

**LIVING IN THE POWER  
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
AT PCOG**

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*ADOPTED BY THE SESSION*  
APRIL 14, 2009

Dear PCOG Family:

This second Session paper on the Holy Spirit lays out the practical guidelines we, as a church, will follow as we seek to listen to and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit during our church gatherings. This paper is far more practical, though no less biblical, than the first paper, "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," which we published in June 2008.


May God continue to lead and guide us as we seek to be faithful to Jesus and share His love with our world.

Your Session:

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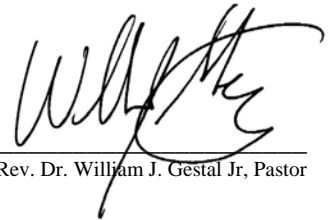
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Signed on behalf of the session above, April 14, 2009:



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## **Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit at PCOG**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is one thing to have core beliefs; it is a second to explain how those beliefs will be worked out in the church. This document is a companion to the session's *PCOG: The Person, Work and Ministry of the Holy Spirit* and this document seeks to outline how PCOG, in its corporate life, will live out its Holy Spirit theology in worship and gatherings.

### **SUMMARY OF BELIEFS REGARDING THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We begin restating the 10 'we believe' statements from the companion paper:

We believe and affirm with the Church universal the essential teachings of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that upon conversion God indwells each believer with the Holy Spirit. And since the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, when one receives the Holy Spirit one receives all of the Holy Spirit.

We believe the New Testament witnesses to a variety of discernable manifestation or life change experiences when the Holy Spirit comes into someone's life.

We believe that the gifts and ministries of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament are all operative today.

We believe no spiritual gift is more important than another, and that all spiritual gifts are given for the common good.

We believe character counts, therefore as Christ-followers we are being transformed into the likeness of our Lord and savior Jesus. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit is not optional; it is essential for disciples of Jesus.

We believe the New Testament teaches Christ-followers to constantly seek the presence and fullness of the Spirit and to not be satisfied or smug about a Holy Spirit moment in the past.

We believe Christ-followers must show Christian liberty and charity to fellow believers who hold a different theology regarding the Holy Spirit.

We believe love is God's most excellent way as we grow in the things of the Spirit.

We believe God is calling PCOG to move out into life and ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE GATHERING VS. CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP**

As we began this study we focused our attention on the Holy Spirit in Sunday morning worship. However as we studied we realized that 'Sunday morning worship' is not a descriptor used in the New Testament. Instead the NT uses 'assembled,' 'meeting,' 'gathered together,' and 'the church' to describe when the early Christians met together. During times of gathering they worshipped, prayed, ate, celebrated the Lord's Supper, made decisions, sent out missionaries,

were instructed in the Word, and the like. Worship was only one aspect of their times of gathering.

This suggests that we be alert and seeking the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in all of our gatherings whether times of worship, study, fellowship, prayer, sacrament, decision, etc.

## HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS AND PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP

Scripture, the experience of the early Church, as well as our own experience at PCOG shows us that the Holy Spirit reveals his presence in our personal and corporate life in multiple ways. One way is when the Holy Spirit manifests his gifts in and through believers. While there is no exhaustive list in the Bible, scripture names specific gifts in Romans, 1Corinthians, and Ephesians (see Appendix for more detail on ‘Gifts of the Holy Spirit’). These include:

- a. Message of Wisdom – 1Cor 12:8
- b. Message of Knowledge – 1Cor 12:8
- c. Faith – 1Cor 12:9
- d. Gifts of Healing – 1Cor 12:9, 12:28
- e. Miraculous Powers – 1Cor 12:10, 12:28
- f. Prophecy - 1Cor 12:10, 1Cor 12:28, Rom 12:6, Eph 4:11
- g. Distinguishing between spirits – 1Cor 12 9
- h. Speaking in different kinds of tongues – 1Cor 12:10
- i. Interpretation of Tongues – 1Cor 12:10
- j. Other spiritual gifts – teaching, exhortation, serving, giving, leadership, showing mercy, administration, evangelism, etc.

Scripture makes it clear that all gifts are the work of the Spirit and are given by God for the benefit of the community. It is also clear that no believer has all the gifts. In fact, believers have different gifts according to God’s grace in giving them (1Cor 12:8-11). However, scripture also calls us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts (1Cor 12:31, 14:1).

A second way that the Holy Spirit’s presence is evidenced in gatherings is through “expressions of worship,” as worshippers respond to God’s presence and the Holy Spirit’s voice in personal and individual ways. Some of the different expressions found in scripture and seen in worship are (see Appendix for more detail on these ‘Expressions of Worship’):

- a. Body posture
- a. Clapping
- b. Dancing
- c. Raising hands
- d. Verbal
- e. Waving banners and flags.

Learning to surrender ourselves to God fully is important; however, specific worship expressions are not a measure of maturity in and of themselves. Because worship expressions reflect personal preferences, culture, traditions, and upbringing of the worshipper, it is critical that brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ extend one another the liberty to worship God in meaningful ways.

## PRACTICAL GUIDELINES ANCHORED IN SCRIPTURE

In gatherings the following principles should guide our use of worship expressions and our exercise of Holy Spirit gifts:

1. **God-focused:** The triune God of the Bible, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the focus of our gatherings, whether the gathering's prime purpose is worship or fellowship. Our focus is never gifts, manifestations, or particular worship expressions (Rev 4-5, see also 1Cor 5:4: "gathered in the name of the Lord", 1Cor 11:20 "Lord's Supper" and 11:24-25 "do this in remembrance of me").
2. **Body-building:** The purpose of gatherings is to edify and build up the body; they are not times for individual "shows" (Eph 4:11-13, 1Cor 14, especially verses 3, 12, 19).
3. **Love-guided:** "*Follow the way of love,*" instructed Paul (1Cor 13-14:1) ... worship expressions and the exercise of gifts should not call attention to self but honor God and build the body. Not everyone will be at the same place spiritually; some are ready for gifts to flow while others may be uncomfortable with this. Expressiveness in worship and the exercise of gifts are to be done in a manner that will not put peer pressure on others to do so, or belittle those not yet comfortable with this (cf. Rom 14, 1Cor 8). Similarly, love calls people not-yet-comfortable to allow others prompted with Holy Spirit expressions or gifts to act in accordance with the Spirit's promptings.
4. **Edify-n-weigh:** Spoken gifts (i.e. prophesy, tongues, words of knowledge and wisdom, etc.) should glorify God, edify and build up the gathered body (corporately or by building up individuals in the body) and be weighed by some in the community (1Cor 14:1-5, 26-29). Since intelligibility is important in a corporate gathering, a community tongue must be interpreted or it should not be given (1Cor 14:27-28).
5. **Order-vs.-freedom:** When exercising gifts or expressing one's worship each person must remain in control of his/her conduct (1Cor 14:27-33). "*Everything,*" in the gathering "*should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*" (1Cor 14:40, see also 14:33). Equally, PCOG honors and encourages all Holy Spirit gifts and appropriate worship expressions so long as they are exercised in accordance with Scripture.
6. **Participation-expected:** Gatherings are not a "spectator sport;" We are charged to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God and to avail ourselves to serve others. Everyone has things to offer when the body gathers (Rom 12:1-2, 1Cor 14, Eph 5:18-20).

## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES TO PROMOTE ORDER & DECENCY IN GATHERINGS:

*Note: the principles above are foundational and as such are meant to be lasting; the following recommended practices can and likely will change over time and in various venues.*

As elders we offer the following RECOMMENDED PRACTICES for our larger church gatherings (i.e. weekend worship, congregational meetings, large fellowship events, etc.). We encourage the leaders of smaller PCOG gatherings (small groups, Bible studies, youth events, etc.) to develop their own RECOMMENDED PRACTICES as they implement the PRACTICAL GUIDELINES above.

Worship expressiveness is invited and even encouraged; the following recommended practices recognize the limited size of our worship space.

- Body posture (raising hands, laying prostrate, dancing, etc): be mindful of the personal space of worshippers near by. Given our “close packing,” one might need to step in to open space to be fully expressive.
- Verbal expressiveness: please remember others are worshipping around you. Personal praise in tongues is acceptable, but must not be loud enough to be confused with a corporate tongue, (see below).
- Flags: due to sanctuary space limitations, flags should generally be waved in the back or lobby, so as not to hurt others.

Believing that the Lord continues to speak to his people, the following note will be placed in Sunday and large church gatherings programs to provide a framework for people who receive a ‘word’ from the Lord to have access to share it with those leading the service:

*If you receive a scripture, word, picture or thought you believe is from the Lord and for the church, we ask you to please write it down and give it to designated leaders. They will review it and discern if and when it should be shared with the congregation which may be at today’s service or a subsequent service.*

The names of the leaders designated to receive these ‘words’ will be printed in the bulletin. It may also be advisable to have a worship leader name these people at the start of the service.

1Corinthians 14 calls for all corporate tongues to be interpreted, therefore should someone begin giving a tongue, the worship leader (likely the pastor) will allow the tongue to continue and then ask if someone has the interpretation (note 1Cor14:13 it might be the tongue giver him/herself). If an interpretation is given, discern and act accordingly. When no interpretation is provided a simple comment that apparently the tongue was not for the body could be made before resuming the service.

## Appendix

### EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP

Reading through Scripture we observed at least 6 physical expressions used in worship by the people of God:

- 1) Body posture
- 2) Clapping hands
- 3) Dancing
- 4) Raising hands
- 5) Verbal expressions
- 6) Waving or lifting of banners, flags

#### 1) BODY POSTURE

It is clear in the Bible that certain body postures – particularly bowing down, kneeling or falling down – are regularly connected with the worship of God. And while the Bible does not indicate any prescribed or preferred body posture in worship, the weight of the evidence suggests that the Jews in the Old Testament (and even the angels in heaven) adopted postures which reflected humility and awe in the presence of God. The following are a selection of verses which reveal this:

Genesis 24:26 -- Then the man **bowed down** and **worshiped** the LORD,

Genesis 24:48 -- and I **bowed down** and **worshiped** the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.

Exodus 4:31 --and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they **bowed down** and **worshiped**.

Exodus 12:27 --then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck **down** the Egyptians.' " Then the people **bowed down** and **worshiped**.

Exodus 20:5 -- You shall not **bow down** to them or **worship** them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous

God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

2 Kings 17:35 -- When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: "Do not **worship** any other gods or **bow down** to them, serve them or sacrifice to them.

2 Kings 17:36 --But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must **worship**. To him you shall **bow down** and to him offer sacrifices.

2 Chronicles 20:18 -- Jehoshaphat **bowed** with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell **down** in **worship** before the LORD.

Nehemiah 8:6 -- Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they **bowed down** and **worshiped** the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Psalms 95:6 -- Come, let us **bow down** in **worship**, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

Matthew 2:11 -- On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they **bowed down** and **worshiped** him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Revelation 4:10 -- the twenty-four elders **fall down** before him who sits on the throne, and **worship** him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

#### 2) CLAPPING HANDS

Clapping hands is an expression used in worship (often in a cultural context) both as a musical accompaniment and as an expression of joy, praise, and thankfulness. An example is spontaneously clapping to praise God after a worship song. Here are several references regarding clapping hands to express joy and praise and to exalt God:

Psalms 47:1 -- **Clap** your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Psalms 98:8 -- Let the rivers **clap** their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy;

Isaiah 55:12 -- You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will **clap** their hands.

#### 3) DANCING

Like clapping dancing expresses joy or rejoicing in the Lord. Scriptural references include:

2 Samuel 6:14 -- David, wearing a linen ephod, **danced** before the LORD with all his might.

Psalms 150:4 -- Praise him [God] with tambourine and **dancing**.

Jeremiah 31:4 -- I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to **dance** with the joyful.

Jeremiah 31:13 -- Then maidens will **dance** and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

#### 4) RAISING HANDS

Raising hands during worship can express adoration of our Lord or it can express submission or surrender of ourselves our Lord. Scriptural references include:

Psalm 28:2 -- I'm letting you know what I need, calling out for help - And **lifting my arms** toward your inner sanctum.

Psalm 63:4 -- I will **lift up my hands** in thy name.

Psalm 143:6 -- I **spread out my hands** to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

1Tim 2:8 -- I want men everywhere to **lift up holy hands** in prayer, without anger or disputing.

#### 5) VERBAL RESPONSES

There are a few occasions of worship described in the Bible where the worshippers make verbal responses as part of their act of worship. Worship as described in the Book of Revelation is most notable. John describes the worship before the throne of heaven as filled with exclamations of "Amen" "Hallelujah" and choruses of praise and adoration (read Rev 4, 5, 19 in particular). Note also that there is a great deal of falling down before God in these glimpses of heavenly worship. Here are three verses where worshippers are described as making distinct verbal responses in their act of worship.

Nehemiah 8:6 -- Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "**Amen! Amen!**" Then they bowed down and **worshiped** the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Revelation 5:14 -- The four living creatures said, "**Amen,**" and the elders fell down and **worshiped**.

Revelation 19:4 -- The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and **worshiped** God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "**Amen, Hallelujah!**"

#### 6) WAVING A FLAG OR BANNER

While, the Bible does not directly describe the use of a banner or flag in worship, it does describe their use in praising God, in making proclamations, in celebrating victory, as well as identifying ones' tribe or family, and as a way to rally the forces in battle. As a result, the symbolism of waving a banner as a part of worship could be quite strong – though it is not clear that banners were used in either the Old or New Testament worship.. The banners in the sanctuary are there because the prayer intercessors felt led by the Lord to purchase them. God leads them to use the banners in proclamation during their daily worship time. The Lord instructs them occasionally to use a particular color banner for a specific proclamation, such as red to represent the blood of Christ. Scripture references of banners used in praise and in proclamation are:

Ps. 20:5 -- "We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our **banners** in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests"

Jeremiah 50:2 -- (proclaiming victory over Babylon) "Announce and proclaim among the nations, lift up a **banner** and proclaim it, keep nothing back, but say 'Babylon will be captured'"

### GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are many ways that the Holy Spirit manifests His presence. Some of these ways are in the gifts of the Spirit referenced in the New Testament. Below, we describe the nine gifts referenced in 1Cor: 12. However, this list is in no way attempting to be exhaustive. Some other gifts referenced in the New Testament are noted in item 10.

The brief descriptions of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit are based on scripture and our interpretation of scripture as well as the experience of believers. The foundational document prepared by Pastor Gestal and Session – *PCOG: The Person, Work and Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (PWM -- April 2008, and henceforth referred to as PWM) provides the necessary general teaching and context for understanding how the many aspects of the Holy Spirit work out in the life of individual believers and in the gathered community of believers.

Our brief discussion of the gifts includes nine of those from one or more of the major listings found in Romans, 1Corinthians, and Ephesians. Paul used interesting variations in introducing the gift-lists, and it is well for us to keep those variations and applications in mind:



Rom 12: 6 -- “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...”

1Cor 12:7 -- “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Further he tells them there are, “different kinds of gifts” (v.4) and, “different kinds of workings.” (v.6)

1Cor 12:28 -- “In the church God has appointed”, and, “those having gifts of...”

Eph 4:11 -- “It was he (Christ) who gave some to be...”

### 1) MESSAGE OF WISDOM – 1COR 12:8

All too often the terms wisdom and knowledge are used interchangeably, causing confusion as to how these two distinctly different gifts find expression in and benefit the body of believers. Starting with how scripture views wisdom, we can see how Paul differentiates the two. In Psalm 111:10 we learn that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of *wisdom*; all who follow his precepts have a good *understanding*...” In the 1Corinthinas passage listed above Paul says “To one there is given through the Spirit the *message of wisdom*, to another the *message of knowledge* by means of the same Spirit, ...”

At the risk of over simplifying this difference, think of knowledge as having a certain set or range of facts and information, while wisdom is the discernment on what to do with that information – how to bring that information to bear on a specific need in the life of an individual or the body. Another definition contrasts wisdom as having a “keenness” in using or applying knowledge wisely.

Current examples include times when God has “interrupted” a time of prayer and changed the direction the prayers needed to take. Gathered to pray for that individual’s initial request of “A”, a member of the praying team can hear from, or sense God redirecting their prayer to deal with “A”, they need to surface “B” which is often something the individual has buried deep in the past. So the knowledge of “B” allows wisdom to discern how best to proceed, particularly when this new information seems to be quite sensitive or controversial. Wisdom also supports those steps of faith in situations where a believer might be reluctant to proceed, but can do so knowing God is directing their path.

Thus, words of wisdom involve three distinct actions:

1. hearing a word from God
2. testing the spirits – discerning the spirits and the word as being from God
3. acting on the findings to benefit the person or the group

### 2) MESSAGE OF KNOWLEDGE – 1COR 12:8

As mentioned above, Paul clearly differentiates the two gifts of wisdom and knowledge in v. 8. “... to another the *message of knowledge* by means of the same spirit.” In the praying case described above, it appears that often a word of knowledge would precede the giving of a word of wisdom. That is the need to acknowledge, to know about, “B.” Knowing this allows the prayer team to deal with that first before dealing with “A” -- “A” being the problem as originally expressed by the person requesting prayer to begin with. With no prior knowledge of “B”, it remains unknown to all the participants until God reveals it – via a word of knowledge – to someone in the group. Then, combined with a word of wisdom as to how best to proceed given this new, or previously unknown, information or knowledge, the praying can continue on the most effective path.

In a group setting a similar path exists. Here, a person is given a word of knowledge – correction, challenge, and encouragement for example – a message from God that He has determined his people need to hear. With proper confirmation from the body, and the gift of wisdom also coming in to play as to how best to apply or take action on the word of knowledge, God’s message is imparted to the whole body.

### 3) FAITH – 1COR 12:8

The gift of faith is separate from faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The gift of faith is a supernatural level of faith to believe God’s promises regardless of circumstances. For example, in Mark 5: 25-34 the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years believed that if she could touch Jesus’ garment, she would be healed. Jesus response, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” confirms that unshakable faith. The gift of faith brings about the receiving of miracles to the believer. (This is not to be confused with the Holy Spirit gift of Miraculous Powers where God uses believers with this gift to work miracles). People with the gift of faith have unwavering faith and are an inspiration and encouragement to others.

### 4) GIFTS OF HEALING – 1COR 12:9; 1COR 12:28

It is telling that from the earliest stages of his earthly ministry, healings played a prominent role in Jesus’ time on earth. In Mt 4:23, we learn about his three pronged approach – teaching, preaching, and healing -- “Jesus went

throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and *healing every disease and sickness* among the people.” The gospel record and Acts are replete with miraculous healings as God communicated his power over the “natural” world and his desire to show that his love for his people knew no bounds. Paul includes the healing gifts in both of the Corinthian listings showing their importance and “normalness” in the lives of the believers.

We note from the examples of scripture, healings take place for the whole body – not just physical, but emotional and spiritual as well. Further, we are called to continue these acts of healing, of restoration, of making well, by exercising this gift when and where called to do so. Even on a personal basis, when sick, we are instructed in James to “... call on the elders of the church to pray over [us] and anoint [us] with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise [us] up. ...” (James 5: 14) While there is no “magic formula” for the words of healing prayers, such work often includes anointing with oil and the laying on of hands while praying.

Similarly, other than our need to pray expectantly for the healing or restoration in a given situation, there are no set patterns as to how the healings take place. Some are truly instantaneous, happening at the actual time of praying. Some happen over time, but are still miraculous. Still others involve and take advantage of modern medical practice, while some take place in such a way that medicine cannot explain the results.

While we know that Jesus can and will end all suffering, the miracle healing we have witnessed in our times are “here and now” signs for that future promise – mere glimpses of His power, glory and love. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the gift of healing is the apparent randomness of when it “works” and when it “doesn’t.” This leaves us with the reality of how do we support, pray for and uphold those who do not experience the healing hoped for, despite fervent prayer and taking “all the right steps.” At once so simple yet so complex – “merely” surround that person with continued care, support, love and grace, that God would continue to work in their lives in ways we are unable to comprehend, much less understand, from our limited vantage points. After all, don’t we often find it difficult to accept how God’s purposes are being served in certain situations, whether it be a healing that we had hoped and prayed for doesn’t take place, or some other dreadful circumstances? Yet, don’t we also need to continue to live on His promise of restoration no matter what, incorporating his promise of wholeness and peace in our lives?

## **5) MIRACULOUS POWERS – 1Cor 12:10; 1Cor 12:28**

In one respect, all our discussions of the gifts above deal with miracles of one kind or another – seeing the many ways God communicates His love, encouragement, direction, and yes, even correction when and where needed, all to build up the faith of individual believers as well as the whole body. We see in Jn 2:11 the main aspects of miracles – something of a supernatural character taking place, which cause awe and wonder to those witnessing the event, and finally the action of belief by the witnesses -- “This, the first of his miraculous signs, (turning water into wine) Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

All this is captured in the definition for miracles given in Eerdmans’ – “For a Christian, then, a miracle is a mighty work, beyond the normal functioning of human beings, which evokes wonder and in which we hear God speaking of his personal involvement and care for people.” (Eerdmans’ p. 91)

Thus, through the gifting “miraculous powers” (1Cor 12:10) and/or “workers of miracles” (1Cor 12:28), we are equipped to partner with God to bring about a God-enabled change to a person or situation that could not otherwise be explained by “natural causes.” The New Testament, gospels, Acts and letters, attests that Jesus’ early followers were conduits of God’s miraculous powers– driving out demons, healings, etc.

The letter to the Hebrews gives us an important reminder – our focus should not be on the gift or event itself but rather on God and our relationship to Him that comes through that gift or event. In Heb 2, following a discussion on the salvation found only in Jesus, the writer reminds us that “God also testified to it by *signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit* distributed according to his will.” (Heb 2: 4)

Perhaps it is all too easy to stand in awe and wonder at the wide range of miracles recorded in Scripture, while at the same time feeling they don’t really apply to our present, “scientifically enlightened” world. Our flawed thinking says “that was then, but this is now.” However, both the literature and personal testimonies show that God continues to use miracles to accomplish his purposes. While those happen in the same wide ranging ways, one example should suffice. One mission group reported that in addition to a number of “normal” miracles of healings and breakthroughs in a very difficult environment, God opened doors that had been forever and firmly close. Apparently there was a city in the region that not only barred any Christian activity, but was so restrictive that non-Muslims were not even allowed to enter the city. It appeared that there was just no way that members of this mission group were going to be able to bring the Good News to that city. Nonetheless, they set about the work of

prayer and fasting for a miracle to open the doors. Sure enough, through many supernatural steps involving many different people, agencies and offices, they gained access and were able to carry out their work of the Lord.

Regardless of the apparent importance, or even despite the seemingly un-importance of a particular miracle, we need to remember that at heart, miracles are intelligent acts of a loving and personal God who chooses to work out His purposes in our lives, and in His world, by partnering with us in many different ways. Miracles are just one of the many resources He makes available to us.

#### **6) GIFT OF PROPHECY – 1Cor 12:10; 1Cor 12:28; Rom 12:6; Eph 4:11**

We see the importance Paul places on the gift of prophecy by the number of times he addresses it in the different letters. In particular, he gives a prominent teaching on prophecy in his first letter to the church at Corinth. Looking at chapters 12, 13, and 14 of 1Cor as one teaching “block” by Paul, we see Ch. 12 as providing information, and Ch.13 as an “ode to love” (stressed in PWM, pp 9-10). Since Ch. 14 provides “final instructions,” Paul’s opening lines of Ch. 14 become all the more important. Here he tells the church at Corinth to “Follow the way of love (as detailed in Ch. 13) and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.” Following a contrast with tongues, v. 3-4 reads “But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. ... but he who prophesies edifies the whole church.” One might say that tongues are men speaking to God, but prophecy is God speaking to man.

As with tongues, there is a parallel gift, which Paul addresses as necessary to properly incorporate prophecy into the body – testing the spirits – “... to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between the spirits...” (1Cor 12: 10) (see below). With proper confirmation by the body for the prophetic word to be aligned with Scripture and fully tested, God’s words can be applied to the particular situation being addressed. Thus this gift ministers to the whole body by proclaiming God’s word, admonishing where necessary, or edifying when needed, all to enable God’s children to heed His communication. While we tend to think of prophesying as fore-telling the future, the prophets of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, were most often engaged in the double duty of both looking back as well as looking forward. First, looking back to call the people back to God’s revealed truth, when they had strayed from that truth. Then they had to issue calls to reorient their lives to be more in line with God’s teaching. The forward component stresses the hope and promises we have in the gift of Jesus and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The importance of prophecy to the life of the church is also highlighted by Paul in Ephesians, 2:20. Here he reminds the church that they are “... fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the chief corner stone.” Both of the groups listed played necessary and critical roles in building the church, Christ’s body.

#### **7) DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS – 1Cor 12:10**

Discerning of spirits is the supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to distinguish whether something is of the flesh (human motivation), of the Holy Spirit, or of demonic influence. An example of this gift in action is when Paul and Silas were followed by the slave girl who “had a spirit by which she predicted the future” and Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her (Acts 16:16-18). The gift is useful in many ways including protecting the body against false teaching or deceiving spirits (e.g. discerning whether prophesies are in fact from God or not), as an aid in deliverance ministry, and in spiritual warfare.

#### **8) SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT KINDS OF TONGUES – 1Cor 12:10**

One definition for the gift of tongues is “... simply another way that the Spirit gives some people to express their praise. It is a way of praising God not in intelligible words formulated in our minds, but in spontaneous utterances of joy that well up from our hearts.” (Eerdmans’ p 372) PWM, note k, pg 23 refers to Gordon Fee’s comments on Paul’s teaching in 1Cor, where he provides correction to the church in Corinth on their abuse of the gifts in their gatherings. One part of that correction contrasts tongues and prophecy and their role in worship or other gatherings. Fee describes tongues as “*unintelligible inspired speech*,” while prophecy is “*intelligible inspired speech*.” This differentiation leads to Paul’s instruction on the “absolute need for intelligibility in the assembly.” Note that Paul does not call for a prohibition on tongues in worship, only that rules of “decently and in order” apply, requiring the interpretation of tongues (see 9. below) in such an assembly. This is to assure that this gift benefits the whole assembly.

There are times when interpretation is not required, such as on Pentecost described in Acts 2. There the mix of languages being spoken did seem to be “unknown,” but were actually being heard by people in their own language.

There is yet a third type of manifestation of this gift, often called a private prayer language between a believer and God in those private moments of prayer and quiet times spent with the Lord.

### 9) INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES – 1Cor 12:10

As touched on above, when an utterance in tongues is given in a gathering, an interpretation of the tongues is necessary so that the utterance can be put into intelligible language, assuring benefit to the whole gathering. Note that tongues and interpretation of tongues are two distinct gifts and can be exercised by two different people.

Paul continues explaining the role of the various gifts, he says, “to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues” (1Cor 12:10). Then in 1Cor 14:13 commenting on tongues in a corporate gathering, “for this reason the man who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says.”

### 10) OTHER SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The listings of gifts in the various Pauline letters are not exhaustive. In addition to the gifts discussed above, Paul includes:

Rom 12: 6-8 -- **exhortation**

1Cor 12:28; Rom 12:7; Eph 4:11 -- **teaching**

Rom 12 -- **servicing, contributing to the needs of others (giving), leadership (governing), showing mercy**

1Cor 12: 27-31 -- **helps, administration**

Eph 4: 11 -- (some to be) **evangelist**; note that while the “office” of evangelist is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to some, all believers are “gifted” by the same Spirit to share their own story of Christ in their lives, to have that ready answer when asked for the “why?” of your faith.

Whatever list we find a particular gift in, we should always keep in mind that scripture tells us:

- All gifts are from God and for the benefit of the community of believers (“given for the common good” 1Cor 12:7).
- They grow out of the level and quality of our relationship with God in Christ.
- We all have different gifts according to God’s grace in giving them.
- All the gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit.

Finally, what more encouragement do we need than that found in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, Eph 3:20-21:

*“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us [that same power that raised Jesus from the dead], to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

### SOURCES FOR APPENDIX:

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