I think that even if I found the ideal church, I would go there, but I wouldn't become a member in the sense that that term is usually used, because the Bible nowhere speaks of membership of a church like that. The only way in which the Bible speaks of being a member of the church is like a limb of the body.

We're all members of the real church, the body of Christ. Nowhere are we told to join some little group and identify ourselves as belonging to them in exclusion to the other groups in town of Christians. And this is something that I think is saying, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, what's the difference? I'm of the Baptist church, I'm of the Assembly of God church, I'm of the Fourth Great Church, I'm of the Methodist church.

What is the difference between that and I'm of, I'm of, I'm of? You see, I can say, if it were true, I can say I go regularly every week to such and such a church without saying I'm of that church. I can say God has led me to be involved in this church at the moment, maybe permanently. This may be the church my children will grow up in, my grandchildren will grow up in.

I have no problem with that, but I don't identify myself as belonging to that organization. I belong to the body of Christ, and they belong to me. And until, I'm not saying you have to get rid of the organizations, let them stay, but let Christians outgrow this notion that they somehow belong to this group in a way they don't belong to the group at the next corner of the town, or on the other side of town of Christians.

Christians are Christians. And it may be that I enjoy the teaching of one pastor more than another, or I enjoy a style of worship in one group more than another. I don't think

there's anything wrong with that.

I think it's really wise, in fact, for Christians to, if possible, especially if they're getting all their edification and encouragement from Sunday morning, and that's the only time during the week they get it, I think it's very helpful to go to a group that you get some edification from, and that you have some resonance with. In my case, if I were to join a church in the sense of going all the time, one of the things I'm looking for is homeschooling families. Because I have kids, and I want my kids to fellowship with other kids who are raised with similar principles.

I mean, we don't keep our kids from meeting other kids who aren't homeschooled, but if we're going to really get involved in the life of a community of Christians, there's got to be some level of shared commitment about some basic issues. But that doesn't mean that Christians who don't homeschool, I'm somehow not as much a part of them as I am to Christians who do. I have more in common with Christians who homeschool.

I'll probably spend more time fellowshipping with those kind of Christians than ones who send their kids to public school. But there are Christians who send their kids to public school, and they're as much a part of the same body as I am. If they have a need, my resources should be as available to them as they are to this group I go to every Sunday.

And this is what really has changed, the mentality. It's not the dissolving of the organizations. It's the mentality towards organizations that I think God would have to change from what it now is, generally speaking, in order for there to be a unity of the Spirit and a unity of the faith, such as would cause the body to not be a divided thing.

You know, Catholics are always telling me, you Protestants are so divided, how could you possibly be the true body of Christ? Look how many divisions there are. And I say, but there aren't really. At least all the real Christians I know believe the same gospel.

And the things we disagree about are peripheral. They're not important. They're not as important anyway as some of the things Catholics disagree among themselves about.

I mean, Catholics all believe the same gospel as each other. All my Protestant friends believe the same gospel as each other. We've got about as much unity.

It's just not organizational unity. It just doesn't look as united to the world because we go to different organizations for Sunday worship. But we're still one body.

And as soon as the world can look on and say, Ah, these people, I get it. These Baptists, they're not some other religion than these four square people over here or these Mennonite people over here. These people are all one people.

Because I happen to know that this little church over here had a severe financial need and someone from another denomination sent a big gift over. Or this church over here

didn't have someone to teach their college department Sunday school. So this church had someone and it's a different denomination, but they sent them over to minister.

That happened, actually. I was a member of the Mennonite church and I went over and taught the college group every week at the Assembly of God. That's where I met some of you.

And I figured, hey, I don't belong to any one organization. I belong to Jesus. And that's what the Bible says.

So, I mean, I have no problem, by the way, of people being regular, committed, involved in a single church, if that's what God calls you to do. And you can be more effective sometimes by building intense relationships with a few people than trying to kind of spread yourself real thin. But at the same time, there's a temptation to say, therefore, these are my people.

And somehow these people I heard about a crisis over in this other church across town, that's their problem. That's their people. These are my people.

When we've got a problem here, I'll take care of it. When they've got it, they take care of it. No, they're my people.

They're the body of Christ, too. My resources, my gifts are for them, too. If they want them.

If they don't want them, that's okay. But they're available. They have to be.

Or else we're going to perpetuate the immaturity that is preventing the goal of the gifts. The gift is to build up the body into a unity of the faith until we come to a mature man, to the fullness of the faith.