

This Pentecost, Welcome All of the Holy Spirit's Gifts

A few years ago I was invited to speak at a conference in California. During one of my messages, the Lord showed me that a woman in the auditorium was struggling with infertility. When I made the announcement, a young woman in the back of the room burst into tears.

I didn't know this woman had endured three miscarriages or that she was depressed because she feared never having a baby. She came to the front of the auditorium with her mother by her side, and I briefly prayed for her. There was nothing sensational about that moment; all I remember was asking Jesus to break the spirit of barrenness.

A year later I returned to that city, and when the pastor picked me up at the airport he said: "I forgot to tell you that a woman in my church wants to talk to you. She said last year you prayed for her to have a baby!" I learned that this woman went home from the conference and got pregnant a month later. She now had the baby, a girl named Esperanza, and she wanted me to meet her.

That was not the first or last time I've received a "word of knowledge" while ministering. It is one of the nine supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. But I've often wondered what would have happened if I had ignored the Holy Spirit's promptings during that conference in California. Would Esperanza's mother have received her miracle?

One simple word of knowledge changed that family. But what if I had let fear stop me from flowing in the miraculous? What if I had just decided to stick to my notes, preach a nice sermon and play it safe?

I'm afraid that's what many of us are doing today. We say we believe the Bible, but when it comes to the Holy Spirit's gifts, we are either too timid to step out in faith, or we don't believe we need miracles anymore.

If we really want to be a people of Pentecost, the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 should be manifested regularly through our lives. Few Christians today have even heard of these gifts; fewer have seen them in operation. We need a refresher course in the ways the Holy Spirit works:

1. The word of wisdom. God can give us a supernatural solution to a problem that cannot be solved by man's ideas. We desperately need this gift so we can stop relying on man's carnal ways and instead discover heaven's answers.

2. The word of knowledge. The Holy Spirit will sometimes reveal information that could not have been known by man. Just as Jesus knew the Samaritan woman had been married five times (see John 4:17-18), the Holy Spirit can reveal the secrets of the heart so people will listen to God's truth.

3. The gift of faith. This is not the normal kind of faith we need daily. The gift of faith is a special ability to believe for big things. It required a gift of faith for the prophet Elijah to pray for rain after more than three years of drought (see James 5:17-18). We can experience this level of power today through the Holy Spirit.

4. The gift of healing. Paul told the Corinthians that there are actually *gifts* (plural) of healing. I have met people who have a special gift to pray for hearing problems; others have faith to pray for those with cancer; in my own ministry I have seen many people healed from depression and the effects of abuse. God is still in the business of healing bodies, minds and broken hearts.

5. The gift of miracles. The book of Acts is a series of miracles—so why would we ever assume God pulled the plug on

that power? He still opens prison doors, breaks chains, releases angels, opens blind eyes, changes weather patterns and delivers people of demons. If we remove the miraculous from our Christianity, we portray a puny God to the world. He is a miracle worker!

6. Prophecy. God loves to speak to His people, and He wants to use us to relay His message. I consider the gift of prophecy “supernatural encouragement” because it always edifies the person who receives a word from the Lord—even if it is corrective. Will you allow God to use you to speak His direct message to others?

7. Discernment (or “discerning of spirits”). When the Holy Spirit gave His gifts, He also provided a way for us to tell the difference between God’s work and a demonic counterfeit. Not all that is supernatural is from God, so we need discernment to protect us from false prophecy and occultic fakery. We also need this gift to set people free from demonic bondage.

8. Speaking in tongues. There are “various kinds of tongues” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Believers can have their own private prayer language, but some people are also gifted to speak in tongues in a church meeting. I also know of situations where Christians received a special ability to speak in a foreign language so they could communicate the gospel.

9. Interpretation of tongues. Similar to prophecy, this gift can relay a message from God that was spoken in a foreign or angelic tongue. Linguistic barriers don’t limit our God; He loves the entire world and He knows all languages!

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians: “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 14:1a). God wants His gifts flowing through us, but He never forces us to use them. He is looking for availability, courage and surrender.

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost on June 5, please allow the Holy Spirit to jumpstart His power in your life in a fresh way. {eo}

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