



# Spiritual Gifts Class

by Pastor Jimmy Inman

## True Life Ministry Class

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# Section 1

## Introduction To Ministry

## Introduction To Ministry

Matthew 20:25-28 says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Every Christian is called to be a minister and a servant. However, very few seem to realize this fact. According to a Gallup poll only 10% of American church members are active in any kind of personal ministry. 50% of all church members have no interest in serving in any ministry. This means that most churches function like "sleeping giants." In fact, someone has written that "if the church ever awakens and unleashes the massive talent, resources, creativity, and energy lying dormant in the typical church, Christianity will explode with growth at an unprecedented rate." Actually, if we want to please God, we do not have any choice as far as ministry goes because God has called and commanded us to do it. Warren Wiersbe has written, "Fortunately, acceptable Christian service isn't based on feelings; it's based on obedience. It's a matter of the will and not the feelings."

What is ministry? Gene Mims has defined ministry as "meeting another person's need in Jesus name." Wiersbe says that "ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God." Mark 6:30-44 and Acts 3:1-10 are two passages that give beautiful pictures of ministry. Romans 12:1-8 teaches us the following four basic truths about ministry:

### **Truth #1: Every believer is a minister.**

A Christian is a follower and an imitator of Christ, and Jesus came to serve and minister (Mark 10:45). Therefore, to be like Jesus, we must be ministers. Elton Trueblood has stated, "A non-ministering Christian is a contradiction in terms." In fact, every Christian is:

1. Created for ministry (Ephesians 2:10)
2. Called and saved for ministry (2 Timothy 1:8-9)
3. Gifted for ministry (1 Peter 4:10)
4. Authorized for ministry (Matthew 28:19-20)
5. Commanded to minister (Matthew 20:25-28, 1 Peter 4:10-11)
6. Needed for ministry (1 Corinthians 12)
7. Accountable for ministry (Colossians 3:23-24)

### **Truth #2: Every ministry is important.**

According to 1 Corinthians 12, every person and every ministry is important within the Body of Christ. We need each other to accomplish everything God wants us to accomplish.

**Truth #3: We are dependent on each other.**

1 Corinthians 12 also teaches us that we must function together in an interdependent manner.

**Truth# 4: God gifts us to perform the ministry He calls us to do.**

Several places in the New Testament teach us that God gives every believer at least one spiritual gift. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, "As each one has received a gift, minister it 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, let him do it as with 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. Amen." God does not ask us to do anything He does not enable us to accomplish. Warren Wiersbe has written, "The trouble with too many of us is that we think God called us to be manufacturers when He really called us to be distributors. He alone has the resources to meet human needs; all we can do is receive His riches and share them with others."

# Section 2

## Spiritual Gifts

## Spiritual Gifts

The Christian life is a life of service (Matthew 20:25-28). While we are not saved by our works, we are saved unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). The leaders of the church are to equip the saints to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). This equipping involves teaching and training, but the abilities that believers have to use in ministry are gifts from God. Spiritual gifts are not natural abilities that anyone can have but supernatural gifts that only believers can have. In the New Testament, these ministry gifts are described as spiritual gifts and grace gifts. Spiritual refers to the fact that they are given by the Holy Spirit. Grace refers to the fact that these gifts are given to the believer based solely on the grace of God. Henry Blackaby has written, "A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work in and through a person's life for the common good of the body of Christ." J. E. O'Day has written, "A spiritual gift is God's grace manifested in specific service to others." With that introduction, we will proceed by examining the biblical principles governing the use of spiritual gifts, listing and briefly explaining the gifts, and looking at how we can go about discovering what spiritual gifts we have.

### 1) Principles Governing The Use Of Spiritual Gifts

The primary passage regarding spiritual gifts is 1 Corinthians 12. What principles does it give regarding the use of spiritual gifts?

#### Principles

- A. The Church is to be Christ-centered and operate under the Lordship of Christ in everything we do (v.1-3).
- B. God sovereignly distributes the gifts as He chooses (v.4-6, 11). [We do not decide our own role in the Body.]
- C. Every believer has at least one gift (v.7). [1 Peter 4:10]
- D. The purpose of the gifts is for the building up of the entire Body (v.7).
- E. The body is a single unit made up of many members (v. 12-13).
- F. Each member of the body needs every other member (v. 14-24).
- G. The Body is to be unified (v. 25).
- H. Each member of the body deserves equal care and concern (v.25-26).
- I. Everything we do, including the exercise of spiritual gifts is to be done in love (v.31).
- J. The exercise of a spiritual gift does not mean that a person is living a holy, spiritual life.

## 2) New Testament Lists Of Spiritual Gifts

What are the actual spiritual gifts? The New Testament lists several, but Bible scholars disagree on exactly what they are. Bible scholars also disagree on whether or not the New Testament lists are exhaustive or representative. They also disagree on the question of the validity of some of the gifts for today. Various scholars also classify them according to various systems. My list of spiritual gifts contains twenty of them. I am only attempting to list and briefly define them without categorizing them in a certain way other than by scripture passages. Also, a particular spiritual gift can manifest itself in different ways in different people. For example, one person with the gift of teaching may use it to be a seminary professor, another may be a pastor, and another may be a children's teacher. There is also a distinction sometimes between the use of a gift for ministry and the occupation of an office within a congregation. For example, a lady can have the gift of pastoring and use it effectively in ministering in particular situations, but it does not mean she is called to the office of pastor in a local congregation. It is also important to realize that there are both fleshly and satanic counterfeits of the various spiritual gifts.

### **The New Testament spiritual gifts are:**

- A. **Missionary** (Ephesians 4:11)-In my understanding, this is the modern-day equivalent of the gift of apostle. The office of apostle ceased with the original apostles (because apostles were given special miracle-working power and had to have seen the risen Christ), but the gift of apostleship is the ability and calling to go forth and proclaim the Gospel of Christ cross-culturally.
- B. **Prophecy** (Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:10)-This is the ability to proclaim a message from the Lord. It is preaching or forth-telling. The message must always be based on and be in agreement with the written Word of God.
- C. **Evangelist** (Ephesians 4:11)-While all Christians are commanded to proclaim the Gospel, some have special ability to share the Gospel with unbelievers and to equip believers in the area of evangelism.
- D. **Pastor** (Ephesians 4:11)-It should actually be translated pastor-teacher in this passage. That is the function of the pastor. He is to shepherd the flock of God (literal meaning of the word). This gift is the special ability to oversee, lead, teach and be an example for a particular local congregation.
- E. **Ministry** (Romans 12:7)-This could also be called the gift of service or helps. It manifests itself in a willingness to serve others and to handle practical jobs.
- F. **Teaching** (Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:7)-This is the ability to study, understand, and proclaim the Word of God to the Body of Christ in an understandable, relevant, edifying, and practical way.
- G. **Exhortation** (Romans 12:8)-This is the ability of one Christian to minister words of comfort, encouragement, challenge, and wise counsel to others.

- H. Giving** (Romans 12:8)-While all Christians are commanded to give, some Christians have a special gift of giving that causes them to cheerfully give a large percentage of their income to the Lord, His work, and those who are in need.
- I. Leadership** (Romans 12:8)-This is a person with the ability to discern God's will and influence others to follow him in doing God's will.
- J. Mercy** (Romans 12:8)-This is the ability to feel compassion and empathy for people who are suffering and then to translate those feelings into helpful actions.
- K. Administration** (1 Corinthians 12:28)-This is the ability to organize in such a way as to carry out the God-given goals of a church. It is the ability to manage the affairs of the church.
- L. Celibacy** (1 Corinthians 7:7)-This is the ability to remain single and abstain from sexual relations in order to more fully serve the Lord.
- M. Wisdom** (1 Corinthians 12:8)-This is the special ability to be led by the Holy Spirit in applying the Word of God to various, specific situations within the Body of Christ in order to give practical answers.
- N. Knowledge** (1 Corinthians 12:8)-This is the ability to be led by the Holy Spirit in ascertaining, understanding, and communicating the facts of a situation.
- O. Faith** (1 Corinthians 12:9)-All Christians have faith, but this is faith in a large measure that is a mountain-moving faith.
- P. Healing** (1 Corinthians 12:9)-This is God working through a human agent to cure physical maladies.
- Q. Miracles** (1 Corinthians 12:10)-This is God doing supernatural works through a particular human agent.
- R. Discerning of Spirits** (1 Corinthians 12:10)-This is the ability to determine if behavior or a message is divine, human, or satanic.
- S. Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:10)-It is the supernatural ability to speak an unlearned, foreign language. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding this gift, but its usage is very strictly governed in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.
- T. Interpretation of Tongues** (1 Corinthians 12:10)-It is the ability to translate the tongues message into the vernacular of the body.

### 3) Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts

As we learned earlier, God gives every believer at least one particular spiritual gift. As a Christian matures and gains experience in the Lord's work, he or she may exhibit characteristics of several of the spiritual gifts, but there will be either one or a few that a Christian will particularly manifest. You can use your spiritual gift(s) without even knowing what it is, but it is helpful to know its identity so you can look for ministry opportunities in your area of giftedness.

How can we discover what our spiritual giftedness is? Ultimately, it is something the Holy Spirit must reveal to us. However, there are some steps we can take to help us discern how the Spirit is speaking to us in this matter. The following are suggestions for steps to take:

1. **Walking in the Spirit**-As we are filled with the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis, He will direct us in the ways He wants us to serve and will show us the gifts He has given us.
2. **Prayer**-The Bible teaches us that if we pray persistently, in faith, and according to God's will that God will answer. We know it is God's will for us to know what our spiritual gifts are so we can be assured that He will show us if we ask Him.
3. **Scripture Study**-We should study what the New Testament teaches about spiritual gifts for ourselves and allow God to speak to us through His Word.
4. **Determine Our Passion**-We should think about what motivates and excites us because this can be an insightful clue into what our spiritual gifts are. For example, if studying and sharing spiritual truth excites you, that could mean that you have the gift of teaching. If sharing the gospel with people pumps you up, that could mean that you have the gift of evangelism. If helping people is a thrill to you, that could mean that you have the gift of service.
5. **Seek Godly Counsel**-Proverbs 11:14, "In the multitude of counselors there is safety." Therefore, it would be wise to discuss this subject and how it applies to your life with a couple of trusted, godly, Spirit-filled friends.
6. **Experiment**-As the Lord leads and as you suspect you have a certain gift, serve in different areas of ministry. It is practically impossible to discover your spiritual gift without doing this. As you do this, observe to see if you are effective in using this gift, if people are blessed, if the church confirms you, if you enjoy it, and if you feel comfortable in serving in this way.
7. **Do a Spiritual Gifts Inventory**-This will not definitely show you what spiritual gift that you have, but it can definitely give a lot of insight.
8. **Analyze Your Natural Abilities**-God can use any ability we have to His glory and for people's benefit.
9. **Remember That God Never Wastes An Experience**-2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." If you have been through something, you have the empathy and understanding to be especially effective in ministering to others who are going through the same difficulty.

# Section 3

## Shaped For Service

## Spiritual Gifts

- What do you believe are your spiritual gifts?
- Do you enjoy serving in these ways and do others affirm you in this service?
- Write down possible spiritual gifts according to the spiritual gifts inventory.

## Heart

- What is your passion? In other words, what fires you up?
- What are some issues that are really important to you?
- If time and money were no issue, how would you spend your life?

## Abilities

- Brainstorm and write down as many of your talents and abilities that you can think of.

## Personality

- Describe your personality.
- Are you introverted or extroverted?
- Passive or aggressive?
- Emotional or logical?

## Experiences

- God never wastes an experience (Romans 8:28). Ask the following questions:
- Educational experiences: What were your favorite subjects in school?
- Vocational experiences: What jobs have you enjoyed and seen results in doing?

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Adapted from the "Purpose Driven Church" by Rick Warren

-Training experiences: What types of training have you had that would be useful in ministry?

-Spiritual experiences: What have been the meaningful or decisive times with God in your life?

-Ministry experiences: How have you served God in the past?

-Painful experiences (2 Corinthians 1:3-4): What are the problems, trials, and hurts that you have learned from?

1. At this point, what do you believe are your spiritual gifts?
2. How are you presently serving God?
3. Are there ways you are serving that are a possible mismatch?
4. Are there areas that you should experiment with as far as ministry?
5. How should you be serving God now?

# Section 4

## Ministry At True Life Church

## Serving In The Church

### Basic Principles Regarding Service

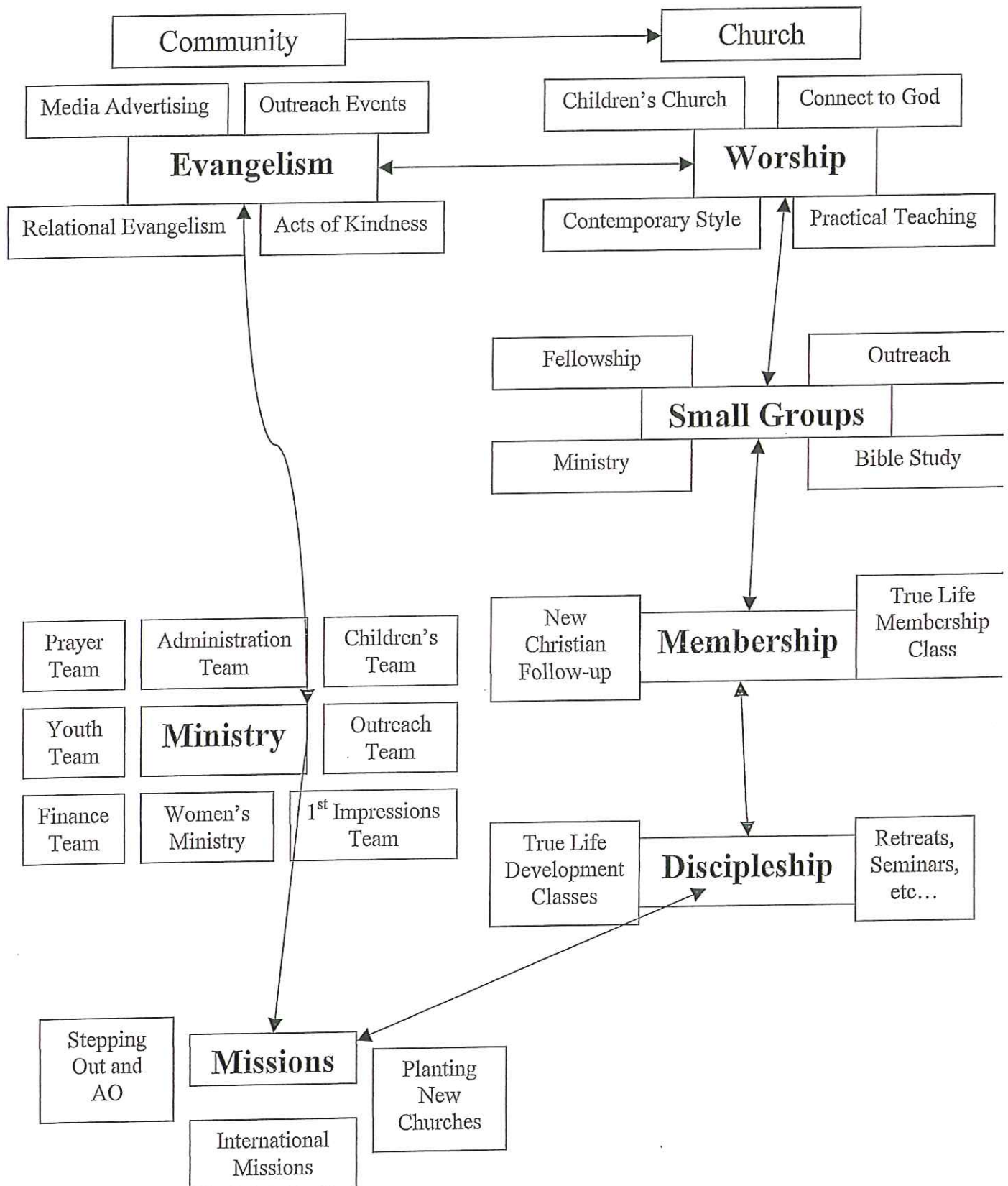
1. Every member is a minister.
2. We are saved to serve.
3. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift that is to be used in ministry.
4. Service is one of the things you are committing to by signing the Membership Covenant.
5. It is our goal for each member to be personally involved in one of the ministries of the church.
6. We will help you discover your spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities.
7. We will attempt to get you involved in the ministry that is the best fit for you.
8. The pastors will seek to equip you for ministry.

### The Process For Becoming And Staying Involved In A True Life Ministry

1. Go through the Membership Class and sign the Membership Covenant.
2. It is not required, but we strongly encourage you to go through the other discipleship classes as well.
3. Complete the Spiritual Gifts Inventory.
4. Go through the steps to become a part of a particular ministry.
5. Participate in the ongoing trainings offered by your particular ministry.
6. Work under proper authority and in concert with others on your team.
7. Fulfill the necessary requirements for successfully accomplishing your ministry.

**\*Remember that the point of our ministry is to glorify God by working together to accomplish our God-given mission and vision. It takes all of us working together to do everything God wants us to do. \***

# Ministry Systems Flow Chart



**“HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY BODY”**

**1 Corinthians 12**

**Introduction:** I think we would all agree that it is important to take care of our physical bodies and be healthy. However, the Bible calls the church the Body of Christ and teaches us that the church must be a healthy body in a spiritual sense as well. As a church, what will it take for us to be a healthy body?

**(I) In order to be a healthy body, a church must follow its Head-Jesus Christ.**

A physical body takes direction from its head (the brain). A spiritual body must do the same because Jesus is the Head (which means Lord, or ruling authority) of the church (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22-23). This means:

1. The first step in truly becoming a part of the church is to submit to the Lordship of Christ by faith.
2. We must acknowledge that the church belongs to Him and not us.
3. Christ is the ruling authority of the church, and the Bible is the blueprint for how it should function.
4. Obedience to Christ is key.
5. A church becomes dysfunctional when not working with its head.
6. If this is right-everything else will fall into place.

**(II) In order to be a healthy body, a church must serve one another through its God-given spiritual gifts.**

A spiritual gift is a tool that God gives a believer to use in building His Church. It is the supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit that enables a person to effectively minister to others in the name of Christ. God sovereignly distributes the gifts as He chooses which means that He decides our place in the Church instead of us deciding it. Every believer has at least one gift. The purpose of the gifts is for building up the whole body of Christ. Spiritual gifts include: missionary, prophecy, evangelist, pastor, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, administration, wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discernment, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

**Are you using your gift to serve the Lord?**

**(III) In order to be a healthy body, a church must be united.** Verse 25 says that we are to have “no schism,” which means no divisions. Disunity kills churches. It is the devil’s tool. Unity is not unanimity. It does not mean we are exactly alike or always agree, but it means that we unite around Scripture, love one another, treat one another in the right way, and work out problems in relationships. This is based on three theological truths from v.12-24:

1. **The church is one.**
2. **However, it is also diverse because it is made up of many different members.**
3. **Yet, it is interdependent (we need each other and must work together).**

**Unity Killers (Sin destroys unity)**

1. Being unsubmitive to Scripture (John 17:17)
2. Disputing over unnecessary things (Romans 14:1)
3. Not following pastoral leadership and developing factions (Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17)
4. Lack of a common vision (Proverbs 29:18)
5. Gossip and backbiting (Proverbs 6:19)
6. Unforgiveness (Ephesians 4:32)
7. Not handling disputes in the proper manner (Matthew 18:15-18)
8. Lack of restoring relationships (Matthew 5:23-24)

9. Being selfishly self-centered and not caring for others (Philippians 2:1-4)
10. Mistreating people (Numbers 16)

### Unity Builders

These are some steps that one missions organization takes to build and maintain unity that I believe can serve as a good model for how to build unity:

1. I will recognize the call and gifts from God in all of my co-workers.
2. I will exercise vigilance over our unity.
3. I commit to speaking well of my coworker brothers and sisters and will publicly express appreciation for them.
4. I will pray diligently and fervently for the blessing of God on my teammates.
5. I will affirm the co-equal importance of planting, watering and supporting ministries.
6. I will shoulder responsibility for the ministry assigned to me and at the same time exercise prayerful concern for the field's ministry in its entirety.
7. I understand that in the 'heat of battle' there will be misunderstandings, conflicts and offenses.
8. I will deal with offenses promptly and appropriately.
9. I will listen intently in order to understand the other person's perspective.
10. I will avoid judging the motives of a fellow worker because I cannot see my brother or sister's heart.
11. I will forgive others on the team without hesitation or precondition, knowing that I, too, will need frequent forgiveness for my offenses.
12. I will commit myself to becoming better acquainted with the members of my team.

(IV) **In order to be a healthy body, we must care for one another.** This presupposes the idea of building relationships with one another. It means having friendships instead of just being friendly. The Hope Healthletter gives the following suggestions for ways to get along better:

1. Before you say anything to anyone, ask yourself three questions: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully.
3. Never miss an opportunity to compliment or say something encouraging.
4. Refuse to talk negatively about others and don't listen when others do.
5. Have a forgiving view of people. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.
6. Keep an open mind; discuss, don't argue.
7. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before saying or doing anything that could make matters worse.
8. Let your virtues speak for themselves.
9. If someone criticizes you, see if there is any truth to what he is saying; if so, make changes.
10. Cultivate your sense of humor.
11. "Do not seek so much to be consoled, as to console; do not seek so much to be understood as to understand; do not seek so much to be loved as to love"

It is talking about loving one another (John 13:35) and expressing that love in practical ways by caring for one another and meeting needs. We are called to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, comfort the grieving, care for the sick, share hope with the hopeless while at the same time rejoicing with those who are rejoicing.

**Conclusion:** Are you doing your part to make this body healthy? Are you surrendered to the Lordship of Christ? Are you using your spiritual gifts in service? Are you building up the unity of the church? Are you building relationships and caring for others?

# Appendix:

## The Biblical Teaching About Tongues

**THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT TONGUES**

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**A Paper**

**Presented to Dr. Danny Akin**

**Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**

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**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements of the Course**

**Systematic Theology**

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## THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT TONGUES

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most heated debates in Christian circles concerns the issue of speaking in tongues. Positions vary from one extreme of those who believe that the gift ceased sometime during or at the end of apostolic period<sup>1</sup> to the other extreme of those who regard the experience as the visible sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that should be experienced by all believers.<sup>2</sup> Donald Williams vividly summarizes the problem by writing,

It is one of the great ironies of ecclesiology, one of the great tragedies of church history, and one of the great triumphs of Satan that a doctrine so conducive to the health and unity of the body of Christ as that of the spiritual gifts should have become the occasion for an outpouring of divisiveness, fear, and polarization. Nevertheless, such has been our experience in the twentieth century. It is the well documented nature of heresy that errors tend to breed their opposites. From neglect comes excess; from excess comes fear, denial, and rejection; from all these comes polarization, the hardening of positions, and the squandering of spiritual energy. Logically, the debate is over the place of the so-called supernatural, miraculous, or extraordinary gifts. Practically, the focal point seems to be the emotionally charged issue of tongues.<sup>3</sup>

It is absolutely necessary for a follower of Jesus Christ to sort through the confusion and controversy and develop a correct understanding of *glossolalia* [speaking in tongues].

Pentecostal theology is very experience-oriented. Frederick Bruner writes, "It is important to notice that it is not the doctrine, it is the experience of the Holy Spirit which Pentecostals repeatedly assert that they wish to stress."<sup>4</sup> Ervin writes, "But the attempt to interpret the charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit without a charismatic experience is as fatuous as the application of the 'Christian ethic' apart from a regenerate dynamic."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the basic presupposition of this paper is that the Bible is God's inerrant, and thus, authoritative Word that serves as the only standard for faith and practice. Even while acknowledging that experience informs theology, this writer asserts

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Renald E. Showers. "The Cessation Of The Gift Of Tongues." *Israel My Glory* (April/May 1989): 21-24; John MacArthur, Jr. *The Truth about Tongues* (Panorama City, California: Word of Grace Communications, 1984), 10. MacArthur believes "that tongues ceased in the Apostolic Age" while Showers is so specific that he claims the gift of tongues ceased somewhere around 73 A.D.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Howard M. Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken As Ye Suppose* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1968), 105; J.W. Jepson, *What You Should Know About The Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), 100.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Williams, *The Person And Work Of The Holy Spirit* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 175.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ervin, 3.

that experiences must be judged by the teachings of the Bible. Therefore, this paper will not focus on experience, but it will attempt to correctly interpret the biblical material about tongues presented in Acts and 1 Corinthians 12-14 in order to develop a genuinely biblical doctrine of speaking in tongues. The focus will be on issues relating to the current tongues controversy. They include: the contemporary validity of tongues, the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as it relates to tongues, the type of language tongues are, the purpose of tongues, and biblical guidelines for the public use of tongues.

### THE CONTEMPORARY VALIDITY OF TONGUES

Is the gift of tongues for today? This is a proper starting point for a discussion of *glossolalia* because if tongues have ceased all other discussion is really a moot point. If cessationism is correct, as Williams states, "All manifestations such as *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) are counterfeit at best, if not downright demonic."<sup>6</sup> As was noted earlier in the introductory section of the paper, there are two opposing schools of thought on this subject. There are also mediating positions between the two poles. MacArthur represents the cessationist position when he writes, "I am convinced, beyond all reasonable doubt, that tongues ceased in the Apostolic Age nineteen hundred years ago. And I also believe that the work *pauo* {1 Cor. 13:8} indicates that once tongues stopped, they stopped for good."<sup>7</sup> The Charismatic position is represented by Ervin, who writes, "And whether stated, or implied, it is a fair conclusion from the Biblical evidence, that tongues are the 'external and indubitable proof' of the baptism in / filling with the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> One mediating position is expressed by Millard Erickson, who believes each instance of *glossolalia* should be examined on its own merits. He writes, "Consequently, one cannot rule in an *a priori* and categorical fashion that a claim of *glossolalia* is spurious."<sup>9</sup> Another mediating position is expressed by Packer, who asserts that the gift "cannot be confidently equated from any point of view with New Testament tongues: but still believes "glossolalia could be a good gift of God for some people at least, on the basis that anything that helps you to concentrate on God, practice his presence, and open yourself to his influence is a good gift."<sup>10</sup>

The key biblical text in regard to this question is 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Verses eight through ten say, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away."<sup>11</sup> Patterson lists the three basic views as to what the perfect is referring to as the writing of the New Testament, the return of Christ, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, 176.

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Ervin, 105.

<sup>9</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 881.

<sup>10</sup> J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 224-225.

<sup>11</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

heavenly state.<sup>12</sup> Cessationists who take the view that the “perfect” is the New Testament believe that tongues ceased at that time. However, many cessationists believe the “perfect” refers to the eternal state, but they still believe tongues will cease before knowledge and prophecy because of the way verse eight is written in Greek. “Fail,” which refers to prophecies, and “vanish away,” which refers to knowledge, come from the same Greek word, whose lexical form is *katargeo*, and is in the passive voice.<sup>13</sup> “Shall cease,” which refers to tongues, is *pauo* in the Greek and is in the middle voice.<sup>14</sup> Criswell says, “He uses a different verb, *pauo*, ‘cause to cease,’ and he changes the voice from passive to middle, *pausontai*, which literally translated means ‘tongues shall make themselves to cease’ or ‘tongues shall automatically cease of themselves’.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, many cessationists believe that prophecy and knowledge will cease in the eternal state while tongues cease sometime before prophecy and knowledge. Then, they give various arguments with the intent of proving that the time of cessation was during the Apostolic Age. MacArthur, who is one of the leading cessationists, gives six basic arguments. They are: the gift of tongues was a miracle gift, and the age of miracles passed away with the apostles; the gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Jews; the inferiority of tongues to prophecy; the lack of need of the gift when the New Testament was completed; and absence of the tongues phenomena within evangelical church history.<sup>16</sup>

How valid are these arguments? In regard to 1 Corinthians 13, it should be noted, first of all, that the focal point of the chapter is the superiority of love (“a more excellent way”). Even the exercise of the spiritual gifts is to be controlled by love. This does not rule out the cessationist argument about tongues, but it should cause the wise interpreter to proceed with caution and not make too much out of the change in voice. Furthermore, equally competent scholars disagree with the cessationist understanding of these verses. D.A. Carson says of the cessationist view that it “assumes without warrant that the switch to this verb is more than a stylistic variation.”<sup>17</sup> Gordon Fee says, “The change of verbs is purely rhetorical.”<sup>18</sup> The point is that the foundation of the cessationist argument is based on an inference and not on a definite fact of Scripture. MacArthur’s six arguments do carry some weight, but they seem to be lacking as far as absolutely proving the cessationist point. Once again, they are inferences. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 14:39 says, “Do not forbid to speak with tongues.” In regard to this sentence, MacArthur says, “Paul was not forbidding the use of a true gift in its true expression at its true time. Now this cannot be applied to today, because the

<sup>12</sup> Paige Patterson, *The Troubled Triumphant Church: An Exposition of First Corinthians* (Dallas, Texas: Criswell Publications, 1983), 239.

<sup>13</sup> Patterson, 238.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> W.A. Criswell, *The Holy Spirit in Today’s World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1966), 177.

<sup>16</sup> MacArthur, 10-19.

<sup>17</sup> D.A. Carson, *Showing The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 66.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

true gift of tongues has ceased.”<sup>19</sup> This writer is compelled to agree with Jack Deere, who says,

They {orthodox theologians and Bible teachers} have set aside a part of the Word of God as void! And they have done so without specific biblical proof. If I were going to set aside a part of the new Testament as no longer valid for today, I could not do that on the basis of theological deductions or later historical experience. I would have to have a specific text in the New Testament that told me a particular command has now been nullified.<sup>20</sup>

This seems to be a necessary conclusion if the Bible is going to truly be the basis of authority in regard to the tongues question. In addition, Erickson says, “There simply is no biblical evidence indicating the time of fulfillment of the prediction that tongues will cease. Therefore, this writer does not believe that cessationism is a valid position to hold in regard to *glossolalia*. The opposite viewpoint will be considered in the next section of the paper.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE GIFT OF TONGUES

The cornerstone of Pentecostal theology is their belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs subsequently to and not coterminously with salvation<sup>21</sup> and is accompanied by the initial, physical evidence of speaking in tongues.<sup>22</sup> If they are correct about the baptism of the Spirit, then they are correct in their assertion that tongues are for every believer. However, if they are wrong at this foundational point, their teaching about tongues is also wrong. What does the Bible teach?

The key verse in regard to this question is 1 Corinthians 12:13. It says, “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.” In order to solve the dilemma of when the baptism occurs, Patterson asserts that “one needs to address three questions: (1) Who is being baptized? (2) Who is the baptizer or the administrator? (3) Into what element is this immersion taking place?”<sup>23</sup> The Corinthian believers were those who were referred to as being baptized, and the conclusion can be drawn that this applies to all true believers.<sup>24</sup> The Corinthians were baptized into the body of Christ, and it was the Holy Spirit who was the baptizer.<sup>25</sup> Patterson then draws the conclusion that “at the moment

<sup>19</sup> MacArthur, 127.

<sup>20</sup> Jack Deere, *Surprised By The Power Of The Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 138.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ervin, 40-55, for an example of this.

<sup>22</sup> Jepson, 100.

<sup>23</sup> Patterson, 218

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

of conversion the Holy Spirit immerses every believer into the body of Jesus Christ."<sup>26</sup> It must be at the moment of conversion because "if it were to happen sometime after salvation, then Paul could not have said that all believers have been baptized with the Spirit."<sup>27</sup> Fee, who is a Pentecostal, writes, "Most likely, therefore, Paul is referring to their common experience of conversion, and he does so in terms of its most crucial ingredient, the receiving of the Spirit."<sup>28</sup> Packer says, "Reference to a second blessing has to be read into the text; it cannot be read out of it."<sup>29</sup> Thus, an examination of this verse demonstrates that salvation and the baptism of the Spirit are coterminous, and the Pentecostal view is shown to be false.

This section of Scripture also demonstrates that tongues were never intended for every believer. Paul does this by demonstrating the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the giving of gifts in verses 4-11, showing the diversity of giftedness within the unity of the body through an extended analogy in verses 12-26, and using a series of rhetorical questions in verses 27-30. One of the questions he asks is, "Do all speak with tongues?" (v. 30). MacGorman says, "In all seven of the questions he used the negative particle *me*, indicating that he expected the answer no."<sup>30</sup> Showers says, "Thus in Paul's day all believers had been baptized with the Spirit, but many were never given the ability to speak in tongues."<sup>31</sup> The same is true today. Therefore, it is clear that neither the cessationist nor the Charismatic position on tongues is viable, and a mediating position must be adopted. This will be done later in the paper.

### THE TYPE OF LANGUAGE OF TONGUES

One of the main questions that needs to be dealt with in regard to *glossolalia* concerns the type of language that speaking in tongues actually involves. There can be no doubt that what occurred on the Day of Pentecost that is recorded in Acts 2 is the apostles actually speaking in known languages they had never studied. However, the question remains as to what type of language was being used in Corinth. Patterson lists three views of this problem. They are: (1) exclusively ecstatic utterance, (2) exclusively known languages, and (3) sometimes real languages like the Day of Pentecost and sometimes ecstatic utterances.<sup>32</sup> There is enough ambiguity that humility and not dogmatism should mark one's interpretation on this question. However, this writer is inclined to agree with Patterson's third view. The true gift of tongues is expressed in known language, but the Corinthian Christians had possibly been influenced by their pagan neighbors and were practicing the fleshly imitation of ecstatic utterance.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>27</sup> Renald E. Showers, "Spiritual Gifts-Their Distribution And Relationships." *Israel My Glory* (June/July 1988), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Fee, 605.

<sup>29</sup> Packer, 203.

<sup>30</sup> J.W. MacGorman, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1974), 54.

<sup>31</sup> Showers, "Spiritual Gifts-Their Distribution And Relationships", 22.

<sup>32</sup> Patterson, 244-246.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 245.

According to House, "Three sources are the most probable candidates for the ecstatic phenomenon seen at Corinth: the Cybele-Attis cult, the Dionysian cult (both mystery religions), and the religion of Apollo."<sup>34</sup> Paul is not denying the existence of a real gift of tongues (cf. 14:18), but it is clear that the manifestations of tongues in Corinth were not of the same character as that of the Day of Pentecost where real languages were used. On the other hand, some scholars disagree with this conclusion. For example, Fee defines tongues as "unintelligible inspired speech."<sup>35</sup> MacGorman says, "It {tongues} is irrational; that is, it is mindless."<sup>36</sup> However, one should consider the fact that the Bible records angels and even God as communicating with mankind only in understandable human speech. Furthermore, Carson notes that careful word studies have demonstrated that *glossa* never denotes "nongognitive utterance."<sup>37</sup> Hodges contends that the English reader should mentally substitute language wherever he reads tongue.<sup>38</sup> Zodhiates declares that "the Greek word *glossa* means 1) our physical tongue, 2) our speech or language, and 3) our distinctive ethnic language."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, based on these facts, this writer is compelled to agree with MacArthur that "the gift of tongues is 'the ability to speak a foreign language that had not been learned by the speaker'."<sup>40</sup>

### THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES

What is the purpose of tongues? It has already been demonstrated that it is not the initial, visible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as many Charismatics teach. Furthermore, it is not to be used privately as a means of "devotional assistance" like many Charismatics assert.<sup>41</sup> There are several reasons why tongues are not to be used in this way. First, since the gift of tongues consists of known languages, it is not correct to equate attempts to communicate with God through ecstatic utterance with the genuine gift of tongues. Second, since God condescended to communicate with humanity in understandable language, why is there any need for persons to attempt to communicate with God in non-rational language? Third, *glossolalia* is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12: 10, 28), and by their very nature, the use of gifts is to be directed toward others because "a spiritual gift is a particular ability to minister to other people which is given graciously by the Holy Spirit to a believer."<sup>42</sup> Fourth, the purpose of spiritual gifts, including tongues, is for the edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:12). Fifth,

<sup>34</sup> H. Wayne House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth." *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 1983), 137.

<sup>35</sup> Fee, 571.

<sup>36</sup> MacGorman, 91.

<sup>37</sup> Carson, 80-81.

<sup>38</sup> Zane C. Hodges, "The Purpose of Tongues." *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-Sept. 1963), 231.

<sup>39</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *Tongues? An Exegetical Commentary on 1 Corinthians: 12-14* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1974), 13.

<sup>40</sup> MacArthur, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Jepson, 104. Cf. also Fee, who says that the gift "can be used privately as much as one pleases" (p.574).

<sup>42</sup> Showers, "Spiritual Gifts-Their Definition, Discernment And Purpose." *Israel My Glory* (March/May 1988), 14.

the main Charismatic proof text for a private prayer language, Romans 8:26-27, does not support but is actually opposed to the concept because the verses say "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thus, the Spirit is not enabling believers to pray in tongues, but He is interceding for believers when they are not capable of expressing themselves in prayer. Sixth, the actual purpose of tongues, according to Acts 2, is for them to be a vehicle of communication and authentication of the gospel. Obviously, this has nothing to do with privately speaking in tongues.

### BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC USE OF TONGUES

There are nine principles that are given in 1 Corinthians 12-14 to regulate the public practice of the gift of tongues. Three of these are general principles that come from chapters 12 and 13 while the other six are specific principles that Paul sets forth as he closes out his discussion of spiritual gifts in 14:26-40. The first principle is that *glossolalia* must not be the major emphasis in a church. It is a gift and not the gift. This is a clear principle because chapter 12 teaches that the Spirit sovereignly distributes the gifts, no believer has all of the gifts, and there is a diversity within the Body of Christ. Second, the public use of tongues must never be divisive. Chapter 12 clearly teaches that God designed the Body to be in unity. Third, the clear focus of chapter 13 is that the gifts, certainly including tongues, are to be used in a loving manner. The application of this principle keeps tongues from being self-centered. Turning to 1 Cor. 14:26-40, the fourth principle expressed by Paul is that "all things are to be done for edification" (v. 26). Fifth, Paul asserts that no more than two or three are to speak in tongues any time the church is gathered together (v. 27). Sixth, he teaches that no more than one person is to speak in tongues at a time (v. 27). Seventh, Paul declares that there must be an interpreter in order for someone to speak in tongues (v. 27-28). Eighth, women are not to speak in tongues (v. 34). Ninth, all things are to "be done decently and in order."

### CONCLUSION

It was noted earlier in the paper that neither cessationism nor the Charismatic position on speaking in tongues is valid. Thus, some type of middle position is needed. This writer takes a position similar to Erickson's that advocates looking at each case and comparing it to Scripture. If this is done and the biblical guidelines enforced, it is an indisputable fact that almost, if not all, contemporary speaking in tongues would cease or be ruled out.

Finally, I would like to offer some practical suggestions for dealing with this issue. First, all we do and say is to be marked by love. Jesus said that love for one another, not our theological position or spiritual gifts, should cause people to know we are His disciples (John 13:35). Second, everything we do is to be done under the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3). Third, we must remember that the

Spirit's role is to testify of Christ (John 15:26) and glorify Christ (John 16:14). Thus, we must be Christocentric. Fourth, we are to receive Paul's commands as "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The Bible must be our authority. It is time for all Christians to stop elevating tradition and experience over revealed truth. Fifth, we are not to forbid the use of tongues unless it is in violation of the Scriptural principles (1 Cor. 14:39). Sixth, we must test the spirits (1 John 4:1). It is wrong to accept every spiritual experience as an experience with the Holy Spirit. Seventh, and finally, our response to those who are in error should be humble, patient, and gentle correction and teaching (2 Timothy 2:24-26) unless they persist in heresy. Then, we are to note and avoid them (Romans 16:17).

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