

Understanding Why God Gave the Church the Gifts of the Spirit

The earliest mention in Scripture of the gifts of the Spirit is when Isaiah prophesies of the Messiah: “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He shall delight in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge by what his eyes see, nor reprove by what his ears hear” (Isa. 11:2-3).

It amazes me that so many Christians reject the gifts of the Spirit and say they are not for today. Yet when people are dramatically healed, prophecies come true, people are ignited by the Word of God as they learn about it, and specific prayers are prayed for people without previously knowing them or their circumstances, it’s puzzling as to why these gifts are not approved by the church.

However, an even better question we should ask is: What are the gifts of the Spirit, and why does God give them to us in the first place? It is a big focus of my new book, *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, which releases May 16.

The reason we receive these gifts, all embodied in Jesus, is so the body of Christ will function with diverse gifts, each “according to the grace that is given to us,” as Paul tells us, “if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; if service, in serving; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with generosity; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Let’s take a look at these gifts and what they each mean for the body of Christ.

Word of Knowledge

According to the *FireBible*, a word of knowledge is “a statement inspired by the Holy Spirit that reveals knowledge about people, circumstances or Biblical truth that likely would not have been known or understood apart from God. Its aim is usually to provide guidance, to help confirm a decision or to expose something that is important for a person’s spiritual development.”

I remember seeing this in action when I attended one of Kathryn Kuhlman’s crusades in Lakeland, Florida, in 1975. I wrote about the experience in *Florida* magazine, the Sunday magazine of the *SentinelStar* (now called *Orlando Sentinel*), where I worked at the time.

Kathryn Kuhlman was well-known for “calling out” miracles with a word of knowledge, but I’d never personally seen her do it before attending that crusade. My article described what I saw:

Then, suddenly, she pointed toward the back of the arena. “Someone with varicose veins has just been healed.” Before that person can respond she says an ear has been healed, then that bursitis has been healed. Christians call this a “Word of Knowledge”—one of seven New Testament gifts given by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul said this gift gives knowledge to a person about something that has just happened. The announcements of healing in this manner continue off and on for an hour.

The Gift of Faith

What about the other gifts? One of the most powerful is the gift of faith. The Bible says every believer is given a “a measure of faith.” The writer of Hebrews tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And Jesus told us that if we have faith as tiny as a mustard seed, we can speak to mountains and they will be

removed and cast into the sea. This type of faith is available to all believers.

But the gift of faith is something more. It's not saving grace but an extraordinary faith to see the impossible done.

The Gifts of Healings

Another spiritual gift is the gifts of healings. These gifts (plural) are given to the church to restore healing in a miraculous manner. Every believer may not operate in this gift, but it's for the church as a whole.

The Working of Miracles

The gift of miracles is the gift to display signs and wonders that give credibility to God's Word and the gospel message and overcome the work of Satan.

The gifts of healing and miracles often are almost interchangeable. If I'm sick and pray for healing, and then am healed, I give glory to God. But sometimes a healing is so enormous it can be explained only as a miracle.

Heidi Baker, who has ministered powerfully all over the world, has based her outreach in Mozambique, and in her book *Birth of the Miraculous*, she shares a powerful story of how she lived in the slums and worked with the poorest of the poor in that nation.

Because so many were sick and some were blind, she prayed for the gift of healing for many years and eventually received the Lord's promise that the blind would see. For a year she prayed for every blind person she could find, but no one gained their sight. Then one day she was in a dark little mud-hut church in central Mozambique, laying hands on an old blind lady. Suddenly the woman said she could see.

The gifts of the Spirit aren't reserved for a select few who are "super-anointed." If we are filled with the Holy Spirit

and being led by Him, the gifts should manifest in our lives. In fact, Paul tells us to “follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit.”

God wants His gifts flowing through you; all He needs is your availability. If you will surrender to Him, He will jumpstart His power in your life.

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 For more information on my new book, *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, visit .