

The Gifts of the Spirit

by Bud Palmberg

Preface

The text herein is derived from transcripts of a series of sermons preached by Bud Palmberg in 1980 at Mercer Island Covenant Church. When I took up the task of creating a book from Bud Palmberg's sermons (with the blessing of his wife), I determined to let Bud speak for himself rather than insert my own voice or theology into the text. Nonetheless, the informal voice of a sermon needed to be converted to the more formal language of a book. Changes include converting references to other sermons into references to other chapters, changing the tense where appropriate, removing references to individuals in the congregation, reorganizing some of the material, removing benedictions, removing some repeated text or examples, and such. The original sermons and their transcripts can be found at the saministries.org website. Bud went home to Jesus in 2019, but before that, he left me with an outline for the sermon on Tongues, which is missing from the recorded sermons to which I have access. Thus the chapter on Tongues is reconstructed from what I recall hearing that morning, with the help of Bud's notes. Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotes are from the World English Bible.

The message of this series of sermons is just as valid today as it was when it was preached from the pulpit some 40 years ago. Although, as the title suggests, the subject matter is the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, that probably constitutes only about one half of the material. The rest is an exhortation to hold fast to the teaching of scripture rather than experience or tradition, and the importance of building up the body rather than tearing it down with factionalism - lessons that have been applicable from the early days of the church to the current time. This was a fantastic foundation for me as a new believer when I sat in church those mornings, so many years ago.

I don't know what Bud would think of this book if he were here today, but I am sure that he would want the reader to take to heart the timeless lessons contained herein. I'm equally convinced that he would warn against the temptation to jump forward to the chapter on the particular gift you have an interest in. Rather, he'd want you to read and seriously consider the foundational chapters that precede anything about specific gifts. Ground yourself in scripture. In his own words, "I would encourage you to spend some time on your own with the word of God, and really 'study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, but rightly handle (*or handles responsibly*) the word of truth.'"

To God be the glory.

Alan Conroy, 2023

Introduction

It is a privilege to write an introduction for this collection of my dear husband's sermons over the years of his pastoral ministry. I'm very grateful for the many hours of dedication that Alan Conroy has given to this project.

When I was thirteen years old and recently confirmed, my family moved from Detroit to Traverse City, Michigan in May, 1950. Within weeks, my parents were challenged, along with three other couples who had recently moved there, to pray about starting a Sunday School in Grelickville, a nearby suburb. By September, we were meeting in a school building on Sunday mornings. My father had become the Sunday School Superintendent and I became the pianist and, as a ninth-grader, one of the teachers of children. That was the beginning of the present West Bay Covenant Church. It was during those high school years that I sensed God's touch on my life, even with the willingness to be the wife of a pastor should God lead in this way. It was shortly after my high school graduation that I met Bud who was headed for the University of Nebraska. Our lives went various directions, but came together in late 1956 and we were married on September 7, 1957. Since Bud wasn't quite sure in what direction God would lead him after getting a teaching degree from the University of Nebraska in 1956, he decided to spend one year of post graduate studies at North Park Seminary in Chicago. Near the end of that school year, he was challenged to spend twenty months as the intern pastor of a small country church ten miles from Robertsdale in southern Alabama. We then married at ages 22 and 20 and knelt at our wedding, praying for God's guidance. Within two weeks, we were headed from Detroit to Alabama to pastor, together, Greenwood Covenant Church. Prior to leaving, his dad encouraged and challenged him by saying, "Preach the Word, son; preach the Word."

During that twenty month internship, there were river baptisms and great enthusiasm among the twenty-five plus high school and college age youth and their families. When there wasn't an indoor function, the church parking area was the "hang-out." Many were eager to be strong believers. This experience brought Bud to definitely know God's call and look ahead toward a life-long love of church ministry.

Bud's grandfather, C. Oscar Palmberg had graduated in Chicago's first North Park Seminary class on April 24, 1897. His father was called to the business world, but Bud once found him in his office on his knees with a NAPA customer while leading him to Jesus Christ.

Bud's strong commitment to Christ was always evident by the passion and enthusiasm of his preaching. He was amazed when at the Sunday dinner table, he'd occasionally share that he hadn't been sure about how well he had communicated that morning, but then was surprised as people expressed their appreciation. I was always challenged by his sermons, and even this very day, I listened to two of them and thanked God for the gift of preaching that Bud was given. It was only in his 80's that he preached more slowly, though with the same passion.

Reflecting on his younger years, I remember Bud telling me that one night at their little church in Mead, Nebraska, the sermon by guest preacher, Dr. Paul Rood was powerful. Bud, as a nine year old, sensed the Holy Spirit prompting his young heart to respond by "going forward" at Dr. Rood's invitation to receive Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. However, the front two rows were filled with Boy Scouts in uniform. He told me, "I knew that I would probably cry when I went forward and the Scouts would see those tears and not want me in their troupe when I reached qualifying age, so I

did not 'walk the aisle'."

He told me that his dad was praying with some who had responded to the invitation. When he finished that joyous work, he noticed an uncharacteristic quiet in Bud's demeanor. He was not tearing around the balcony with friend, Fred Anderson as usual, but was sitting quietly in the back of the church.

With Spirit led insight, his dad said, "Son, you wish you had come forward to accept Jesus tonight, don't you." Bud's tears were his answer. His dad took him by the hand to the room behind the platform and just outside the kitchen. There, they knelt together. Bud told me that he would always cherish the feeling of his father's strong arm around his bony shoulders as he led him to the "Throne of Grace". Even as he was telling me, he said he could feel those arms and hear his Dad's emotion-filled prayer. He said that the sense of relief, freedom and joy was tremendous. On his walk home, he said that he became a "holy leaper!"

When Bud told me of this event, it reminded me of the time that I had a very similar experience at the age of ten. I had attended an evening service with my dad and was touched by the message of the guest pastor, Allen Wickman. In the car while going home, my dad sensed the same demeanor in me and asked a similar question. I told him that I wasn't sure that I would go to heaven. He drew me over on that bench car seat of our 1947 Plymouth and held me close with his right arm. Though I had already accepted Jesus into my heart, he comforted me and prayed as we drove home.

I am so thankful for 62 years of adventure and ministry with Bud here in the states and beyond. In retirement years, we were able to serve as VIMs (Volunteers in Ministry) for three months in 2003, 2005 and later in 2019. It was then, that at the age of eighty-four, he unfortunately lost his balance and fell, causing a brain hemorrhage and went to be with his Lord within thirty hours. I was upheld by the dear church friends and the Lord Jesus. Bud and I often talked and prayed with gratitude about how blessed we were through our many years of sharing the Gospel and doing our best, with God's help, to sincerely love others.

My sincere prayer is that these sermons will still be relevant so many years later and will draw many people to Jesus.

In His Grip and Grateful,
Donna Jean Christine Palmberg

Chapter 1. Our Shared Ministry

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

There is an enormous spiritual hunger in the world at large, but specifically in America today. It is a deep spiritual hunger that people are seeking to satisfy in all sorts of ways - many of which are very counterproductive. Many who are writing in the fields of social psychology are writing relative to what they see as this deep spiritual hunger and attributing much of the increase in the use of alcohol, the return to hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, and even something as deadly as Angel Dust, the enormous turning toward cocaine by the socially acceptable and the elite classes of some segments of society, the assumed pleasure and use of marijuana, the enormous inroads of almost any kind of occult activity that takes place in the United States, to this spiritual hunger. Not too long ago, four thousand people met just a few miles south of where I live and they paid \$350 a piece for two and a half days where they practiced (among other things) imagining that they were frozen yogurt, and came away describing the "marvelous religious experience" that they had had. Now this would be funny if it wasn't so sad, but it is graphic of the spiritual hunger that is in mankind at large and that is in our society into which we, as a church, must address ourselves. And to which we must be sent.

Krister Stendahl, who is the dean of Harvard Divinity School, says that the growth of transcendental meditation and other things of this nature, suggest a genuine hunger for a mystical and a religious experience. What troubles me is that in the church of Christ there are many people who look for the same thing: a mystical experience. The whole return to the mystery religions of the middle ages is an evidence of the fact we are undergoing an enormous spiritual revolution. A revolution where people are saying "I am hungry spiritually" and they are admitting it and they are looking for it at great cost to themselves, at great risk to themselves spiritually. They are looking for it and the churches have not really been providing this new spiritual life that they hunger for, so they look elsewhere.

I can tell you, that by the time you finish this book, you may not be at all happy with me. Because I am not going to stroke you where you want to be petted. You might be angry unless you agree with me that we have but one standard to which we will bind ourselves. It is not your experience, and it is not my experience - it is the sure and certain word of God. And the men and the women who in this whole area of the Charismatic renewal are writing and saying that it is time for us to recognize that God, by His Holy Spirit, is still speaking today in relevant and in revelatory terms that transcend and go beyond and fill out and complete the word of God.¹ That is heresy! And I don't care where it comes from. The scripture makes it abundantly plain that the word of God is sure and certain and complete, and nothing He will say by His Spirit to us in this book, or in our own personal lives, can in any way improve, add to, or take away from the word of God - once and for all delivered to the saints. Jesus Himself said "Heaven and Earth will pass away but not one word, not one jot or title, of My word shall pass...". Now that has got to be the foundation of our understanding, or we are off to a bad start. Because our experiences vary and there is going to be a vast variety of experiences in the Body of Christ. We must bring ourselves under the authority of God's word - not under the authority of my experience or your experience. We must ask ourselves: what does the word say, and how do we live in obedience to that? Now there are places where the scripture is open to interpretation. My interpretation under the

¹ One of them is the head of the Melodyland School of Theology.

inspiration of the Holy Spirit may differ from yours. That's okay. There's room in the Body of Christ for variety. But we must agree that our standard is not experience. And our standard is not the quotation of all kinds of writers who frequently write ex-cathedra and assume it should be accepted as scripture. We need to return to the reformation theology that says "solely the word of God", because beyond that we are led to heresy.

Every time we have begun to assume that God is still speaking in new ways, we move beyond scripture and what is the result? One result is the book of Mormon. Another result is Christian Science: "science and health and the key to the scriptures". And another result is some of the writing that is being done today on the scene by the Neo-orthodox, by some in the Charismatic movement, and by some who are not in the Charismatic movement. And they are all claiming the same kind of inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the book of Mormon claims for itself and that Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy claims for her "science, health and key to the scriptures". That's the path of heresy. It has been throughout all of church history, and it continues to this day. Unless we are ready to recognize God gave us His word and it is His word that is normative and authoritative, we are all in trouble! And some of the craziness that we see on the American church scene today will simply continue and get worse.

I love experiences. If there's a new experience around that is legal and relatively safe I want to try it, because I love experiences. But if you base your walk with Jesus Christ on your experience, you are headed for a fall. And you're going to be teaching and demonstrating heresy. Now the scripture says in Ephesians 4, that His gifts were until we attain to the unity of the faith of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood. Mature manhood says "I may not like it; it may not feel good, but it is right and I will obey." That's maturity. The child's reaction to an order is "I don't wanna!" And some Christians are running around with this kind of childish attitude that says "I don't wanna! It doesn't feel good, I want a warm fuzzy!". And the scripture says "this is the word of God, hear ye Him!" So (verse 14) "that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, by their craftiness and deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head - into Christ, from Whom the whole body joined and knit together by every joint which it is supplied and when each part is working properly makes bodily growth and up-builds itself in love." That is the goal and purpose of the gifts. God did not give by His Holy Spirit gifts in order to "turn us on". He gave us gifts to equip us. And that's the basic premise on which we have to base our understanding.

If this is going to take place, you are going to have to change your concept of yourself. You have got to get rid of your second-class psychosis. Do you ever watch television and take a look at how they portray guys in my profession? They are usually just about to be committed to a rubber room. They are stupid, they always say the wrong thing, they are bumbler, and their theology is something incredible. That is a reflection, to some degree, of the way society views clergy. Sometimes I get involved in a heavy discussion sitting in the coffee shop, or at a rotary club, or Kiwanis club meeting and then somebody asks me what I do for a living. I say "I'm a minister".

"You mean you're a preacher?"

"Well yeah, I'm a minister. I'm a pastor."

And I immediately see everything that we have said in our interchange before, rerun through their programmer with a 20% discount added. Because their idea is "that poor guy! He's a nice enough fellow, and he seems to know what's going on, but everything he says is just a little bit lacking in

relevance. He's not where I am. He doesn't know what its like to work where I work." It's a lot of baloney, but I live with it because I have to - its a part of my job description: deal with people who don't understand, who think you don't understand. Therefore, ever since the beginning of time God has so arranged His body so that you would carry the weight. Not us professionals. You've got to get rid of that second-class psychosis that sees the word "laymen" as a synonym for "part time, untrained, uninformed, not quite really dedicated, amateur Christian", in contrast with "dedicated, trained professional, full-time men of God". That is not the case.

Let's get back to the beginnings. What is the Biblical portrayal of believers? The Biblical model is the lay movement. Who did Jesus call? When He called twelve disciples, He did not go to the latest class of the Hebrew seminary. He went out and called fishermen and tax collectors and the rest. Then He said to His disciples at the end of his public ministry, just before His ascension, "Go back to Jerusalem and tarry there and when the Holy Spirit comes, He will give you power." To do what? "To be My witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world". And so they did. They went back, they waited, and the Holy Spirit came. They received power and a whole lot of other stuff. And then they were His witnesses in Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem. They never left town! Their order was Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, but they stayed right there. As you read through the first part of the book of Acts you think, "boy they had a good thing going." They're sitting around there saying "isn't it great to be blessed like this? Oh, God is so blessing us!" They had "bless me" services, and had just a super time. Meanwhile, God is saying "What about Judea and Samaria?" Then finally you see it coming. In chapters 5 and 6 you see persecution starting to come on the horizon. Then in chapter 7 we see Stephen, the first man to die for faith in Jesus Christ. They drag him outside the city walls (chapter 7 is Stephen's sermon, by the way - he was a layman - terrific sermon), then they kill him. Then it says in Acts 8, in the last half of the first verse, "from that day a great persecution arose against the church, and they that were in Jerusalem were scattered everywhere" Then you jump down to the fourth verse and it says, "and they scattered, went everywhere preaching the gospel" Now wait - back up to the first verse again, "and they were all scattered - *except* the apostles". So who got scattered? It was the laymen. And who went everywhere preaching the gospel? Those who were scattered - the laymen. And so in God's Divine order and plan, the order was "stay in Jerusalem, receive the Holy Spirit and power to do what I told you to do." And they didn't do it. And persecution came and scattered them throughout that part of the country and notice where they went. Turn to that passage and you will discover: Judea and Samaria. They're on their way! But under persecution. The interesting thing is, it was not carried on the shoulders of the preachers. It was the laymen. What you say has validity, you see, because you don't get run through that discounting procedure when you talk to people.

Now, take a look at the Covenant church denominational history. The Covenant was born out of the revivals that swept through Sweden during the last part of the nineteenth century: the 1850's, 60's, and 70's. Its started outside of Stockholm where a guy by the name of Scott, who was kind of influenced by Moody and Sankey and anglo-American revival technique of mass meetings. He took a whole lot of young fellows who would come to Stockholm and the area looking for jobs in the industrial revolution but hadn't found any, and he won them to Christ. He gave them a little bit of Bible teaching and he handed them a cardboard suitcase full of cheaply printed Bibles and Swedish magazines called the Pietista, which had sermons in it, and sent them home. Now Sweden had just passed a national literacy law and everyone had to learn to read. If anybody knows what its like to be snowed-in for a week, and not have enough to read in the house, you're reading the wallpaper after a while. Now the law says everybody's got to learn to read. So everyone learned to read, but nobody had enough to read. God in His mercy and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit moved Scott to train these guys and they went all over to their hometowns with their cardboard suitcases full of goodies to sell. And people would

buy it and nobody cared what it was because it was something to read.

Then these people simply shared what Christ had done in their life - how they had been changed and how Jesus had come into their life. They knew very little theology, except they knew the basic statement. And so these little booksellers, these coal porters, are running up and down Sweden hustling their books and their Bibles, sharing what they knew about Jesus Christ, and pointing to His word. And revival fires were lit up and down Sweden, traveling not on the silver throated tongue of some great Swedish preacher, but in the semi-literate stammering of booksellers!

And then those Swedes came to America by the boatload - my grandmother among them. They lit on the eastern seaboard and leapfrogged into the midwest and some got as far as Yakima Washington where they raised apples. But a bunch of them stopped in Iowa, in a town called Swedebend. And in Swedebend, Iowa there was a shoemaker - just a simple cobbler. All he did all day long was put soles on shoes and repair shoes and so forth. He was a man who had worked with his hands, but who loved His Lord and read his Bible well. And he poured himself into the study of the word. Gradually this little group of immigrant Swedes started to get together where they shared the joy that they had found in Jesus Christ. They sang the hymns of the revival and they shared together and they asked brother Bjork, because he seemed to have special leadership qualities, if he would be their lay preacher. So Bjork would get up on Sunday morning in his little one-room schoolhouse affair that they called a church, and he'd open up the desk and he'd take out his Pietista - and he'd read them a sermon. He'd spend some time with it - he'd use illustrations from life in Swedebend and that sort of thing (if there *was* any life in Swedebend then) and he made it his own. But one Saturday a couple of ladies were cleaning up the place and when they opened the desk, they found the Bible and the copy of the Pietista, all ready for the next morning. One of them said to the other, "you know, brother Bjork knows the word of God so well. Its a shame he doesn't just preach from that instead of read us these dry sermons." So they hid his magazine. And the next morning, brother Bjork got up there, and after they'd sung the hymns of the revival, this shoemaker stood up and he opened the desk and found nothing but his Bible with a note that said, "brother Bjork, preach from this." And he did! And that shoemaker became the first president of the national evangelical Covenant church of America. It, and the body of Christ, have been a lay movement from the beginning. But somehow we have gotten this second-class syndrome among our laymen who say "we'd better hire another gun because we can't handle the outlaws." The gospel calls us to be His ministers. That's why the Holy Spirit was given in the first place - to equip us.

The Old Testament doesn't have those kinds of distinctions. In Exodus 19, It says "You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and holy people." And Isaiah 61 says, "You shall be named the priests of the Lord. Men shall call you the ministers of our God." That's in the Old Testament, when they had very clear distinctions between the priesthood and those who were not of the priesthood. Then Peter says in the New Testament, "You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house - a holy priesthood to offer up acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ." You see, you are not called to conserve and support alone, but you are called to initiate and propagate. When you say "I'm just a layman," you're not being humble - you're being *disobedient*. You are to take the inspiration and the insight and draw together to gain and then to go.

Next, you've got to change your concept of the church. It's starting to come together a little bit more, but people still say "where's your church?" and church members say, "the corner of 78th and 32nd." Well that's accurate on Sunday morning. But it won't be accurate in the afternoon. Because the church will be all over the place. During the week, part of the church is going to be on a golf course. Part of the church is going to be on United Airlines. Part of the church is going to be flying with Continental. Part of the church is going to be working at Boeing. Part of the church is going to be cleaning up the

kitchen. Part of the church is going to be getting the kids off to school, and part of the church is going to be at school. Because the church is the body of Christ and it is wherever His people are. That's an exciting concept. You see the New Testament word for church is "ecclesia" which means the "called-out ones", "the assembled ones", or "the gathered-together ones". That doesn't mean "gathered together in a *location*". It means gathered together in a common love and a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Any time you sit down with a brother in Christ and share Him, over a cup of coffee, that's the church.

When Matthew 18:20 says "where two or three are gathered together in my name", that's not a built-in excuse for lousy attendance at prayer meetings. What that really means is that wherever the body is, whenever two or three are together, Christ is there – it is His body – it is the church, and it is functioning. We need to get rid of the idea that the church is a building. You're the church. The Scottish people are right when they say "what time does kirk go in?" In other words, what time does the body of Christ go into the building where they meet? When people call me on Monday or Tuesday and ask where the church is, I have to choke back the desire to say "well, what time is it?" Because I want to tell them that "the church is here and there and everything," and I've tried it a couple times. It really confuses people. Once in a while they hang up. And I don't want to mess up any opportunities by being cute. But it isn't just being cute - it's accurate. You see, throughout church history, we've had some wrong and mistaken ideas of what the church is. Before the Reformation, in the 16th century, the Roman church thought that the church is institutional. After the Reformation, in a response to some of the leadership of John Calvin, the idea was that the church is doctrinal. And then in modern day society you've got a couple different ideas: you've got an idea that the church is liturgical and other people who see the church as kind of a subculture holding to certain outdated ethical taboos. And it's not any of those.

The church is the body of Christ. The church is a redemptive fellowship - a theocratic society with Christ at its head, with no set form of its life except a dynamic fellowship of love and vitality infused with the power of the Holy Spirit and enthused by the living reality of Christ's resurrection power. That's what a church is. The true Christian fellowship is bound together in love for Jesus Christ on that basis. What we see today, when so many people are saying to us, "Yeah, I love Jesus Christ, but no, I want nothing to do with the church" is a reaction to a false understanding about what the church is.

Finally, you need to change your concept of what discipleship is. Jesus calls us to a life of separation, but what the Bible calls "separation" is not to be interpreted as "isolation". In Jesus' day there were a number of religious parties. One of which was the Essenes, who felt there's only one possible way you can live up to God's standard as represented in the laws of Moses and live in this world: and that is to withdraw from the world. So they went to the outskirts of Jericho and established a little commune down on the Dead Sea. It was a community called the Qumran community. It was the one responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls, which has given so much archaeological evidence of the authenticity of scripture. But these were people who simply withdrew from life. They said "there's no way I can live for God out there," so they wanted to withdraw.

There are a lot of people who want to do that today. They have a fortress mentality when it comes to the church: They say, "you know what we ought to do? We ought to all sell our homes, get out of our businesses, and go someplace and buy forty acres. And the first thing we do is build a wall all the way around it. Then paint the roofs the same color so Jesus can find us when He comes." This kind of fortress mentality says, "you and me, boy, we got to get together, we bind ourselves together" and Jesus did not say that. Read what He said in that long discourse in the upper room. From John 13 through 17. And when He gets to the 17th chapter, He prays for His disciples, and says to His Father, "I pray for

these men You've given to Me. Everything You've given to me, I've given to them. And now Lord I pray for them. I'm *not* asking You to take them *out* of the world, I'm asking You 'Keep them in the world!'. That fortress retreat mentality has never served the gospel. It has not served it well on the world mission scene. It will not serve it well in the kind of Christian commune mentality that we see all around us today.

Christ's will for His disciples was not withdrawal, but penetration. And that's why He gave the Holy Spirit, and why He gave His gifts. Look at that: "His gifts were that some should be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers." These gifts, in contrast with the list in I Corinthians 12, are to do with ministering. But notice why: "For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ." I grew up thinking that that was a description of a pastor's job. It was three fold: 1) to build up the body, that is to make Christians mature - and you do that by preaching long sermons, and holding confirmation classes, and seminars, and that sort of thing. 2) The second part of the minister's job is to do the work of the ministry. Everybody knows that means visiting the sick, and preaching, and running committees, and invoking and blessing everything that happens. 3) And the third aspect of the pastor's job is to build up the body, and that meant that the trustees and the pulpit search committee have looked around until they found a real "hot dog" who could be the best "member getter" on record. Because his job was to build up the body, and everybody knows the statistical report is going to go to headquarters. Then I discovered that is wrong. The Greek makes it very plain that the task of those that have been gifted with these gifts is to equip the rest of the saints to do the work of the ministry. Why should I do the work of ten, if I can get ten to do the work? Its much more efficient. It spreads it out much more wider area. And so I praise God that the job of these who have been gifted in these areas is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry and thus build up the church.

Today's clergy/lay distinctions have obliterated the functioning of gifts held by all believers. Somebody asked me one time, "why don't you wear your pulpit gown all the time? You look so nice in it! Why do you get up there and look like an insurance salesman?" Partly because insurance salesmen are ministers too. We are all ministers. I want as few things to separate us from one another as possible. And when I wear the pulpit gown, it is to set apart the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of communion from the normal round of things. it's not to set me apart. Because, you see, I am just as human and real as you are. You struggle with temptations to pride, and temptations to shade the truth, and temptations to dip into the petty cash, and temptations to cheat on your income tax, and temptations to lust and act upon that lust. That's no different than this pastor. The only distinction that we have is that God has given me the enormous joy of getting paid for doing what you do for free. He has gifted me and trained me and holds me responsible for a specific aspect of ministry, but we are fellow ministers.

Bob Rocksford says, "Now I've come to see that on the local church level, there is no greater evidence of leadership weakness and spiritual pride - not to speak of organizational inefficiency - than to see the pastor running everything, attending, initiating everything, invoking, and blessing everything. This creates all kinds of clergy/lay tension and causes the thinking layman to throw up his hands in despair and let the pastor get on with his one-man band." Its a relief to me, you see, to know that I am not the repository of all knowledge and power and wisdom and ability. But, of course, my church has suspected that for some time! Its a joy to know that this is a shared ministry. Do you know of a weakness in your church's ministry? Don't lay the blame at the pastor's desk. it's not his weakness any more than it is yours. Its our shared need. Its our shared ministry. We are called to be one in Christ - to be His disciples. Its our privilege to accept one another in love and forgiveness - not in conformity to each other, but in acceptance of one another. Its our joy to help the helpless and the thankless and its

our thrill to minister to the people who are hurting, and to bring a kind of elbow-rubbing closeness of the gospel into our world.

Where is your ministry? Well, part of mine is preaching on Sunday morning. Part of yours is sitting in that carpool all week long. What do you talk about? What do they talk about? Are you alert? Now, don't start beating them with a Scofield Bible on Monday morning, or you'll just burn it out in a hurry. But be ready. Be alert, and let the quality of your life create curiosity in theirs because you walk with Jesus. You see, the world does not relate to the church. The church and the world just keep banging up against each other, but there's no real point of contact. But you relate to the church because you *are* the church. And you relate to the world because that's your area of ministry and so you become the point of contact. So the scripture says that, "we have been called to do the work of the ministry and build up the body of Christ until we attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Not me or you. "So that we may no longer be tossed around like children." That's why the gifts were given. In the next chapter we're going to talk about why is it super important to find out what gifts are and what gifts you have. There's some very important reasons why we should. After that, we'll talk about what's the difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. And then we'll get into the lists.

Pray that your heart will be open so that the Spirit of God can really teach you. Know this: you have been called to a ministry. And the result of that is that you are held responsible for your ministry.

Chapter 2. The Gifts of the Spirit: An Introduction

For I say through the grace that was given me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think; but to think reasonably, as God has apportioned to each person a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members don't have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another, having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us: if prophecy, let's prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or service, let's give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching; or he who exhorts, to his exhorting; he who gives, let him do it with generosity; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:3-8

Now concerning Spiritual Gifts brethren, I do not want you to be unaware or ignorant
I Corinthians 12:1

Few subjects today are surrounded by as much ignorance and bad (and incomplete) teaching as the subject of the Holy Spirit, His gifts, and His fruit. In fact, its tragic to see that entire churches, denominations, families, long-term friendships have been fractured and split over disagreement centering around the third Person of the Trinity that the scripture tells us - in no uncertain terms - was given to demonstrate, and to build up, the unity of the body. To me it is a tragedy that Satan has been able to use what was given to develop and build up the unity of the body of Christ, instead to fragment and to divide it, and to create within that body of Christ all kinds of non-Christian attitudes toward one another.

The Holy Spirit was given, the scripture says, to build up the unity of the body so that we become no longer like children driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine. In the hands of well-meaning but ignorant men, the opposite has taken place. As a result there are many today who are ignorant and who want to stay that way. And there are many people who would just as soon not get into this subject. I don't know how many people warned me "you're going to get in trouble" as I addressed this issue. There is so much confusion in this area and so often we have argued from our experiences to theology and that is always a dangerous thing. Its like people say "I have a certain experience and so then I look at scripture and I go through it until I find something that can be taken and applied to my experience". No! What we must do is place our experience under the judgment of scripture. Solely scripture! A lot of people are ignorant and don't want to become aware, while other people are ignorant but think everybody else is.

Not too long ago, a group of about 25 international Christian leaders were together for a conference and one of the men who was present said that at that time he suggested that before they actually began the conference, as a devotional exercise, they go around in a circle of these international Christian big shots, and share a verbal word of praise for a gift the Holy Spirit had given to enrich the church. And they made statements like this:

- "Lord, we praise You for the gift of our loved ones."
- "Lord, we praise You for our children."
- "Lord, we praise You for Billy Graham."
- "Lord, we praise you for Jesus Christ."
- "Lord, we praise You for the privilege of preaching the gospel."

- "Lord, we praise You for our brothers and sisters in Christ."
- Etc., etc.

Less than 25% of those present were able to respond in an intelligent and articulate way to the specific request that they share praise for a spiritual gift. Now all of the things they referred to were, indeed, gifts. But they were not under the category or qualification that the leader had requested. And if this is true among Christian leaders, how much more is it true among grass roots?

Let me illustrate two opposite reactions to one of the most controversial gifts - the gift of tongues. A young lady who had only been a Christian for about six to eight months was interviewing for a job with a Christian organization. She was asked, among other things, "how do you feel about tongues?"

And her response was to look a little confused and say, "Um, what do you mean?"

And they say, "Well, how do you feel about speaking in tongues?"

She said, "I'm not sure I know what you're talking about."

So one of those who was interviewing her explained what had taken place in Acts chapter 2 and said that "they spoke with unknown languages, or languages they had not learned"

And she interrupted the person who was explaining it, "well, I've learned one thing in the eight or nine months I've been a Christian, and this is: if it's in the Book, you can pretty well rely on it."

And they said, "now what a minute. We have a policy that no one will serve on staff with this organization unless they sign a pledge promising they will not speak in tongues."

And she said, "But I don't understand. If its in the Book..." and that ended the interview.

Now on the other side, I am aware of a Christian brother who has a tremendous gift of teaching. The Holy Spirit has gifted his mind with a kind of insight and wonder that allows him to take the scriptures and open them like a flower opening to the sun. His gift of teaching was recognized by a group of people that are called "Charismatics" (and we'll get into that definition after a while, because that's really a misnomer) - by people who are very much interested in the tongues gift, and they recognized this man's gift of teaching and he began to teach and it grew and grew and grew and men and women were coming to know Christ and people were growing spiritually and they had to keep getting larger and larger places for them to meet as this man exercised the gift of the Holy Spirit. And then word got out that this man had never spoken in tongues. And this sponsoring group believes that tongues is the sign gift of the entry and baptism of the Holy Spirit - without tongues, you don't have the Holy Spirit - and therefore they withdrew support, closed down the meetings, and hundreds of people were left without the insight and blessing of this man's gift.

Those are two illustrations of what can only be called ignorance. Paul says, "moreover brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant concerning the spirituals." I Corinthians 12 begins a new section of that book. It's really a kind of turning point. The first eleven chapters, the apostle Paul has been dealing with what are called "carnalities". He is talking about the fleshly nature of that church. He has talked about the non-spiritual aspect of many within the church of Corinth. He says in the 3rd chapter, for instance, in the 1st verse, "And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as to carnal - even as unto babes in Christ." Corinth was a carnal church. Of all the churches I know of, that's the

one I'd probably least liked to have served. They had more problems than they could begin to deal with. So in the first eleven chapters, Paul deals with their carnality. He talks about their wranglings and their divisions between themselves. He talks about their gossiping and he deals with their sexual sins and their abuse of their freedom in Christ. And their taking each other to lawsuit in court and their awful abuse of the Lord's supper and the love feast. That was the condition of the church at Corinth. Now, mind you, it is also the condition of the church that prided itself on possessing every spiritual gift. Now hear this: this church that was characterized by suits against one another, by immorality, by drunkenness at the Lord's table, by party spirits and divisions and all the rest also prided itself on having all spiritual gifts operative within its body. Therefore, Godliness and giftedness are *not* synonymous.

When Paul writes in the first eleven chapters of the book of I Corinthians, he is saying, "this is what you are in the church: you are carnal. Now I don't want you to be ignorant about the spirituals." So, starting in chapter 12, he is going to deal with, not the carnalities which he's dealt with, but with the spirituals. If you look in your translation, it probably says "Now, I do not want you to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts" or something of that nature. And the word "gifts" should be, if it's not, in italics. Because, what it means is that's not in the Greek. That's the implication. But I think the implication is much more clear if you leave out the word "gift" because that simply confuses it. The word is not "charismata", the word is the same word that we get from "pneumatic tires": "pneumatikos", which means "Spirit-filled", "air filled", "Spirit breathed". And so it is that we have got to recognize Paul is contrasting the old carnal nature with the spiritual nature; the carnality of the Corinthian church with the spiritualities that he calls for. And therefore, he is saying "you can have the gifts," and Corinth did (he says in the first chapter, "you have gifts in abundance, and all of them"), but not be a spiritual church.

So if somebody asks me "do I want every gift operative in my church?" I'd say, "yes, dear God, I do. But I would rather have a Godly church than a gifted church, if I had a choice." I believe that if we are Godly then God's gifts operate in the proper perspective, where they belong. And they will cause the church to accomplish what God intended them to do.

You notice in verse 1 the word is "pneumaticos" or "spiritualities". Chapters 1 through 11 is about their carnalities. Starting in chapter 12 he talks about spiritualities. Now he's not talking about the gifts, per se. They are a part of it. But when he talks about the spiritualities, he talks about the unity of the body of Christ. And that's the whole motivation of chapter 12. It is the unity of the body. Secondly, he is talking to them about the fruits of the Spirit, the central of which is love. A third spiritual that he deals with, and this church was so carnal he had to go way back to the very foundation and teach them the gospel all over again. So in chapter 15, he deals with them about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then he deals with the Christians' triumph in Christ. These are the spiritualities that he wants to share with them. And you can see by reading chapters 1 through 11 that ignorance of these spiritualities is not bliss. Not in the life of any individual, nor in the life of the church. So he says in the second and third verse, "you know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols, however you may have been moved. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaketh by the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus be cursed.' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit." Paul is here reminding them of that out from which they have been saved.

He says, "you know that you were heathen, how you were led astray to dumb idols no matter how you were moved" and there are two words that he uses here that I believe are very helpful in helping us to understand how we can test the genuine from the counterfeit when it comes to the movements of the Spirit. The one word is "moved". He says, "you were led astray to dumb idols however you may be

been **moved**" and the Greek in the word "moved" gives the clear and unmistakable impression of being "carried along". It means "lack of volitional control". It means "compulsive behavior". The Holy Spirit is utterly different than that. He never forces. He never compels. He never violates the human personality. And that's why I find myself in strong disagreement with those who interpret the scriptures where the word "tongues" is used and refer to it in interpretation "ecstatic utterances", because the words "ecstatic utterance" carries with it the connotation of being "carried along" or being "out of control" and being "lacking in my own volitional control". And the Holy Spirit never does. "The spirits are subject...". The second word is the word "speaking". Notice he goes on down and says "therefore, I want you to understand that no one **speaking** by the Spirit of God...". Now that implies full control. You see, the Holy Spirit's primary concern is not to produce spiritual excitement, but the Holy Spirit's concern is to produce spiritual growth, development, and to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

Now a second test is not only the nature of the gift itself - whether it moves us or whether we have the control - but the second test concerns the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Don't understand this phrase "no man can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Spirit of God" to say that anybody that just gives the words "Jesus is Lord" therefore is a Christian. I've had people say that: "well, you know Pastor, this person says 'Jesus is Lord'. What are you going to do? You just have to believe them." Baloney! "By your fruit you shall know them" and I don't care how much they talk unless its demonstrated in their life. And the scripture that is quoted here, in the second and third verse which says, "therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus be cursed' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" really carries with it the connotation "no man can say and live under the Lordship of Christ except by the Spirit." It is not simply a verbalization. There is no room for verbal theology in scripture, because to say and to be are the same things. So the second test of genuine or counterfeit is "what about the Lordship of Jesus Christ?" That church at Corinth had every gift there was in the Book. They prided themselves so much on it that they were even dividing the church over the gifts. But they did not demonstrate the Lordship of Christ in their life. They were building up themselves - or their own little religious party. They were tearing down and dividing the body of Christ which the Holy Spirit was given in order to unify and to build up. And Paul doesn't want us to be ignorant of the facts concerning the spirituals.

There are basically four reasons that I want to touch on why it is important for us to know what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are, and what our own gifts are. First of all, it's important because it will enable us to be what God wants us to be. You see, to know that God Himself has equipped you with the unique pattern of Spiritual life and gifts. And to know that He has placed you where you are in order to minister those gifts, is to enter a new dimension of exciting possibilities, where you have the confidence that you are in partnership with God and with other parts of the body for the building up of the whole. It gives you a handle on your spiritual job description and it relieves the frustration of trying to *do* in your own strength. It frees you to operate in the ministry of the Holy Spirit's power. Listen, brothers and sisters, it will do away with that crippling inferiority complex that so many of you struggle with. There is no room in the body of Christ for an inferiority complex. We are so frequently wrapped up in guilt comparisons that we get tied up in inferiority.

Let me give you an illustration. Say a lady, by the name of Betty, loves to entertain. You can hardly answer the phone when Betty calls without getting invited over for a cup of coffee or something. She sees you at church - she wants you to drop over sometime. There's always people coming and going in her house. She's the kind of a lady who, if you walk in and there's a pile of clothes in the corner, she says "don't pay any attention to the clothes," and she throws them in the other corner, out of sight. It doesn't shake her up. But then along comes the Sunday School superintendent or the pastor and they say, "Betty, we'd like you to teach" and Betty breaks into a cold sweat. She tries. Believe me, she tries.

But she almost goes into coronary arrest every time she faces what, to her, is that formidable rank of third and fourth graders. She is absolutely terrified by these youngsters. And if you give her older people and that's no better. They scare her too. But because she feels it's every Christian's job to teach, she's going to try her best to teach.

Now Mary, on the other hand, loves to teach. She can't see two kids walk past her house, or the paperboy collecting for the paper, without her trying to give him some good little bit. She is continually gathering around herself youngsters and older people. She loves to share what God has taught her. She has the chance to teach. Oh, she takes it seriously. She works on that lesson. She loves to prepare that little handwork and all the rest for her class. She's so excited about it. She thinks that light of recognition and understanding in a child's eye when they understand a Biblical concept cannot be compared with any joy on Earth. But then somebody comes to Mary and says, "Now, Mary, it's nice that you teach, but we really want you to entertain visiting missionaries for the rest of the year." And she panics, because Mary's incapable of entertaining without having a panic. She can't have somebody in for coffee without cleaning the garage. She's afraid they'll accidentally look into that closet and so she's got to clean the whole house to have them in the living room for ten minutes.

What's happening here is that Betty, who has the gift of hospitality, is being forced into teaching. And Mary, who has the gift of teaching, is being forced into hospitality. And do they feel inferior! When, instead, they ought to be able to relax and rejoice because knowing their gift is a gift of teaching, or their gift is a gift of hospitality, or any gift mix (and we'll get into that in a few chapters), they zestfully get into their teaching or into their hospitality free of guilt and free of jealousy, because they are able to thank and praise God, not only for their own gifts, but for each others', and how well they fit together. You need to know what God's gifts to you have been. In order that you might be set free from that crippling inferiority that thinks "I'm not as good as somebody else." No matter what your gift is, you are important to God, because you are a part of the body of Christ. And the scripture says, "because I am not the eye, I am not a part of the body does not make it any less a part of the body." That kind of false humility is stimulated by ignorance. Remember what Romans 12 said? "I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment." That means, take a good hard, realistic look at who you are and what God has given you, and use that. "Not to think more highly than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." And all this thinking soberly should lead one who knows his gift away from pride in that gift all the way to thankfulness and joy at just being able to use it in His service.

Second, to know your gifts will enable the church to be what God wants it to be. We have got to remember the consistent Biblical figure for the church is the **body**. Hermeneutics is a fancy word which really means "principles of interpretation", and if you understand the principle of the body, you understand the whole hermeneutical key to an understanding of this scripture. Now how tough is that? Well, you don't need to be very sophisticated. For instance, if you realize that you cannot pick up an object with your ear, or smell with your eye, or see with your nose, then you understand the hermeneutical principle. It's not a very sophisticated one, really. It simply means that every part of the body is created for its function and that's where it functions. And outside of that functioning it cannot really do much good. Now, if you understand that - that each member of the body has a different function - that the whole body is made up of many different parts - then you will understand that the body's members are designed to do their task and no more. But together they form the whole. That's the hermeneutical principle. Since we're part of one body, it is vital that we know each other, that care about each other, and that we function as we are, for the health of the whole body. In Ephesians chapter 4, which is another one of the gift chapters in scripture, it says that when all gifts are in

operation, the whole body matures - it becomes a perfect man, no more like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. It grows and it matures. The need to compete is eliminated.

Back in the old days, when the pipe organs were run by bellows, they used to have all of the congregation's hyper-kinetic kids run the bellows. They would get back behind little curtains and they would pump on these bellows so there'd be plenty of air going through the organ. I read about an organist in those days who gave a terrific concert, and when he got done, everybody came up to the console of the organ and were complimenting him on the great power and majesty with which he played the instrument. After about ten or fifteen minutes of praise being lauded on this organist, a sweaty, dirty little kid stuck his head out from under a curtain back where he had been pumping the bellows all the time, and he says, "we did a pretty good job, didn't we?"

The organist turned to him and said, "who are you anyway? I am the artist at the keyboard!", and you can predict the result. The next concert came a month later and it calls for an enormous amount of wind as the organist approaches a very stormy passage. Just as he signals for more wind, the organ starts to die. And he signals frantically for more wind and finally the curtain comes aside and this sweaty little kid looks out and says, "Now shall we say 'we'?" You see, the body of Christ functions very much like that. There are those who are back behind the curtains, pumping the bellows. And there are those who are up front. But it is to the glory of **God** - not the the glory of any individual. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to His glory for the building up of the whole body - not for the glorification or the lauding of any particular part of His body.

Third, I believe that the Holy Spirit would desire us to know His gifts in order that we might bring the glory to God. I Peter 4 says, "as each one has received a spiritual gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards to the manifold grace of God so that in all things Christ may be glorified. That God may be glorified." You see, the ministry of the body is the ministry of Christ. He loves the world and the men and women in it - the homeless and the derelicts and the addicts and the outcasts and the driven and the driver. He loves them all, the success and the failure. He loves them and wants to reach them, but He cannot reach them except through His body. And that's why He's equipped it with gifts and filled it with His life to His glory.

There's one more reason, and that is: it is important to know our gifts because we are held accountable for their use. I Peter 4 again says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards." I Corinthians 4:2 says, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Every spiritual gift we have is a resource we must use, and for which we are accountable. In Matthew 25, Christ tells the parable about the three stewards who were given a different amount of gold. One was given one talent, another two talents, and another five talents. And the significant thing about that whole parable was not the number of talents of gold that they had, but how good of stewards they were with what they possessed. And the message of that parable is unmistakably clear: "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required". Tragically some people have been called to be His stewards and they will not hear His words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant", because they have been ignorant and buried (or chosen to ignore) their spiritual gifts. I think it's important to know.

Let me lay down, once again, some principles. Next chapter we will look at the subject of "what are the gifts" and the contrast between the gifts and the fruit, because we've got to clearly define what we are talking about before we get going. Remember this principle: the gifts are to be used corporately. Private callings are not scriptural. The gifts are for the benefit of the body. Secondly, remember that when you are speaking concerning the gifts, you are not talking about that which the Holy Spirit has

given to "turn on" individual Christians. it's not some sort of a kick He's promised us. It is to build up the total body to maturity and to His glory. And nothing represents maturity less than some of the bickering and squabbling that you see in the church scene today between people who say "we got it and you ain't got it." That's not maturity; that's childish. And it is childish because it is in disobedience to the context. The giving of gifts are always for the purpose of the building up of the body - the edification of the body. And the context of the gift is always unity. Always! Love is the controlling attitude for the proper use of the gifts. I trust, by God's grace, that as you read through the rest of this book, that you will not be ignorant of the spirituals but will learn what God has for you in His word.

Chapter 3. The Difference Between Fruits, Gifts, and Talents

You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you will ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 15:16

It was 5:00 in the morning on a very snowy cold winter's day that a missionary candidate arrived for a strange early-morning appointment with a missionary examiner. He was ushered into an office where he sat waiting until 8:00 for an interview. When, finally, the examiner - a retired missionary - came into the room, he asked the first question of the applicant for mission service, "Can you spell?"

The missionary candidate said "Yes..."

And so the examiner said, "spell 'baker'"

"B-A-K-E-R"

"Very good. How good are you at numbers?"

"Pretty good"

"Add 2 and 2."

"4"

"That's fine. I think you have probably passed your interview and I will notify the mission board tomorrow of those results," and he was dismissed. He walked out rather confused and bemused by the whole thing.

The next day, the missionary examiner presented the report of his interview to the mission board, and this is what he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the candidate that I interviewed yesterday is a worthy candidate to be a missionary. He has all of the qualifications needed by a missionary. First of all, I tested him on self-denial by making him get up at 5:00. And he left the warm bed and came through the snow without complaint. Secondly, I tested him on his promptness and sense of responsibility and he came on time. Third, I tested him on his patience by making him wait three hours before I showed up. Fourth, I tested him on his temper because he showed no signs of anger at the delay. Fifth, I tested his humility by asking him questions any seven year old could answer. And he showed, again, no indignation. And, so you see, because he manifests the fruits of the Spirit so needed by a missionary, I recommend he be accepted."

Now, I think that's a parenthetical story. But I think it makes a good point: we who are so frequently wrapped up in examining people's credentials - in terms of what the world calls qualification - need to know that the scripture places its emphasis, not upon the demonstration of gifts, but upon the production of fruit. The Holy Spirit's gifts are necessary for the growth and the maturity of the body of Christ, but the Spirit-produced fruit is more significant. And the missionary examiner in the story saw that. Perhaps that's why, in order to answer the question "what are these spiritual gifts", it's necessary

first of all to begin by saying what they are not, in order to clear away some of the confused thinking that we have.

In the first place, the gifts of the Spirit are not the same as the fruits of the Spirit. Now I suppose you say, "that's self-evident." But it doesn't seem to be in the kind of garbled thinking that's reflected in much of the writing, publication, and even many of the tapes that are being hawked all over the country today. The gifts of the Spirit are not the same as the fruits of the Spirit, and there's several instances of that. In the first place, the fruits of the Spirit are much more important than the gifts. You wouldn't hear that or understand that from a lot of the talk concerning the gifts. But the fruits of the Spirit, according to the teaching of scripture, are much more important than the gifts, because Godliness is more desirable than giftedness. Jesus said, "I have called you and appointed you that you might go and bear much fruit." He does not say, "I've called you in order that you can demonstrate how gifted you are"

"I've called you that you bear much fruit and that your fruit would remain." You see, the church at Corinth, to which Paul wrote some of the primary teachings concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit, was a church that in the first chapter is described by Paul saying "so you are not lacking in any gift". Indeed, the Corinthian church had gifts in such abundance that these gifts were causing many problems, because the Corinthians were not Godly. They did not demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit, they just paraded the gifts of the Spirit and the result is they were in deep trouble. That's why the apostle Paul writes to them and he puts the chapter on fruit - which is basically the "love chapter", chapter 13 - right in the middle of this discourse. He says to these Corinthians, who are so proud of their gifts and so busy parading them and putting each other down on the basis of gifts, "hey let me tell you something: without love, which is the primary fruit of the Spirit, you're gifts are nothing but a lot of noise. Tinkling brass or a clanging cymbal." The possession of gifts does not indicate Godliness. And that's why the church was so riddled with problems - including four different ways that church was split, the condoning and even kind of pride of broad-mindedness concerning sexual sin within the leadership of the church, and drunkenness at the Lord's table. This in a church that has all of the gifts. The problem was they demonstrated none of the fruit, while they are called to bear fruit.

That's why the qualifications for the offices of leadership of the church stated in I Timothy 3 and also in Titus 1, are "must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, able to manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect, for if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the Devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the Devil's trap." And so on. And you will notice that the emphasis is not upon the gifts. You'd think they would say, "well he's got to be a good administrator and he's got to have this gift, and this gift, and this gift." It doesn't say anything about that. It's an emphasis on the fruits of the Spirit, which validate our commitment.

I remember how my theology was rattled a few years ago when a fellow came up to me down on First avenue, who was very, very drunk and in a rather tough condition. When he saw my collar, he said to me, "Father, I want you to know that I am a Christian."

And I said, "I'm glad you told me because you give me no evidence of that." Now I wasn't being smart, I was trying to make a point.

And he said, "I'll give you some evidence."

And he proceeded to speak in an unknown tongue. It was beautiful, but I was revolted because it is pure water out of a foul cistern. Now, the manifestation of any gift is invalidated without the fruit, because the Biblical teaching surrounding gifts is that there is a distinct and clear difference between gifts and fruit. And Godliness is more to be desired than giftedness. That's why every major passage on gifts in the New Testament is accompanied by a passage on the fruit. That's why I Corinthians 12 and 14, which are gift chapters, have - right smack in the middle - chapter 13, which pulls it all into perspective on their fruit. Romans 12 lists the gifts of the Spirit and immediately following it says, "let love be without hypocrisy, be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love" and on for 11 more verses.

Secondly, not only are the fruits of the Spirit more important than the gifts of the Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit help define what a Christian does, but the fruit of the Spirit demonstrates what a Christian **is**. Gifts have to do with service. Those are tools. The fruit has to do with the character of the person. What a man is, is vastly more important than what he does. But not in our society. If a man **is** something, we frequently will excuse all kinds of boorish behavior, because of what he is.

Now, you medical men, please forgive me here, but I'm going to use you as an illustration. If somebody stands up in a congregational business meeting on a real matter, or in a Bible study, and somebody makes the statement, "this is what I think it says", and everybody knows it's Doctor so and so who says it, they go, "oh yeah!" But if a teamster stands up, or somebody whose hands are covered with callouses and whose back is bent by the toil of digging a ditch all of his life, and says, "That's what I think" and it's different than the doctor says, guess who they vote with. You see, what a man **is**, is so important in our society. That's why we run around with our titles hanging all over us. That's why there are some people that are incapable of giving their name without giving their pedigree, so that you can automatically pop them in the right slot high enough up. And the more important they are, the higher the slot, and the more eager they are that you know it. Until they get real important, and then you know it anyway so they don't have to tell you.

One reason why I go incognito all the time and introduce myself as Bud Palmberg is partly because I don't want people to determine who I am by what I do. Now, granted, there ought to be some correlation there. I ought to be a man of God as well as a guy with a job of a preacher. But that doesn't always hold true. Just read your paper. But with me, of course, if they find out that I'm a minister, they stick me in a slot and run everything else through a discounting procedure and I can't throw the weight I want to throw. So it's best they don't know what I am. Other than just loud.

The gifts of the Spirit help define what a Christian does, but it's the fruit of the Spirit that defines him *as* a Christian. What a man is, is so much more important than what he does. I don't care what you do. I do care who, before God, you are. Because, you see, what a man does should grow out of what a man is. So that's why the scripture talks in such plain and simple language when it says, "you don't pick figs off a thistle" "You don't get sweet water out of a foul well" That's the principle.

There's another difference between the fruits and the gifts. And that is the duration. The Bible makes it very plain that the gifts of the Spirit are temporal. They pass. I Corinthians 13 names three of them and it says, "prophecy and tongues and knowledge will vanish away." Now there are a lot of people who say it's already happened - it happened at the end of the Apostolic age and all the rest (we may get into that a little bit). But it says in the same passage, "faith hope and love will abide." The gifts are temporal. They're for a purpose and when that purpose is met, it's no longer needed - it's not a merit badge you wear on a sash around you and say, "hey, I used this back in '28 and I still got it." But the

fruit is permanent.

Here's a fourth difference, that is that the gifts are given and therefore to be discovered. But the fruit of the Spirit is to be developed. What I have been given, I need to discover. That which I am, I need to develop. The fruits are the normal expected outcome of Christian growth - of maturity, of conformity to Christ, and of the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit. They grow in a Christian's life as a result. As a result of the believer's walk with God and his obedience and his yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. And gifts without fruit are worthless. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the prerequisite for the effective exercise of gifts. And the reason the Corinthian church was such a total wipe-out was because they had all the gifts and thought "that's all" and that their gifts somehow validated the fact that they must be Godly. Nothing of the sort!

A fifth difference is that each believer is not given all of the gifts. Not all of you, and all of us, are to have all of the gifts, but all of us are to produce all of the fruit. Understand? Therefore, while we must not be ignorant of spiritual gifts, we need to guard ourselves against preening ourselves on their possession, because they are - after all - only gifts and they are not earned like a merit badge and therefore cannot be paraded as part of our qualifications. They are not nearly as important. Jesus said in John 15 "I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain." Paul, praying for the church at Philippi in the first chapter says, "And this I pray: that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment" (those are a couple of the gifts). But he says, "So that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ - having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Listen carefully: we are instructed to use the gifts for service, but we are to center on bearing the fruit for His glory. Again I say that the gifts without the fruit of a Godly life are nothing.

Secondly, the gifts of the Spirit are not the same as natural talents. And there are several reasons for this also. First of all, spiritual gifts are only given to believers. The only people that ever have the gifts of the Holy Spirit are those who have been born of God, who are born by the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. But natural talents have nothing to do with it. I know atheists and agnostics and all kinds of people who have talents. Music ability, art ability, athletic ability, mechanical ability, cooking, languages, teaching - name it, they've got all kinds of talent. I love to watch the Sonics. I'm just staggered by that. When Gus Williams breaks for that center line, he goes up with the ball in his right hand, but he suddenly discovers that there's somebody guarding the right side of the basket, so he puts the ball in his left hand. When he sees that the basket is pretty well covered and he's not going to get to it anyway, he passes it over his back to somebody. All the while, he's flying in the air. Now that's called "wing time". And I have never understood how somebody bigger than I am is able to jump higher than I am, and stay up longer than I can. Because when I jump, I go up and down right away. When these guys go down the line, watch them sometime - they just float and I don't understand it. There's something illegal in the laws of physics about that, but it is also called "talent".

Now when I went out for basketball - and I was one of the few guys that went out for basketball four years (it was a four year high school and I never made the team). Most guys got smart after the second year. I went out all four years. Because I knew that there wasn't anything that difficult, because I boxed with several of the guys on the basketball team and I could clean their clocks. I could knock them all over the ring whenever I felt like it. But on the basketball court... You see, I was good at shooting. I was good. Real good. In fact, the older I get the better I was. Well, you see, the coach required something else. You had to bounce the ball down to get within range of the basket. And I could bounce the ball, but guys kept trying to take it away from me, and then I would get confused.

Then I dribbled it down my knees and my feet and the other guys. You see, I can go to the right, but couldn't go to the left. And it didn't take a very smart defensive man to figure out I could only go one way. So I never made it. Now, that's the difference between desire and talent. I had the desire - man, they couldn't keep me away. But I didn't have any talent. Had nothing to do with how dedicated you were, or how smart. Boy, some of the biggest remedial people you ever saw in your life were on the basketball team. Well, look at the newspapers today and you can see what's happening with their "ghost transcripts". Alright, there's a difference between talent and spiritual gifts as well. No unbeliever has a spiritual gift. And every believer has at least one.

Secondly, not only are spiritual gifts given only to believers, but talents have to do with techniques and methods, whereas the Holy Spirit's gifts have to do with spiritual abilities. And I don't mean just abilities in spiritual matters. I mean that talents rely on natural powers developed. But the gifts of the Spirit rely on spiritual endowment. It's what the Holy Spirit gives to us. It's not something we work up and develop. That's a talent.

Third, talents and gifts also differ in their effect. Talents can instruct and inspire and entertain on a natural level. But something supernatural happens when someone exercises a spiritual gift. It may look like the same, but the effect is entirely different. People are spiritually reborn, their lives are permanently changed, or they're incredibly blessed or encouraged or exhorted or something else, but that's what happens when the Holy Spirit is exercising Himself through a believer, through a gift.

The natural talent and the spiritual gifts *may* be related. But spiritual gifts are not just souped-up natural talents, though our natural facilities and faculties may point in the direction in which our spiritual gifts will be used. Let me illustrate. Suppose a Christian with a magnificent voice sings in concerts to the delight and enjoyment of thousands. Singing is a natural talent. It has been developed and trained through discipline, and work, and his own strength. And the result of that exercised talent is thrilling and inspiring, but it is only a natural talent. Now, suppose the same person is a Christian, and God, through His mercy, chooses to give him a gift, which He wants to use through the singing. He's still the same singer, sings the same way, but if he has the gift of exhortation, people who hear his singing are tremendously encouraged and challenged and up built. Or if he has the gift of evangelism, people find Christ through his singing. Sounds just like it always did. But the result is different. So natural talents and spiritual gifts may be related. My talents may point in the direction which the spiritual gifts may be, but they may not. So be sure you draw a distinction. But don't draw a separation, because God may choose to use that. Remember, while gifts may build on a natural foundation, they also may not. Now let me illustrate that.

There's a man in southern California by the name of John Wimber. He's now a pastor, but before John became a Christian, he was a magnificent musician (still is for that matter). He was one of the best jazz musicians that I've ever had the privilege of meeting personally. He played with Count Basie, and he played with Dave Brubeck, and he played with Stan Kenton. Now those are three big names, but they are big names in different traditions in jazz music. And he played with all of them. He's a terrific guy. He's not only an instrumentalist, but he is also a composer, an arranger, and all the rest, besides he's a good businessman. He starts a business - a little music store - now he's got a whole bunch - and he makes money like crazy. He just can't help it. Now, he's a man of enormous talents. When John Wimber became a Christian, everybody that knew him said, "Oh boy, now watch how God gifts him and uses his music." It didn't happen. He's still one of the best reed men around. He still is a writer and composer - oh he wrote a couple of Christian songs, no big deal - they weren't so good. God gave him a different gift. God gave him the gift of evangelism. It has nothing to do with his music. Now, I suppose God could - if He wanted to - when he's playing his sax sometime, win somebody to Christ

through his sax playing, but I don't think the sax will make it. But John has a gift of evangelism and he comes into a room, whether there's two people in it or three thousand, he's like a bird dog on field trial. He walks into that room and you see him start to vibrate, and then he goes on point. And he knows that person not only needs Christ, but wants Him. How does he know it? Who knows? God knows. He has the gift of evangelism, he moves in on this guy, sits down, opens a conversation, the guy doesn't feel pressured, he doesn't feel pushed, he doesn't feel beat up on or anything, he's just sitting there saying, "Yeah, give me more! Give me more!" And John gives him more. Now because John's a great musician, you'd think maybe he'd sing to him or something. But that's his talent. And God gifted him some place else. There are over 2,000 people that I know of, down in southern California who, on a one-on-one relationship with John Wimber, have come to know Jesus Christ. He's now a pastor. He's a pastor with the fastest growing churches in the country and it's incredible to see what he does. He's also the most unorthodox minister I've met in a long time - maybe that's the reason I like him so much.

By the way, he had been a Christian for two weeks and there was a side man in the trio that he was playing with at the time, that he really wanted to bring to the Lord. And so he brought him to a Bible study because John had been told, "you ought to go to a Bible study." So he goes to this church and finds out the pastor's got a Bible study, so he goes to the pastor's Bible study. This minister gets in there and people are just sitting around chatting and having a good time, and the pastor's having a good time. He seems like a regular guy although he was dressed in his basic narrow black tie, but when he got all done with the chatter and it was time to start the Bible study, Wimber said, "I never saw anything like it: the guy changed voices. Just completely." He'd say, "Now let's look at the word of God." And Wimber said, "This guy had the most stained-glass voice I ever heard in my life. And he just put it on, and then when he closed his Bible, he'd go back to normal voice. I thought it was connected with when he opened his Bible." And he said, "he pulled out a Bible - it was the biggest blackest Scofield Bible in captivity." Wimber said, "I was a little nervous about all this anyway, and I thought, 'boy, this guy sitting next to me, who is just coming down from a trip, was saying 'hey man, what is this?' especially when the guy's voice changed and everything."

So this minister said, "Let's look at the word of God".

This guy turns to Wimber and says, "what's that?"

Now, Wimber, because he knew this man and loved him and he cared enough to understand his language - he was a part of that culture - he turns to him and says, "What the guy is laying on you man, is 'that's a heavy chart'" Now a musician understood that. He'd go on with this all night long, translating.

The subject that night was the grace of God. Oh this guy just waxed so eloquently about grace that the side man was looking to see when Grace was coming in. He just couldn't figure it out. Finally, he turns to Wimber and says, "What is this 'grace' he's talking about? Man, I don't understand that."

And Wimber's response to him was, "it's like this man: there's an opening on Basie's band with no audition." You see, that's grace to a musician. That's unmerited favor to a musician. It can't be earned. It can't be deserved. All you can do is say, "oh, thank you!" And receive it. You see, that's a gift. That's not a talent. That's not something you write up in the little book and then you memorize "fifteen ways to witness to a musician". You may sell some books, but you're going to wind up with a lot of people who bought the book and tried it, and it just bombs out, and then they're going to feel guilt on top of everything else. Part of our reason for spending time with the gifts is to get rid of our guilt trips.

But don't expect because you are a school teacher that God has given you this spiritual gift of teaching. Churches do this all the time. We're so dumb! We find out somebody's a school teacher - "Oh boy, do I have a Sunday school class for you." And they bomb out sometimes because, while they are skilled and talented professional teachers, they are not gifted. You have encountered, in your lifetime in Christ, Sunday school teachers who could not understand any of the pedagogical arguments or the philosophical approaches to education if their very lives depended upon it, but who were gifted conveyors of God. You see, there's a difference. He may, however, take that same school teacher and take that talent and use it as the vehicle for His gifts. Isn't it wonderful that God is so unpredictable, so creative, so tailor-made for our needs and for the ministry He has for us to perform?

Chapter 4 The Difference between Gifts and Roles

Now the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I don't belong to the body," does that alter the fact that the foot is a part of the body? Of if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I don't belong to the body," does that mean that the ear really is no part of the body? After all, if the body were all one eye, for example, where would be the sense of hearing? Or if it were all one ear, where would be the sense of smell? But God has arranged all the parts in the one body according to his design. For if everything were concentrated in one part, how could there be a body at all? The fact is there are many parts, but only one body. So that the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" nor, again, can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body which have no obvious function are the more essential to health: and to those parts of the body which seem to us to be less deserving of notice we have to allow the highest honour of function. The parts which do not look beautiful have a deeper beauty in the work they do, while the parts which look beautiful may not be at all essential to life! But God has harmonised the whole body by giving importance of function to the parts which lack apparent importance, that the body should work together as a whole with all the members in sympathetic relationship with one another. So it happens that if one member suffers all the other members suffer with it, and if one member is honoured all the members share a common joy.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 (Philips)

Paul starts out I Corinthians 12, by saying "now concerning the spirituals, I don't want you to be ignorant," and there is so much ignorance in the world concerning the spirituals and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This past week I was in Louisville, Kentucky for the midwinter conference. I left at home all of my books on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit. I'd had enough of it. I've read every book that's been written in the area that I could get my hands on and a lot of them I wish I hadn't bothered with. So I decided to take the week off and, as I sat down on the plane last Monday morning, at 12:35 in the morning, my seat partner who happens to be my golfing partner as well - pastor Jennings of Bremerton - cracked his briefcase and whipped out a book, and guess what it was on? I said, "no, I haven't seen that particular book on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and I don't want to see that book."

He said, let me quote you a verse of scripture, and he quoted for me, 'now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant'" and he handed me the book. Fortunately it was a small book, and it wasn't a bad book. It wasn't great, but it wasn't bad either.

How desperately needed this word is, made obvious by the expanding, never-ceasing, areas of Christian bookstores devoted to spiritual gifts and the ministry and person of the Holy Spirit. It never ceases to amaze me when I realize that what God had given to the body of Christ in the Holy Spirit, Whose purpose was to take the things of Christ, and to show them to us and build up the unity of the body of Christ, for the effective ministry and penetration of the world to carry out the great commission, has instead been used by Satan and diverted and twisted so that, instead of building the body of Christ and developing the unity of Christ, it has capitalized on creating disunity. That's because of ignorance. Not ignorance of the gifts, but ignorance of the spirituals in contrast with what Paul has been talking about in the first 11 chapters of I Corinthians, which are the carnalities - the

fleshly evidences. And now he moves into the spirituals - the spiritual evidence. We sometimes forget that the scriptures are so utterly practical. When you read the Phillips translation from I Corinthians 12, you just can't help but get the point, can you? This glorification of any particular gift or the exultation of any particular gift, or the projection of my gift on you, has no place in the body of Christ. It is counterproductive and it is non-Biblical. And that's why Paul draws such a ludicrous picture - the illustration of the whole body being an eye. Just one huge eye - not even little feet - just one big eye. And its silly! Its ridiculous! Its overdrawn. He wants so desperately that we understand that the whole body is not an ear, or a nose, or a mouth, or feet, or hands. A body is, by definition, a *body*. How desperately we need to know, then, something about the gifts of the Spirit.

I think it is very critically important that we understand that the corporate use of the gifts, as it is basic to our understanding of spiritual gifts. They are always given for corporate use. They are not given to "turn you on" as an individual. They are to build up the total body to maturity and to the praise of His glory. When you speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you have to remember that edification is the purpose for the gifts - the building up. The context of the gifts is always the unity of the body. And the controlling attitude for their proper exercise is love. So we have to understand that gifts are a fundamental provision of the Lord for the operation of the church. You see, as the human body consists of individual cells, exercising various functions, so it is the body of Christ consists of many members, each of whom possesses a specific function which is known as a spiritual gift. Each gift is essential to the proper function and operation of the body. But no gift is greater than another.

The question is, what are these gifts? Well, we started last chapter by saying there are a couple of things that the gifts are not. I spent quite a bit of time on the subject that the scripture points out that the gifts of the Spirit are not the same as the fruit of the Spirit. And I want to reiterate only this much: godliness is greater than giftedness. The first chapter of I Corinthians tells us that the church at Corinth was not lacking in any gift, but they were a mess. They were useless to God in that situation, although they had all the gifts. And so if you only had the choice, you would be unspeakably foolish to choose gifts over fruit. I am not going to major in gifts. I do not want my congregation majoring in gifts. I want to major in bearing fruit. Fruit that will remain. And that's what the challenge of scripture is. We also considered that gifts are not the same thing as natural talents.

It is also necessary that we draw a distinction between genuine spiritual gifts and genuine Christian roles. Look over the Biblical list of the spiritual gifts, and you recognize that many of them describe what is expected of every Christian. Some of the gifts are also every Christian's role. Now this is really important so I want you to hear this very carefully. I want to illustrate it in a couple of different ways. Many of those things that are listed as gifts of the Spirit are, in fact, roles that belong in every Christian's life. For instance, all of us, as Christians, are commanded to witness. That's one of our roles as Christians - is to bear witness to the good news - to share the good news. But we also know that there is a gift that is called the gift of evangelism. And a lot of us assume that that's part of it. Just because a person does not have the gift of evangelism does not mean that he shouldn't be ready to share his faith at any opportunity. Somebody said to me, "now that you're back from your trip across the country and back, I suppose you'll have some interesting stories to tell." Well, frequently I do, because the Lord puts me, or I put, me in some situations that keep me off-balance, but I said to the Lord, as I got on the plane, "I am exhausted! And I'm going to be flying all night long and I don't want to talk to anybody." And when I arrived in St. Louis to change planes, I hadn't talked to anybody. Nobody at all. Boy that felt good!

But I got off the plane in St. Louis and some guy came up to me and said, "man its early in the morning, isn't it?" It must have been 5:00 or 6:00 am.

I'd been flying all night and I was really feeling kind of rummy, and I said, "Yeah, its too early in the morning to even get into a conversation."

And he said, "What are you doing, traveling at this hour in the morning? Where are you headed?"

I said, "I'm headed to Louisville".

He said, "What in the world for?"

And I said, "I'm going to a conference."

"Oh really? What kind of a conference?"

There's no way you can get out of something like that. It is very clear that at that moment, God was confronting me with an opportunity - not to exercise my gift - but to fulfill my role to be His witness. It has nothing to do with the gift of evangelism. It has to do with obedience and discipleship. Maybe you don't possess the gift of mercy. But you are still to fulfill the role of comforting and assisting the unfortunate and the needy. You may not have the gift of discernment, but you are still called upon to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good. You may not have the gift of giving, but that doesn't mean when the ushers come down the aisle you say, "Never mind, pass it past me, I don't have the gift. I don't have to tithe." The scripture makes it very plain by the word of God that we are to give financially in such a way that the Bible even describes it with a Greek word which means "burst out laughing". It means "giving hilariously". Some of you don't know how to give that way simply because you have always had your little pocket calculator out to make sure you didn't get over 10%. Or to somehow make sure you somehow try to get up to 10%. Some of you get hung up on percentages. The hilarious giving comes when you have given all that you feel you should. All that you feel responsible to give. All that you feel obligated or indebted to give - and then you give some more. That's when the fun comes. Someone once said, "Give until it hurts and then give a little bit more and it will feel good." But just because you don't have what the Bible calls the spiritual gift of giving does not mean that you say "I don't have that gift, so forget it."

The absence of gifts does not excuse disobedience to the commands. Christians must be ready to exercise any role in any case of a need. When a need is there, you had better meet that need. You do not justify inaction or indifference by saying, "well, I don't have that gift." I exercise so many roles in my job as your pastor that I am not gifted for. But they're part of the job description. They are needs that have to be met. Somebody's got to do it. The need is sitting on my desk - its right in front of me - so I'd better meet it. Gift, or no gift, I have a role to fulfill and I will do it. And so must you. Because I do not have a gift, I am not excused from obedience. We are not allowed to sit with folded hands in indifference and say, "well, since I don't have that gift, I don't have to do it." There are roles to fill. These roles require not giftedness; they require *obedience*.

Secondly, don't confuse spiritual gifts with counterfeit gifts. Satan always opposes God. And if he cannot oppose successfully in a direct confrontation with God, he will always try to confuse the followers by creating a counterfeit. Paul warns in his letter to the Corinthians, "Satan, himself, is transformed into an angel of light, therefore its no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness." The Bible warns that the great counterfeiter, Satan, can make imitations of anything. For Christ, there is Antichrist. For a true prophet, there are the false prophets. For the true apostles, there are the false apostles. For the wheat, there are the tares (or the weeds). For sheep there

are wolves in sheep's clothing. Even for the Holy Spirit and His angels, there are the unclean spirits. And Jesus says in Matthew 24, "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect." Don't get so hung up on the miraculous and the miracles and "whoa, look at that!" Because that, too, can be counterfeit, and can come through Satan rather than from God. We need to base our doctrine firmly on the word of God - not on experiences. Experiences can come from the pit, and they can come from God. But the word of God is sure and certain. Jesus says in Matthew 7 that, "many will stand before the judgment seat and say, 'Lord, Lord didn't we prophesy in Your Name?' That's a gift of the Spirit. 'Didn't we cast out demons in Your Name? Perform many miracles?' Another gift of the Spirit. 'Then I will declare to them,' says Jesus, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" They come with their authenticating gifts and He says what will authenticate you before the throne is the fruits, not the gift. Notice how Christ refers to these counterfeit gifts and to an absence of spiritual fruit.

I do not doubt, for a minute, that every single gift on the list, whether in I Corinthians 12,13,14, or in Ephesians 4, or in Romans 12, or in I Peter - every one of those gifts is capable of being counterfeited. In most likelihood is being so today. Every one of them. Satan is a supernatural being and has power, and can fake everything that is genuine. He duplicated the works that God did through Moses, way back in Exodus 7 and 8. Remember how Moses stands before Pharaoh? And he has some authenticating miracles. He throws down his staff - it becomes a snake. Picks it up by the tail - it becomes a staff again. If somebody did that in a special meeting in a church, the next night he'd have twice as many people there, because they want to see that miracle! So Moses stands before Pharaoh and he throws down the staff and it turns into a snake. And he picks it up - it turns into a rod. But Pharaoh's magic men say, "Big deal." And they did the same thing. You see, Satan is able to counterfeit, and has ever since the beginning. So don't hook your theology on experience. If you do, you'll crash. And there are so many that have.

I bring this to your mind, not because I want you to make you so paranoid about spiritual gifts that you run around and say, "is that genuine, is that false, is that counterfeit", and you get all shook up. But I want to remind you that God knows all about these counterfeits, and He can give us adequate power to prevent confusion and fear. And I want to remind you that Satan's power is limited and it's controlled. I think Bob Tuttle says it best in his book "The Partakers". He says, "Satan is on a tether." A tether is a line that holds you to a central point; you can't go any farther than that. He continues "If, however, we slip within reach or range of his tether, yielding to some particular temptation, he'll have us for breakfast." I don't want you to become excited and shook up and paranoid about it, but I want you to be wise and discerning. Neither do I want you to be running around being gift-admirers, because you can be spending a lot of energy and time and gasoline chasing gifts that are spurious and false. We are called to be fruit inspectors and fruit bearers. Psalm 1 says, "The righteous are like a tree - firmly planted by the streams of water which yields its fruit in its seasons." In John 15, Jesus says to His disciples, "You didn't choose Me. I chose you and I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain." Philippians 1, Paul prays that church at Philippi will be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. In that passage from Matthew, where Jesus is talking about the last days, He says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who's in heaven." Not gifts but obedient discipleship. "Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we cast out demons in Your Name, and in Your Name perform many miracles, and prophesy' and so forth..." There's a claim to authenticity on the basis of gifts, but Christ, in one fell swoop, says, "If somebody comes among you and claims because of these sign gifts that they somehow are powerful and filled with the Spirit, that's not what you look for." "Then I will say, I never knew you, depart from Me you

who practice lawlessness." In a church not too far away from here, a pastor friend of mine was facing a direct confrontation with a man in his congregation who manifested a particular gift. It was a gift that was a rather dramatic gift, and it was a very spectacular gift, and it was a very impressive gift. At the same time, this man had an incestuous relationship with his own daughter, who then brought this to the attention of the pastor, and when confronted the man with the gifts said "I know that what she says is true, but I'm only being honest to my nature." So you see, gifts don't authenticate a blessed thing! It is the fruit that authenticates. If you're all shook up because you think I'm referring to the gift of tongues, I don't have to be that subtle. It wasn't the gift of tongues. But it might have been. It might have been any gift, because Satan can counterfeit these gifts and that's why the claim to authenticity is not experience. It's the word. It is not demonstrated by the gifts. It is demonstrated by the fruit.

Jesus says in Matthew 7, "There are going to be a lot of false prophets that will come in the way, but you will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are figs from thistles. Every good tree bears good fruit, but the rotten tree produces bad fruit. And a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. So then," Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruit." Therefore, it is mandatory that we are able to distinguish between spiritual gifts and counterfeit gifts.

I Corinthians 12:4 says, "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And varieties of ministries, but the same Lord. And varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons." The first thing we have to notice about that is that gifts unify. You heard me right. The word teaches that gifts unify. We look around us on the church scene and say, "that's not the experience to the church today. If anything's tearing the church apart, it's gifts." But it's not the gifts - its bad teaching about the gifts. Or it is the exaltation of gifts. Or it is the projection of gifts. But it's not gifts. The church at Corinth demonstrated anything but unity, although they demonstrated all of the gifts. But this problem in Corinth was not caused by the gifts. It was caused by ignorance concerning the gifts and the place they fill. So Paul is at some real pains here to show that just as God is three Persons in One, so it is that there is diversity and unity principle operating in the church. And he does it this way: he says there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of administration, but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Diversities, differences, diversities. The purpose of the Trinity is to bring about and manifest the unity of the Godhead. The purpose of Paul's statement with tying in with the principles of the Trinity is that there is unity in diversity - not independence, but interdependence. You see, I am not independent of you, and you are not independent of me. What you do, and how you live, does affect me. And I, you. Because we are interdependent. So it is so critically important that we understand that.

So go into a world that is really excited about seeing something spectacular, as men and women who participate in what is the most spectacular thing of all: new life in Jesus Christ. Go out, then, not to demonstrate your gifts, but to walk in obedient discipleship, rejoicing in **His** power, that will enable you to meet whatever task He sets in your path.

Chapter 5. Given, not Chosen

Above all, hold unfailing your love for one another since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another, as each has received the gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

1 Peter 4:8-10

We're looking at I Corinthians 12 as our basic text, and I want to pick it up with the fourth verse. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of working, but it is the same God Who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the the One Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. To another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one in the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills"

In verses 4 through 11 there are three major themes that I'd like to highlight for you, as follows.

The first is that gifts unify. Now there's an enormous amount of interest in the whole matter of ecumenism - or in the merging or bringing together different parts of the body of Christ. When Jesus prays in John 17, the "high priestly prayer", He prays, "Father, I pray that they may be one, as We are One." Many have used that as kind of the theological, or biblical, foundation for their approach to the ecumenical movement. As I look at the ecumenical movement in the last 15 or 20 years, I see it taking place in two different directions, and on two different levels. On the one hand, you have that which is institutionally instituted, organized, or initiated. Such things as the Conference on Church Union, which would combine most of the major denominations of the United States into a massive, enormous, multi-multi-million member congregation or church. In order to do it in any brevity, I have to almost make it sound like a caricature - but in order for all of the various denominations that are a part of the Conference on Church Union to come to an agreement, it is necessary for them to drop those doctrines which give them the character of their particular denomination. One must peel doctrines away until you get down to the very basics, and the most basic that they have gotten to (which seems to be the only foundation that they can find), is the confession that the scripture gives: "Jesus is Lord". Now that's fine, but they also say in some of their documentation that Who Jesus was historically, as well as biblically, is really a matter of interpretation for the participating denominations. And they also say that what it means to have Jesus as Lord, is also a matter of interpretation. So what frequently has to happen, in order for a large organization to become one, is to reduce it to the lowest common denominator. The question is frequently asked, and justifiably so, if what you have at the end of that "is it worth it?"

The other way in which ecumenism is taking place is on a grass-roots level. It isn't filtering down from some sort of ecclesiastical hierarchy above, but is coming up from the grass-roots level. The Charismatic movement has been one of the foremost forces in this whole ecumenical movement. And so you find at a national Charismatic conference, on the very same platform, Pentecostal preachers, four-square gospel preachers, Roman Catholic cardinals (like cardinal Suenens from France), episcopal bishops - an amazing array and variety of God's people. You say "Isn't that wonderful!" Well, just as those who sought to find ecumenism coming from above, filtering down and superimposed, had to

reduce it to the lowest common denominator. What they did is really give away much of the verities of their faith. In order for this to take place on the Charismatic level, it is necessary for a lot of doctrine, and a lot of Biblical teaching, to be set aside. It is necessary, for instance, if I were a Pentecostal, to set aside all of the history and theology of the Roman Catholic church in order that we might relate to cardinal Suenens. And it would be necessary for him to set aside all my lack of understanding and knowledge and appreciation of church tradition and ecclesiology, and all the rest, for him to accept me. The thing that unites those who operate in the formal institutional ecumenism is really a kind of institutional boiling down to the least common denominator. The Charismatic movement finds its basis for unity on a common experience. On the one hand, there is a selling of the faith, and on the other hand there is a discounting of doctrine. And I do not believe that either one will prove to be beneficial to the body of Christ at large in terms of the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit to build up the unity of the church. That is not what is being talked about.

Now I praise God for a brother and sister in Christ by whatever shingle happens to hang on them. It doesn't make the least bit of difference to me. But what unites us is not a common experience-oriented thing. What unites us is a common recognition that the authority in their life and in my life is this: it is not the doctrine of a church, it is not the preaching of any preacher or the teaching of any teacher, nor is it a common experience. It is the sure and certain word of God. And if, for instance, I am in fellowship with a Roman Catholic who places the authority and the traditions of the church alongside the scripture, I cannot have full fellowship with that person, because it must be *solely* scripture. But by the same token, if I'm having fellowship with a Pentecostal, and it is the word of God **and** their experience, I cannot have fellowship with them either. Or with a baptist, if it is the word of God **and** their doctrine of baptism. Now we can all run into problems. So when the scripture says in I Corinthians 12:4-11 here that the gifts are given for the unity of the body, it is not talking about some sort of external thing - it is saying that the gifts are given to demonstrate that which already exists. I am one in Christ with my brothers, whether we are organizationally together or not. Just as certainly as we have different personalities, so it is that denominations arise, not out of great overpowering doctrinal differences necessarily (although that's where most of them came from originally, but that which keeps them apart is different), there is sometimes a difference. If you're going to build a theology on that kind of a thing, that's nonsense. We are part of this same family. My brother, goodness knows, is different than I am, but he's still my brother. But he's my brother, not because he's different or because we're alike; he's my brother because we have a common parentage.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the gifts unify. But if you take a look at the church scene, you say "that isn't what really happens". Especially if you want to talk about the gifts. "Gifts don't unify!" "Talk about gifts, you're going to split the church!" You look on the church scene today and you see denominations and you see churches and pastors and families split every way over the issue of gifts. Yet here it says in scripture the gifts are given for the building up of the unity of the body of Christ. The church at Corinth demonstrated anything but unity. They were split every which way, but it was not a split caused by the gifts - it was a split that was caused by sin and ignorance concerning their exercise and their role. Paul illustrates it by saying, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" that is, the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. All kinds of different gifts, but they come from the Holy Spirit. He says, "there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." The Lord Jesus Christ administers the gifts, He sent the Holy Spirit in John to take "the things of Mine and show them until you". "There are diversities of operation". Well the word there translated "operations" really is a word that should (or could) be translated "energy". "But it is the same God." And, so you see, Paul states right there that there is diversity, difference, diversity, but the same Spirit, Lord, and Father. That is interdependence, not independence. This Lone Ranger syndrome in the body of Christ has got to stop. We are part of a body. We don't charge off into the sunset on our silver horse.

If you look at verse 7, it says "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal". And there are three things in that little verse that I think are important. First of all, there is a definition of a spiritual gift. Its a simple one - its no big profound thing. He simply says that a gift is a manifestation of the Spirit. The gift is the Holy Spirit doing something through the believer, using the believer to do it for the greater glory of God and the building up of His body - a manifestation of the Spirit. That which I do in the flesh is useless to God. Only that which the Holy Spirit does through me is of real value. There is a man that I love to hear preach, because he has the ability - even in just natural average conversation – for his words come out and you want to stitch them in an old sampler and hang them on a wall. Word pictures just flow from this guy - that's the way he works - its the way he thinks. Its a natural talent. its not a gift - its a natural talent. He's worked on it and he's developed it and all the rest. I heard his Palm Sunday service. Now how do you describe the scene on Palm Sunday? The shallow, silly crowd: "Hosanna!" and all the rest? His first sentence was, "It was a peanut and popcorn crowd on the hill that day". The whole scene is described in that sentence. I'd listen and I think "that's terrific". But do you know what he says? The biggest struggle he has in his life, since he has this speaking ability is to keep from just winging it. Many of you have gone someplace with a big speaker and though you go prepared, you know the guy didn't prepare for five minutes. He sat and read the Sports Illustrated all the way to the meeting, came cruising in after watching the news on television. Never says a lousy thing worth the trip or the tuition or registration or anything else. He just "wings it", because he's a hot dog and he's got some kind of talent and ability and he just traffics in it.

Now, spiritually speaking, that which we lean on our natural talents to accomplish, are not eternally significant. But the most halting, stumbling message profits - whether it is given in song, or in spoken word, or in a cup of cold water - if it is Spirit empowered. Its a manifestation of the Spirit. I have heard some of the greatest singers in the world. God was good to me and I have had a chance to hear Renata Tebaldi, Maria Callas, Beverly Sills, Risë Stevens, and some of the other great lady singers of our world. But I had an experience a few years ago in a church that I served in Illinois that kind of jolted me. There's a lady by the name of Winifred Larson, that had a lot of records. She was popular in the Midwest. She was kind of a religious Kate Smith (that's the kind of voice that she had) - it was kind of a brassy, and strong. I didn't like it. I didn't like her records. I'd go to visit some of my people and they would put a Winifred Larson record on the record player. I would sit there and struggle with my conscience - whether I should smile and be blessed for their sake, or whether I should just admit it. One of the ladies of the congregation passed away and when she died, her two sisters made arrangements for Winifred Larson to come to that church and sing for the funeral. Now, that's fine. Really. It was excellent with me. I didn't expect much out of it, but if it would really help comfort them, great! The funeral wasn't for my benefit. Winifred Larsen told me she was going to sing a song called "Burdens are lifted at Calvary". Now I've got a thing about that song too, because it just gets so repetitious: "Burdens are lifted at Calvary (lifted at Calvary). Burdens are lifted at Calvary (lifted at Calvary)." And you sing that after every verse. But I've got to tell you something. I have been moved by Renata Tebaldi or Beverly Sills. I've been moved to leap to my feet and scream, like at a ball game. But this was a manifestation of the Spirit. Winifred Larson stood there and very simply sang to this congregation, and when she sang "burdens are lifted at Calvary", she ministered to us in the Spirit in a way that there's no way to describe - you'd really have to understand by having had a common experience with that. The tears ran down my cheeks and I sensed the burden - not the burden of the death of this saint, because I knew this child of God was with Him in glory but - I realized that *my* burdens were being lifted as she ministered through the manifestation of the Spirit. She did not sing in tongues, she didn't even improve her voice. She didn't pick a better song. That is a manifestation of the Spirit, and it is not determined by "goose-pimple power." It is determined by effect and source. There's a definition of the gift in verse 7: a manifestation of the Spirit.

The second thing: that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man. The word "man" is "anthropos" which means man, woman, person. it's not sexist - it's a nonsexual term. It means every believer - every person who has been born from above, who has entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and experienced the new birth. Every such person has a gift. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man". Every single one of you. The question is: are you using that gift to the glory of God and the building up of the body of Christ, or are you just kind of running around celebrating the fact you've got a gift? Or don't you know what it is? Many don't, and that's the purpose of this book.

Thirdly, notice that there's a purpose to the gift given in that little verse. The gift is a "manifestation of the Spirit given to every man to profit withal" or a better translation is "for the common good". The purpose is to profit the whole body of Christ. It is not to give you some sort of a buzz. It is to build up the body of Christ to profit the body of believers. Gifts are not given for private profit. The word "profit" - sympheron - means to "bear together". You can't even understand the word translated "profit" in any singular way. It is a corporate term, to "bear together". Paul develops this point with the illustration of the body. We're going to get into that later, but what he is really saying is "my eye has no business running off and operating on its own." The purpose of the eye is to benefit the body. My big toe is benefited by my eye. It keeps the toe from being stubbed by signaling what I see. Yet there are a lot of people who think there is so much value to the eye that they all want to be the eye, and the scripture says the purpose of the gift is to profit the whole body withal. The common good.

Not only are gifts given for unity, (the major theme of these verses is given in verses 8-10), but note: "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another by the same Spirit, faith. To another the gifts of healing. To another the working of miracles and prophecies and discerning of spirits and diverse kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues..." and so forth. The main message here is not only are the gifts given to unify, but the gifts *vary*. There's a tremendous contrast here. The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and faith: that's sort of ordinary. Miracles, prophesy, tongues: boy that's spectacular. There's a sort of contrast that Paul makes here between the more pedestrian gifts and the more exciting gifts, and his point is: it doesn't matter what gift you have. It matters that they are all used for the building up of the body of Christ.

By the way, the word translated "gifts" is "charisma" and that word has been so beat out of shape, its lost a lot of its meaning. A lot of people who are political pundits maintain that Nixon lost the original election to president Kennedy on the basis of the televised debates - and it was not because of the content of the debates - it was because of the appearance of the candidates. Nixon stood there with his kind of beady little eyes, that clenched jaw of his, and 5:00 shadow, and he just didn't project. The sweat on his upper lip cost him a million votes. Kennedy comes on with his shock of hair, and you know what they said? "He has charisma". Now the word "charisma" means "gifts". He didn't have gifts - he had a big inheritance. He had good looks. He had a facile ability and a quick mind and some real gifts and abilities. But, now we know people have to have charisma to win. Just like the term "born again". I recently saw a recipe in the Seattle Times called "Born again goulash". All it is is recycled hash. But that term is so descriptive that the people say "hey, I'm going to use that". That's what's happened to the whole business of "charisma". And so "charismatic" has been appropriated by the general population and it has lost much of its appeal. If somebody says, "are you charismatic?" that doesn't mean "are you're going to get elected to something?" It doesn't mean "do you project some kind of special aura". On the other hand, it does not mean what it has been appropriated to mean, in the theological or church world. In the church world, if somebody comes up and says, "are you charismatic?" honestly, what's the very first thing that comes to your mind? "He's asking me 'do you

speaking in tongues?" And if you don't speak in tongues, your answer is "no, I'm not charismatic". If you do, your answer is "yes, I am charismatic". But I'm here to tell you the Bible says you're all charismatic if you are in Christ. You have been gifted. I have a lot of fun with that, because when somebody who I know is a tongues speaker comes up to me and says, "Pastor Palmberg, are you the pastor of a charismatic church?" "Oh yes!" And they say, "when did you receive the gift?" And I say, "when I made a commitment to Jesus Christ, I was baptized by His Spirit into His body of the church and I was gifted." And he said, "Oh, isn't tongues marvelous?" Then I say "I don't know." And do they get shook up. I have a chance to do a little bit of teaching. Or I'll encounter somebody who is anti-charismatic and they come up and ask (almost "do you have leprosy?") "is your church charismatic?" And I say, "Oh yes it is!" and they get panicked and think how they are going to get their boys or girls to stop coming over from Seattle Pacific University and going to that "far out" church. But I have a chance to share with them that the body of Christ is made up of charismatics. Gifted. That's what it means. It doesn't mean somehow projecting an aura. It simply means matter of fact that we have been given gifts. The problem is, however, that these gifts vary, and since we are so fleshly, we always want to gravitate to the the most spectacular.

So the third major theme that is taught here, is that the Holy Spirit's gifts are given. They are not chosen. The Holy Spirit's gifts are not some sort of a spiritual smorgasbord laid out where we come with our plate and say, "oh I don't want that one. Boy I want that one, and I don't want that one." Those are not the Spirit's gifts according to the teaching of scripture - the gifts are given, they are not chosen. Now some will say, "earnestly desire the higher gifts" it says at the end of the 12th chapter. We'll get to that. But it does not mean that we somehow are supposed to hunger or lust or search after those gifts. That verse of scripture is a corporate verse. It does not refer to an individual seeking a particular gift. It refers to the body of Christ seeking the best, for the body's sake, as He wills. Notice verse 11: "all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" There is no way that personal pronoun "He" applies to me, I don't care if you look in the Greek or the English. It doesn't say "all these worketh that one in the self same Spirit, dividing to Bud and others as they will". That's not what it says. It says "dividing to every man severally as He" (the Spirit) "wills". The sovereignty is the Holy Spirit's - not mine. The personal pronoun "He" is thus directed. Paul reinforces this in verse 18 when he says, "But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the Body as it hath pleased Him." So, don't holler and bellyache about your position in the body either, because that's due to the sovereignty of God. Just make sure you're filling the place that He's put you. The Holy Spirit is sovereign, and the reason for that is because the gifts are for the unity of the church. It isn't a smorgasbord shopping list, like God was a Santa Claus that we could climb up on his lap and hand Him our list: "now I want tongues, I want healings..." Somebody asked me, "if you could have any gift the Holy Spirit wanted to give you, what would you ask for?" I'll tell you right now, I would ask for the gift of healing. And within 30 seconds of receiving the assurance I had that gift, I'd be healing dear brothers and sisters in Christ who have lived with pain for years. So, if its a smorgasbord, and you're offering things, don't offer me tongues - I have enough trouble with the one I got. Just give me something that will help somebody else. But thank God, we don't have to lean on our own understanding, because we see through a mirror darkly the scripture says. We are the kind of fleshly creatures that would all go for the spectacular. That's why this scripture says that "He worketh the one and self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills". The Holy Spirit is sovereign because, since the gifts are for the unity of the church, and since most of us would go for the spectacular "wow" gifts, we'd run into the same problem Corinth had. The matter of Spiritual gifts is not a matter of "I want that, and I don't want that." Because, we would probably go for the same gifts.

You heard about the two ladies shopping: standing there next to the towels, trying to decide. They were counting the number of sheets on a roll and the absorbency and trying to figure out how much it

was worth and if they're getting a deal. And one of the ladies says, "You know, it just drives me crazy - there are so many different options".

And the other lady says, "You know, its probably because we all have different tastes." And then she smiled and she said, "Really, it's a good thing everybody's not alike, because if everybody was like me, they'd all want my husband."

And the second lady said, "Yes, you're right. I agree. Its a good thing everybody is not like me, because nobody would want your husband."

That's part of what takes place within the body of Christ. Everybody has their own choice and if we lined up all the gifts, how many of you would go down that line of gifts and pick the gift of helps? One might, if that was all that was left on the table. But the body of Christ has been moved miles by those who have the gift of helps. I can't say that about some of the more spectacular gifts. Fortunately, they're not our choice, because His reason for giving gifts is to build up the body and, since it is His body, He knows what choice to make. Listen carefully. The emphasis on the spectacular gift results in the misdirected energy that comes when you begin to want a particular gift so bad you are willing to allow yourself to be manipulated to gain the manifestation. You begin to seek so much after the experience, you do not seek after Him - and the experience somehow validates it. That is a lot of nonsense. The pagan religions all the way back to Ephesus and all the way into the Old Testament with Baal worship, including some of the new pagan religions and non-Christian religions such as Mormonism, practice - as a cardinal tenant - tongues. And the interpretation of tongues. And miracles, and prophecies. They can be proven through history - both secular and religious. That is not to say that these are invalid today, and I don't happen to believe they are, although there are great Bible scholars far beyond my ability who say they are. Its interesting to see that just about every one of them comes out of Dallas seminary. I don't mean to say anything bad about it, because that's a good seminary and some of the really "biggies" in the world today came out of that source. I just happen to think that they're a little bit narrow. What I want to say is: don't get tricked into thinking there is such an emphasis on a particular gift that you've got to have that gift - "that's a sign gift" - and if you don't have that gift, you don't get any of the rest. That is not Bible teaching! If you accept it as Bible teaching, you're going to manipulate yourself or allow others to manipulate you until what you experience is a psychological overload rather than a gift of the Spirit.

Now there are gifts that carry a certain kind of "charisma" about them, and that's one of the reasons why, for instance speaking in tongues, is so very popular. There's a certain kind of excitement about it, I understand. So all sorts of bad theology becomes developed to promote and prop up an experience. All sorts of psychological and emotional manipulation can be used to produce an effect. People point to Acts 2, and say "Look, there they spent all that time in the upper room and they tarried and they waited and they prayed, and then the Holy Spirit came upon them and the gift of tongues. So if you want it, you've got to tarry and wait and pray and somebody lay hands on you and..." Oh no, be consistent - read through the rest of the book of Acts. Every time that particular gift is manifested in the three or four places that it is, its a different kind of a formula. Don't reduce God and His Spirit to a formula. Don't say, "if I kneel on my left knee, I get this - and my right knee, I get that" The book of Acts is a book of historical transition - it is not a book of Biblical principles and guidelines whereby to get what they had. Paul had an experience, he going down the road on the way to Damascus, a bright light, a voice from heaven, he's knocked off his horse, he's blinded. What an experience! But does Paul say, "boy, unless you've been knocked off your horse and blinded for three days, you just haven't arrived" or does he base his certainty of salvation upon that the knowledge that he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Acts a description of what God did to him, but it is not a principle of what God must do to

all. The Holy Spirit gives His gifts as He wills for the benefit of the whole body. That's why the sovereignty is reserved by the Holy Spirit. It protects us from ourselves. If it's not in the word of God, I don't care what your experience is. The word of God is my sole authority. If I slide into experiential authority, then my experience will determine my theology, and that is dangerous, heretical ground. And that's the ground of modern theological liberalism and, frankly, that's the ground of much of the Charismatic writing today: your experience determines theology.

I had an acquaintance say to me, not too long ago (he's been involved in leadership positions in the Puget Sound area, and the north Pacific, in the Charismatic movement), "I don't care what the Bible said, I have had the experience, and until you've had the experience, you can't judge me." I said, "Brother, I don't want to judge you if I had the experience. All I can say is: 'do you hear what you are saying?' You are saying that the scripture is under your experience. The authority in your life becomes your buzz. And if you're looking for some sort of 'blessed buzz', instead of an obedience to the word - well, the scripture says 'Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh'. There's no shortcut to holiness. Obedient discipleship is the answer." And that's why the sovereignty is reserved by the Holy Spirit. Praise God for that. He gives gifts as He wills to protect us from ourselves. But one of these days, I'm going to have the incredible joy of having somebody shout "Glory! Hallelujah! I've been given the gift of giving" and then empty their pockets. I've never had that happen yet, and I'm praying for it. Oh, our church needs that gift. Or I'll hear somebody say, "Oh, bless my soul, Pastor, I know what my gift is - its the gift of helps - what do you want me to do?" Why is it only the exciting, more spectacular, gifts that causes us to say, "Glory! Hallelujah!""? That's not Biblical. Whatever He chooses, He chooses to give. It is Glory! Hallelujah! For it comes from Him - not for your blessedness, or for your Spiritual strokes - but to build the body of Christ and glorify the Father.

Chapter 6. A Proper Perspective

Don't lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator, where there can't be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondservant, or free person; but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:9-11

I heard this past week of a pastor who had his own form of shorthand. Beside the listing of members on his own personal copy of the church roll, he had the initials "FBPO" beside certain names. And quite inadvertently, his listing of church members got mixed up with other members of the church board, and they wanted to know what did those initials, FBPO, beside certain names indicated. He was a little bit hesitant to share with them, but finally he agreed to tell them what it meant. He said, "those are our inactive members and the letters stand for 'For Burial Purposes Only'." Some people view the church's role as a "hatching, matching, and dispatching" ministry. We are supposed to be around for births, because that's celebration. We're supposed to be around for weddings, because somebody's got to do the ceremony. And we're supposed to be around for the funeral, because somebody has to say a few "appropriate words". In-between that time, the church just kind of takes up some of the prominent property in communities. Its architecture is either interesting or it's grotesque. And its pastors are either marvelous or ridiculous. The result is the church, for most people in our society, is for burial purposes only. If that. But that is not the Divine plan.

The Holy Spirit has been given, by Christ, to the church to give His gifts - not just to the pastor and to the church staff, who become the hired guns - but to every member. In some churches, the pastors do too much, and the people do too little. But the scripture says "to each": each has received a gift. "Employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace". John Stott describes the condition of many churches, when he says in a little bit of doggerel in one of his books, "the rector is late, he's forgotten the date, so what can the faithful do now, poor things? They'll sit in a pew, with nothing to do and sing a selection of hymns, poor things." And that's the way a lot of churches seem to operate. The church rides on the shoulder of its pastor. And every so often, somebody says, "Oh, what's going to happen if Dr. Bud² left?" Well, if Dr. Bud, but God's grace, has done his job, nothing will happen, except occasionally someone will say, "I kind of miss that guy. What was his name?" Because the body of Christ should be the full functioning of every member, and thereby I become a member with a special calling and a special sphere of ministry, but no more critical to the existence and continuing growth and blessing of this church than any other member functioning in his gift. That's why its so critically important that we know our gifts. Now, don't accuse me of false modesty, because that's never been one of my faults (or virtues). I have, I think, a pretty good self-image. I understand that God has gifted me and God has made me in a certain way, and I'm grateful for that, but do not vest me with more importance than God does. Nor should you vest yourself with less.

Now, there are some prerequisites to discovering your spiritual gift, and I have to remind you of them today, because it is the foundation. The next couple chapters we will look at the specific ways in which you can determine what your spiritual gift is. I know its fun and exciting and anticipatory to get into the gifts, because that's kind of exciting, but the gifts will serve the body of Christ no purpose whatsoever unless it is on a foundation that is firm and solid and deep in the word of God. When Jesus

² I was called Dr. Bud this last week. I got a promotion and I'm grateful for that honor. I'll never get one any other way.

told the parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand, the houses (from all the description given in scripture) were identical. And the conditions that struck those houses were identical: the rains descended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon the house. Nobody can tell me that the parable teaches that the Christian somehow has a "cozy corner" that God wraps him all up and keeps him sheltered from what Shakespeare calls the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." We experience the same thing. The difference is one is built on the rock and the other is built on sand. I don't want to construct this construction concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit unless I am convinced that, before God, I had been a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word, in order that a foundation is built under it.

Therefore the first prerequisite is: you must be a Christian. Spiritual gifts are for spiritual people. Please, do not make synonyms out of "spiritual" and what the popular usage today of the term "pious" is. Piety, by the way, is a good word. It is a word from history and from the scripture. But its a word that carries with it saccharin sweet connotations of hypocrisy today. So we don't like to use it. And don't make a synonym out of the word "spiritual". We are called "spiritual" by the virtue of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us, if we have faith in Him. Now, why do I say a person needs to be a Christian? Because spiritual gifts are only for Christians. What does it mean to "be a Christian"? To be a Christian does not mean you're a baptist or a Presbyterian or a Methodist or Episcopalian, or Covenant. To be a Christian does not mean that you are white or black or that you are republican or democrat or that you are anything else. The passage of scripture from Colossians 3 says all of these human differences that fragment and separate people from one another are inconsequential if we are one in Christ. So a Christian has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. One becomes a Christian by making a conscious commitment of their entire self - intellect, will, and emotion - in which they recognize that God in Jesus Christ has made a way to relationship with the Father: that they are not part of that way, and they want to be part of that way; they need to invite Christ to come into their life to be initiated into that way, and walk with Him on that way. That is what the Bible calls "born again" no matter what the sports pages are doing with that term. It simply means an entire new life has begun. Paul says in II Corinthians 5, "if anyone is in Christ, he becomes a new creation." That's what is meant by "being a Christian." Being a Christian does not involve sitting in church a certain number of painful hours out of each week. Being in church is an expression of that which has taken place for many.

The scripture makes it very plain that those who are born of the Spirit are the only ones to whom spiritual gifts are given. Romans 8 says, "however, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in you and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." And in I Corinthians 14, in speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, it says, "but if all prophesy and an unbeliever - or an ungifted man - enters..." Now, there the term "unbeliever" and "ungifted" are synonyms. Therefore, only those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are given spiritual gifts. I know a lot of non-Christians who have enormous talents that dwarf any talents I may have - but not spiritual gifts, as we have defined them in previous chapters. Therefore, that's the first prerequisite.

The second is: we must recognize the reality of such things as spiritual gifts. I received a fascinating report after the service one morning. One of our members came to me and said, "Pastor Bud, you need to know that two people approached me this week who were very critical of you, and of the series of sermons you've been preaching."

I said, "well I've had more than that myself."

She said, "but there were two people who approached me, and I think you might be interested and find

their criticism beneficial."

I said, "good. Lay it on me. I've been stroked this morning, so I'm secure."

She said, "one person said, 'I believe pastor Palmberg is entirely too harsh toward the Charismatics'" (using that term in the incorrect way - "towards the tongues speakers" in other words). "'He is entirely too harsh, judgmental, closed".

I said, "Now what was the other criticism?"

"The other criticism is, 'Pastor Bud is entirely too supportive of the Charismatic movement'."

I must be doing something right. Because both of those brothers and sisters, whoever or whichever they happen to be, are going to be driven to the word. And that's the authority. I've had people say to me, "boy since you've been teaching about gifts, you've said some things that... oh boy, I've gone home and I've gotten my Bible out and I really dug in."

I say, "Praise the Lord, isn't that exciting!"

It is about time that we study to show ourselves approved unto God. You don't go to church for a weekly injection of spiritual vitamins from the hired gun. You have the scriptures - and if you don't have one, see your pastor or the deacons after church and they can provide you with a Bible. I want you to become men and women of the Book. Therefore, of necessity for the prerequisites, understanding, receiving, and knowing our spiritual gifts, we not only have to be born into His Kingdom - have His Spirit living within us (or, be a Christian) - but we must also believe in the existence and reality of spiritual gifts. If you are ignorant and never been informed, or ignorant because of misinformation, then you are right in line with those to whom Paul wrote in I Corinthians 12, when he says, "Brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant concerning the spiritual things." And there are some people who do not recognize the reality of spiritual gifts, because nobody ever talks about it. When some other pastors found out that I was teaching about gifts, they said, "Boy, I wouldn't touch that with a ten foot pole in today's church climate." And that's why there are so many people who are ignorant of what the scripture teaches and they don't know they are gifted people. So they walk around with feelings of invalidity and insecurity.

As you study the scriptures, you must come to understand that gifts exist. There is no other possibility. The gifts exist! If you are a Christian, you come to the understanding the scriptures teach that you have been gifted at your spiritual birth. You are therefore responsible to discover and to exercise that gift for the building up of the body. The gifts, I say again and again, have never been given to give you a "blessed buzz". The gifts are given to build up the unity of the body of Christ. The fact that you see gifts being abused in different segments of the church society today, does not mean that there is no valid reason to seek after the understanding of gifts. If I'm driving down I-90 and some guy in a Galaxy 500 Ford cuts me off, drives me into the rail, and then proceeds to do that to three other cars, I do not thereby say "that guy that drove that car is not only a bad driver, but he is a lousy citizen and what's more than that, he's not even an honest man because he didn't stop for the red light. I therefore will never drive a Ford." Yet there are so many people who, looking at the abuses of spiritual gifts, say, "well, look at all those abuses. I therefore don't want anything to do with them." That doesn't make any sense at all - and scripture is, of all things, sensible.

Third, you must be willing to go to work. Another prerequisite for discovering your spiritual gift is

you've got to get ready to get up and get going. Someone has, probably accurately, described the church like a football game: 60,000 spectators desperately in need of exercise watching 22 men desperately in need of rest. When my congregation had 35 members in it, every one of them wore three or four hats. We were busy. We knew there was a task to do, and you could look around and see that everyone else had their sleeves rolled up and "if somebody's going to do it, I've got to do it." Since that time, God has blessed and prospered the congregation so that we now have between 600 and 700 people in two services on Sunday. But what's happened is that an inverted pyramid has grown up. If you look all the way down to the bottom, there are still 35 people working very hard. And the body of Christ, as described in scripture, was never intended to be this way. It was intended to be this way: the support system is enormous, as designed by God. But as really experienced in the church today, it is enormously exhausting. It should not be. The steps to follow in finding your spiritual gift requires spiritual exercise. The gifts you've been given are not for putting in a trophy case. They have been given because God has work for you to do in His body. He wants you to serve Him through His body, and His gifts are to equip you for that work. Now, He knows how serious you are about going to work. Some people would like to look at a catalog and see what the possibilities are. But even a great ship cannot be directed, no matter how large that rudder, unless the thing is moving. And if you want to discover your spiritual gift, you'd better be prepared to get up and go with it. You had better be prepared to exercise it for the sake of the body. You'd better be willing to get out of the spectator's seat and put on your overalls, and really put in the work and - not because there's going to be your listing in the bulletin, or because somebody's going to hand you a plaque - but because you have the incredible joy of participating in the building of the unity of the body of Christ, by His grace. He knows if you want to discover your gift because it's kind of a kick to do, or because it's the "in" thing. If so, you can just forget about it. And you can forget about His help in your discovering of that gift, because that's a self-centered kind of a desire, and he's not going to honor that. But if, instead, you covenant with Him that you will use that gift He has given to you by His Holy Spirit for His glory and the welfare of the body and realize that discovering gifts is not some sort of ego trip (it is an equipping for an active productive service), then I have every confidence that you will know, for certain, at least the foundational gift you have been given. I'm still in the process of discovering things that God has given to me, but I know - at least some of the things He has - and I'm responsible for those things I know, being used.

The fourth prerequisite is prayer. If your discovery of spiritual giftedness is to be useful and if it is to be kept safe from abuses, or from bad teaching - if it is to be guarded from distortion or divisiveness or arrogance or pride - it will be because it is wrapped completely in a living, vital, prayer life. It will be because you spend time with His word, and because you spend time with Him. Your quest must be steeped in a consistent prayer life, which results in a consistent lifestyle and behavior. Otherwise you will succumb to the three basic abuses that exist today in the whole area of spiritual gifts. That is: ignorance, competition, and comparison. Ignorance of unknown potential. Ignorance of the realization that you are gifted. God loves you so much He not only birthed you into His body by the death of Christ on the cross, but He has by His Holy Spirit given you gifts to be used as gifts to the body. You see, spiritual gifts are not just received - they are received in order that they might be given. So, we want you to give your giftedness to the body in order to fulfill God's purpose and plan. Ignorance must be avoided. That's why we're spending so much time in preparation.

Secondly, competition has to be avoided. And the only way you can avoid competition is if you spend an awful lot of time in prayer and with the word of God. Competition says, "My gift is neater than your gift." And then you get trapped into gift exaltation and all that stuff that we talked about before.

Comparison is the other problem. Here, more likely, is where we are. And that's the feeling that,

somehow, your gift is neater than my gift. Let me take just a moment to elaborate. In his book "Psycho-cybernetics", Dr. Maxwell Maltz says at least 95% of the people have their lives blighted, to some extent, by feelings of inferiority. And to millions, this is a serious handicap to success and happiness. Now, the result of those kind of attitudes within the church is obvious, where needs are critical. Where are the men and women to meet those needs? And hand-wringers will say, "Well, its a lack of commitment on the part of people." Well, it may be on the part of some people. But more often than not, rather than lack of commitment, it is a lack of feeling that they have anything to offer. There are an awful lot of people who are deeply committed to Christ who feel so poor that they've got nothing, really, to give. I'm convinced that that's the sad conclusion an awful lot of Christians have come to. Let me refer back to Dr. Maltz's book. "Psycho-cybernetics", as you know, is not a Christian book, but truth is of one part. He says, "It is not knowledge of actual inferiority in skill or knowledge that gives us an inferiority complex and interferes with our living - its the feeling of inferiority that does this. And this feeling of inferiority comes about for just one reason: we judge ourselves and we measure ourselves, not against our own norm or par, but against some other individual's norm. And when we do this, we always - without exception - come out second best." Church, stop comparing. God in His infinite wisdom and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, gives His gifts as He wills. You've got yours, and I've got mine. I may think yours is a neat gift, but boy so is mine. That's the body of Christ in function. Anything other than that: comparing our gifts with one another (in a sense of superiority or inferiority) is really a mark of carnality - not spirituality. That's what was going on at Corinth, and that's why Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, "I don't want you to be ignorant concerning the spirituals" Earlier in the book he says, "You know I would like to write to you as spiritual people, but you're not. You just give all the evidence of being carnal people." And one of the marks of their carnality was that they were trapped into the abuse of thinking less of themselves or more of themselves than they ought to think.

So, how do you discover your spiritual gift? Well, we're going to get to that in a later chapter, but I think its critical that we understand why we need to discover them. We need to discover them in order to be put to work, to use them, to exercise them. Dr. Bill Bright tells the story of the Yates pool, which is an oil field in Texas. He tells about how Mr. Yates bought that property. He used it as a sheep ranch for years. When the depression came, Mr. Yates used to spend just about all of his waking moments out there tending his scraggly little miserable sheep on those pitiful pasture lands, wondering how in the world he would ever pay his bills. And then along, one day, came a seismographic crew. They said, "We have reason to believe that there may be oil on this property. Do you mind if we drill?" Yates signed a contract giving them permission to drill on that basis that he retain 90% royalty of whatever they might hit. At 1,115 feet, they hit the first well. It brought in 80,000 barrels a day. Another well in that same pool currently is bringing in 125,000 barrels of oil a day. It is the largest pool known in the western hemisphere, and yet Mr. Yates lived on government welfare with that incalculable wealth under his feet. The body of Christ is so often characterized by people who live in a kind of spiritual welfare system, when God in His infinite mercy, has gifted us totally. He writes to the Colossians and says, "In Christ, you have all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily." What more do you need than you have? Nothing! Discover what you have. Live in the power of what you have received. And rejoice in that.

The Bible says we've been given those gifts. Paul in Romans 12 - in his chapter on gifts - says at the very outset, "I say to you through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. But to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." The English translation of that verse uses the word "think" three times. The Greek actually carries with it a double connotation, because when he says "think soberly", the word translated "soberly" is also a form of the verb "to think". And so what Paul is saying is when

you're talking about spiritual gifts, as I'm just ready to start he says in Romans 12, "I want you to think and think and think think". There is no way in which some of your apprehension and some of your concerns is Biblically justified. Some are so afraid they say, "Spiritual gifts? We're moving into something kind of spooky. Something kind of far out. Something kind of religiously esoteric!" No we're not! Paul says at the very beginning, "I want you to think. I want you to think soberly. Not to think more highly or yourselves than you ought to think. And then with the outset and the outline and the foundation of a thinking approach, to what God has given, he moves into the gifts, which we are not moving out into the spooky fringes - we are talking putting our theology in work clothes and getting on with God's program. The word is not interested in far out experiences. And neither am I. Far out experiences can be had with LSD or with demonic action. I'm not interested in either one. If God, by His grace, should happen to give me some kind of a far out experience, I'd try not to freak you out with it because God may not choose to give you that. Paul had a vision. He had a vision so spectacular he couldn't remember if he was in the body or not. But it was fourteen years old when he finally shared it. Paul did not have "a vision a day to keep the devil away". Paul was a man who walked logically and rationally, because God is a God of logic and rational precision. So as we continue, we are not looking for titillation. We are looking, by God's grace, for some tools. And tools are to be used.

So go into a world that needs everything you have, knowing that you are empowered by His Spirit to fulfill your ministry that He has given with the gifts He, too, has given, with the result that He will be glorified.

Chapter 7. Abuse of Gifts

I need to touch on another aspect - and that is that gifts can be terribly abused. The fact that the gifts can be terribly abused is what led the Holy Spirit to direct the apostle Paul to write the letter of Corinthians. Now I don't want to be negative, because I think this is one of the most positive messages I've ever worked on. But I think that it's necessary because wherever Satan fears the power of the Holy Spirit (which is every time it is manifested) and when he recognizes the Holy Spirit gifts the members of the body of Christ for ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ, what Satan cannot destroy, he will always try to distort. And he's been very busy in this area of spiritual gifts. He's been busy by counterfeiting them, by distorting their purpose, and by dividing the body of Christ through ignorance and confusion. Part of the paranoia that many in the body of Christ are experiencing whenever the subject of gifts comes up is the result of the discrediting and destroying work that Satan has been busy doing. Because the word for "gift" in scripture is the word "charisma" and the tongues movement has frequently referred to itself as the "charismatic movement", the popular American and church public hearing the term "charismatic" assumes that it is a kind of far out fringies. "Those that talk in tongues." That's their interpretation: far out fringies. Not mine, please understand. They therefore back off in fear from the "charismatic". The result is a very popular term is "charismania" or "charisphobia" to describe the abuses that can take place. But I want to be very specific here, because I think this is critical that we understand this in the whole context of the spiritual gifts.

The first major contemporary abuse of the spiritual gifts: C. Peter Wagner of the Fuller Evangelistic Association, who is primarily in charge of the church growth ministries - describes as "gift exaltation". That is the exalting of one gift over any other gift - no matter what gift you're exalting. The person that has a certain gift begins to assume - or project to others - that he constitutes a status symbol of spirituality. Now hear me. The scripture makes abundantly clear that the possession of any gift, or combination of gifts, is not to be equated with spirituality. Paul writes in I Corinthians 1, "You in Corinth are lacking in no spiritual gift." And yet in chapter 3 he says, "I want to write to you as spiritual, but I cannot. I have to write to you as those who are behaving carnally" (that is, unspiritually - in the wordly sense). In other words, they had all the gifts but they were not acting spiritually. They do not equate. Now it would be desired that those who have spiritual gifts would demonstrate true spiritual life. But it is not necessarily an axiom that they follow. The result is, Satan is able to take those who have gifts and put a slight warp in the interpretation on that, so that gift exaltation takes place. We always like to pigeon-hole people. We like to categorize them. "These are doctors, these are lawyers, these are merchants, these are chiefs, and those guys are ministers." We like to put people in boxes. We like to find out how much a person makes, or where they were educated, or where they live, or what kind of a car they drive, in order that we might categorize - and the same thing happens spiritually.

One asks, "Do you have this gift?"

Another responds, "Yeah, I've got that gift," and right away, we're part of the "elite" if we share that gift. Whatever gift. The result happens to be that those who have it are easily able to distinguish themselves from those who don't. That's not Biblical body life. It's a fragmenting of the body life. And those that "got it", flaunt it. At least it sure looks like flaunting to those who haven't got it. To those that have it, it's just celebration, but to those who don't have it, it looks like put downs. That's not Biblical. Gifts are not ends or status symbols. They are for the service and the building up of the entire body. Otherwise, if they are exalted beyond where they belong, they glorify the receiver. That's the

warp that Satan puts on it: they benefit the person; the individual in isolation and not the whole body.

The sad, sinful, and fractured church at Corinth had, as a root cause of that miserable condition, the abuse of gifts that I'm referring to as "gift exaltation". Way back in the very beginning, the first of all of those nine problems Paul deals with when he writes to the church at Corinth, is one of party spirit. That really was a form of gift exaltation. There were those who said, "Now, Paul is our man. Oh what a marvelous man. He has, among other things, the gift of tongues, he has the gift of prophecy, he has the gift of apostleship! That's our man!" And then there were other people who said, "We're of Apollos. He has the gift of knowledge. He has the gift of wisdom. He's our man!" And then there were those who said, "I follow Peter." Peter had the common, ordinary gifts - he had the gift of helps. And they were exalting their gifts and as a result they were clustering around people who represented the particular gift, or combination of gifts, that they were exalting. The result is, instead of the body being built up together, it was being fragmented. Now, it was not abuse of the leaders, it was the abuse of the followers. Paul writes to them and says, "Hey, who is Paul? Who is Apollos? Who is Peter? They're nobody but ministers used by God. One plants, one waters, God gives the increase. So then, the man is not important. The seed and the God who gives the increase is what's important." And yet the followers of these men were in the process of gift exaltation, and it divided the body.

This also happens today. The division that we see concerning the gifts and the ministries of the Holy Spirit across the whole church is the result of two things. Number one: It is the result of bad doctrine. And by bad doctrine, I would define that as doctrine that is experientially-based rather than Biblically-based. People come up to me and say, "Now Pastor, I think you're offline here."

And I'll say, "Why do you think I'm offline?"

"Well, I had this experience, and I read this book about this guy that had this experience."

Frankly, I don't care about your experience. Where is it *written*? We can have all kinds of experiences, and Satan can counterfeit every experience right down the line. But he cannot counterfeit the reality. The reality always is testified to by the sure and certain word of God. So it is that my experience must always come under the review and the affirmation of scripture. Recently I had a discussion with a young person who chose to follow a lifestyle in direct opposite of some clear teaching of scripture and they said, "but I feel so close to Christ."

And I said, "That's too bad. Because you aren't." There is no way in which your experience will conform to Christ. It will not conform to reality unless it is built in obedience to scripture. That's one reason why gift exaltation takes place - it is bad doctrine which bases itself on experience rather than the word of God.

And the other cause of division is all of us are followers of men so much more easily than we are of God. We just gravitate to men. Please listen very carefully: division in the body of Christ comes about in the contemporary church scene, as it did in the early church scene, when people who have certain gifts follow teachers who have essentially the same gifts, and the rallying point are those gifts. The result is division and fragmentation of the body, rather than the building of the body. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, gives gifts severally across a broad spectrum because He wants them severally across a broad spectrum. Not because he wants a pocket of this and a pocket of that and a pocket of the other thing. And the result is the gatherings of those who cluster around these teachers who share the same mutual gifts and the rallying point is the gift, is that the gift becomes a commodity that they push, or the meeting becomes like a club with only those on the inside really able to relate. That is not the body

of Christ. You see, the result is to become specialists in specifics. We become tempted to glorify the gifts and those who are so gifted, rather than the Giver. And the body becomes divided between those who've got it and those who don't. Until finally they want that gift more than they want the Giver of all gifts.

Discontent with what the Holy Spirit has given you is, in fact, criticism of the way He decides to run Christ's church. And I don't want to get into the business of criticizing the way He runs Christ's church. There is no exaltation of any gift over another in the word of God. I say that absolutely. If you take a look at I Corinthians 12 or Romans 12, Ephesians 4, the passages in I Peter, and some of the other scattered references to the gifts, you will discover the same thing I have: there is no uniform list. The lists vary in length. They vary in detail. They vary in the order of the listing. Sometimes they seem to be talking about ministries, and sometimes they seem to be talking about an energizing or power in the ministry. Some lists have this thing, but they don't have the other thing. And this list over here omits some things and adds something else. Why is the Bible so inconsistent in that? The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the scripture consistently selects and orders the gifts in random orders in various passages because we are having demonstrated for us how diverse and varied, like the human body, the gifts really are. We are foolish if we try to make, as some writers have, only a certain number of gifts. I have a briefcase just jammed full of books on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of the writers says right on the cover: "Discovering the 19 Gifts of the Spirit". I read another book, before I got to that one, that said there were only nine, and I was anxious to find out where this guy found ten more. Then I read another book that said there are 25 gifts of the Holy Spirit. So we have all kinds of people ranking and dividing and making lists and all the rest. Let me tell you something. I believe that the Holy Spirit is unlimited. And I believe He can give His gifts as He wills. I think that's what the scripture teaches. I think the gift lists that are found in scripture are indicative, not exhaustive. I think they're kind of a idea of some of the amazing things He is able to do. The emphasis is always upon the Giver and the reason for the gift. Not on the attention to the gift itself. So we must guard against the first abuse, which is gift exaltation.

A member of my congregation, who is of a mathematical mindset, came to me to say that if there are only nine gifts of the Spirit, then if they are held in combinations, that's a potential of 512 gift combinations. And if there are fourteen gifts of the Spirit, that holds a potential of 16,384. Fortunately for you, I promise I'm not going to cover 16,384 gifts of the Spirit!

The second abuse that we see today, Wagner refers to as "gift projection". You'll recognize this abuse too, because its probably touched you as its touched me. Most Christians who have biographies written about them are what we could only call spiritual super achievers. I really don't anticipate anybody will take the time to write a biography of Bud Palmberg. And I am really quite sure, if anyone really took the time, nobody would publish it. You know, you really got to have made a mark, and I was handed, by a very good friend of mine, a little poem that came out of a Teamster's publication. It described how you can see what kind of a mark you leave, by putting your fist in a bucket of water and pulling it out and then looking for the mark. I kind of feel like that. That's alright. I don't mind. I wouldn't buy the book either. But, there are some people around that we know are spiritual super-achievers who would - absolutely guaranteed - make the "Guinness Book of Spiritual Records", if there were one. I love hero stories, and I love biographies. But I've discovered when I read these hero stories or biographies, they always leave me with kind of a low grade depression for a few days. I couldn't figure that out. Why? Why do I feel kind of "meh"? And I think I have the answer. I think I understand. You see, the biographers, whether it was the autobiography or written by someone else, the message that comes through is sort of like this: "this person we're writing about did so much because he loved God so much. Therefore, if you - Bud Palmberg - loved God this much, you could do the same things." Now,

that's gift projection. The result is frustration and guilt and defeat.

Why, my goodness, if I don't love God that much and something's missing in my relationship because the signs are not the same. The person who writes the book in all honest humility seems to say, "I'm just an ordinary Christian. I'm no different from anybody else. This is what I do, God blesses it. If you do what I do, God will bless it just the same." And I say, "Oh boy, what's wrong with me?" They don't seem to realize they're projecting gifts. They can do what they can do because God, in His infinite mercy, has gifted them to do that. They are busy since they are an eye, trying to get the whole body to be an eye - but I'm a foot. They don't see they're projecting guilt and shame. In Matthew 25, the parable is told of the stewardship of talents. Its almost as though the man who had received five talents and came back with the ten, were to say to the guy who received two and came back with four, "Now this is what I did, and if you love God as much as I did, you'd bring ten talents too." Without recognizing that, to start with, he and five and the other guy only had two. Some of these ten-talent-people are busy saying, "I did this; you can do this. If you love God like I do and if you have the same kind of devotional life and you kneel down in the right way, or say the right words, or raise this hand or that hand, or both, or something, you'll have the same thing." That's gift projection. Without mentioning that the Master gave him five or ten talents and gave me two and the reason he has five or ten and I have two is because the Holy Spirit has "divided severally to every man as He" (that is, the Spirit) "wills."

By the way, I am not saying not to read biographies. I think you ought to. I think every Christian ought to read at least three biographies a year. I don't mean biographies of some of the current, contemporary flashes. I mean people like Solomon Goforth of China. Or the Stans. Or William Carey. Or some of the giants of the faith. Not some of the pops. George Mueller is one of those giants of the faith.

Lots of biographies were written about George Mueller. The one I read most recently, published by Zondervan, is called "George Mueller: the Man of Faith" and he was a giant with an incredible gift of faith and these are some facts (get ready to be dazzled). In 1835, George Mueller opened his first orphanage. He had 26 girls. He did not own the home. He did not have any money to run it. He didn't even know where the girls came from. But he opened the first orphanage: Walked in sat down and got permission to stay there a few days. Had no rent. Had no food. Had no nothing. Started with 26 girls. 35 years later he had five homes; he was sheltering and feeding 2,100 orphans every day. He still didn't have any money. He never, ever, solicited financial help. What a contrast with some of the what we see today! He never, ever, solicited financial help. He only told the Lord of his daily needs. In his lifetime of ministry, George Mueller paid to have educated 121,000 orphan children. He distributed 300,000 Bibles in different languages. He distributed 1,500,000 New Testaments in different languages. He sent out 163 missionaries and over 111,000,000 tracts. All without financial aid. He would sit down at an orphanage with 150 children that he had rung the dinner bell and they'd all come and sit down, Mueller and the cook in the kitchen knew there wasn't anything in the house except water. And the children were expecting a meal so they'd sit down and hold hands around the table and he would pray a prayer of such enormous faith it just staggers me to read it in the book. Then right smack in the middle of the prayer, there would be a knock on the door and there's a milkman whose rig broke down outside and he has 40 gallons of milk that he's going to have to dump in the drain "unless, perhaps, Mr. Mueller, you could use it?" And that's the way God supplied his needs. Do you know that by the time Mueller died, after 63 years in ministry, God had sent him \$7,500,000 for ministry. And when he died, he had less than \$1,000. Wow! I'm dazzled. Are you? Okay, now here's what I mean by gift projection: I read this and I'm just saying "Oh God, wow." Then I read what Mueller says, "Let not Satan deceive you in making you think you could not have the same faith, but that it is only for

persons situated as I am. I pray to the Lord and expect an answer to my requests. And may not you do the same, dear believing reader?" No wonder I'm depressed. It's that "dear believing reader" bit that puts me down. I am the unsuspecting victim of gift projection. There is a gift called the gift of faith, and Mueller had it in magnificent measure. But what's this eye doing, hollering at me being a foot, to be an eye? I don't have that gift of faith. Oh, I have faith - I choose to believe - that's an act of obedience and trust.

But the gift of faith says, "Mountain, go in the sea." An old lady who had her morning sun blocked by the mountain, read that scripture and said to herself, "it would be so great to wake up in the morning with brilliant sunshine in my room." So that night, she prayed, "Lord, move that mountain out of the way so I get the sun." In the morning she woke up and looked out the window and said, "Yeah, just as I thought..." You see, that's the kind of faith that some of us have. We don't have that gift of faith. Mueller wouldn't have even looked out the window - he would have put on his sunglasses. You see, when you look at the word of God and discover that the sovereignty is the Holy Spirit's, in His distribution of gifts, then you are free to be able to praise God genuinely and sincerely for the George Muellers in this world. Praise God! Just think, 121,000 orphans were rescued by that man's faith. Praise God for his gift to George Mueller. But, I can also praise God for my gift, which may not save 121,000 people, but God wants me to be steward of what I received - not of what George Mueller got. And so we can gather together about the table of the Lord, not as people who all have the same gift and not as people who are subject to being gift projectors or gift exalters, but those who gather together knowing that the only reason that we qualify to come to this table is not because we're so great, but because He is that great in loving and that His gifts to us by His Holy Spirit are distributed by His wisdom knowing what the body needs and knowing what we can handle. And we can praise Him together. And so we must.

God's gifts to you by the Holy Spirit may not be as dazzling or as spectacular as George Mueller's, but they are God's gift to the body through you. And I, for one, want to praise God for you.

Chapter 8. Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin. The sin, when it is full grown, produces death. Don't be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation nor turning shadow. Of his own will he gave birth to us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

So, then, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; for the anger of man doesn't produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with humility the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not only hearers, deluding your own selves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror; for he sees himself, and goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of freedom and continues, not being a hearer who forgets but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:13-25

Charles Spurgeon was a great preacher in England. He was called, in that day and age, a "pulpiteer." He was serving as a pastor and was visiting an elderly lady from his parish in what, at that time was called an almshouse - a poor house. He kept noticing every time he was there, a small frame that hung on the rather soiled and tattered wall behind her, and he couldn't see what was in the frame. He thought it might be a picture, but when he looked closer, it wasn't. It was some kind of writing and finally, one day, he took a good close look at that and asked her what it was. The lady replied that it was a piece of paper that had been given to her by a aged man that she had nursed for a number of years, as he was an invalid. Not too long before he died, he had handed her this piece of paper. Because he had signed his name rather boldly on the bottom of it, she had put it in a frame she had, and kept it there as kind of a reminder of those happy years of ministry to this invalid man. Dr. Spurgeon asked her if she would mind if he took this for a couple of days. She was not sure she understood that curious request, but granted him the privilege. He took it from the almshouse to the office of a barrister (an attorney) and his suspicion was confirmed. What that lady had put on the wall as a memento of years of service, and the joy in that service, was not an autograph - it was a will. And when they took it to the bank, they discovered that, indeed, the bank had issued quite a search to try and find who the heir was. There was no will that had been left that they knew of. And once it was confirmed, she became heir to hundreds and hundreds of English pounds sterling, which - all along - had belonged to her, but which she had never claimed because she did not really lay claim to that which she possessed. She had not exercised the right to riches. She was living in self-imposed poverty.

The scripture says in Colossians that if we have Christ, we have it all - that in Him dwelt the whole fullness of God, bodily. You cannot find one shred of biblical evidence that there is need for one thing more than what we receive in relationship with Jesus Christ. The continual searching for something more is non-Biblical, and is the result of deception. But it is also the result of the fact that we who have all things by relationship with Christ, frequently sit in the almshouse of our lives, spiritually, with a will to all the Father's riches hanging on the wall as an autograph. When we are talking, concerning the gifts, ministry, and Person of the Holy Spirit, we are not talking about something more - we are talking

about our possession. Otherwise, we continue to run off looking for some "more" experience. And when that pales, we look for something more. People say "I just lack power in my life." No, they don't lack power. All power, scripture says, is been given to us in Christ. "I can do all things, through Christ." Don't tell me you lack power. You lack obedience. You lack the use of that power in obedience. And so, when we're talking about the gifts of the Spirit, we are not talking about some sort of titillation or some something "more". We're talking about tools for ministry, that God - by His great mercy through His Holy Spirit - has given to us. So Paul says in Romans 12, which is the outset of his teaching on gifts in the book of Romans, at the very beginning he says, "I say to you through the grace given to me to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly." And that word "think" just keeps coming through. Here I just need to make a brief parenthetical statement. We sometimes make a mistake, because we assume in our culture today that when we are talking about the seat of our emotions, we are talking about our hearts. So when I say to my wife, "I love you with all my heart," she knows that I am speaking about the seat of my emotion. But the Hebrew mind was different, and their expression was a different expression. If they wanted to say "I love you with all my heart," they would say (and this is factual) "I love you with all my bowels." Now that sounds a little bit risque - almost a little bit crass. But isn't it practical? Isn't that really the seat of your emotions? If something happens, you say, "Oh man, I feel it in my guts." That's crude, but accurate and descriptive, and you know exactly what I'm thinking and feeling when I say that. So, when the scripture uses the term "heart", it is really, in fact, referring to that which is the seat of the mind.

And that's why, for instance, you find James 4 says "You sinners, stop your sinning, and the rest of you cleanse your hearts you double-minded men." What good does that do if its talking about a double-mind having a problem? I say that because I want you to understand that when scripture speaks concerning the thinking processes, it frequently speaks of our mind. James say, for instance, "If you see your brother in need, and you shut up your bowels of mercy...", we would say "you shut your heart to them." Its important that we understand that, because when Paul says, in the context of the chapter on gifts, that we are to think, he is suggesting to us (in fact, he is demanding) that we have a sensible, rational, sane assessment of ourselves. That's a spiritual necessity. I am not interested in looking for some kind of applique to put on, I'm looking for the reality of my inheritance and that which God, by His Spirit, has given me. Therefore, when we talk about spiritual gifts, we're not moving into the realm of the spooky or the esoteric. We are moving into the realm of the spirituals, which are the givens. We're talking about theology in overalls. We're not talking about something "more" or something "wow". Jesus said, "blessed is he who, having heard My words, does them". The same message that came through in the scripture from James 1.

We're going to begin by examining some of the ways in which we can discover what our spiritual gifts are. Some people expect me to spiritually lay out some formula: 1..2..3..4..5,and you've got it. I'm not talking about a formula, so don't try to make formulas out of what I'm saying, because the Bible doesn't use formulas. The Holy Spirit is like the wind, and you can't put the wind in a formula. Meteorologists are really confused by what's happening to the jet stream. It keeps shifting and, in some places, slowing down and then unexplainably taking off. That's why the picture in Time magazine this week shows Azalea blossoms encased in ice in Florida. They can't even predict the wind, and they've got satellites and everything else. Now don't try to put the Holy Spirit into some sort of formula or bottle - it doesn't work. But here are some suggestions as to ways in which you can discover your gift.

First of all, look over the possibilities. Some people are so ignorant concerning the reality of spiritual gifts and the possibilities, that there's no way they're going to know what they have when they discover it. The fact of the matter is, the first step in any travel is to lay out the options. If I want to go from

Seattle to Los Angeles, I have the opportunity of hitchhiking, of riding a horse, of riding a bicycle, of riding a motorcycle, taking my car, taking the train, or flying. I can go the interstate, I can go the coastal route, I can go the back roads, I can even take the cascade trail. I have a lot of options, and I need to know what my options are so I can make a rational decision. If you tell somebody you're taking a trip, they ask "where are you going?"

And you tell them, and then they ask, "How are you going to get there?"

"Oh, I don't know. I haven't decided. I may go this way or that way or that..."

That's crazy. So if you want to know something about spiritual gifts you need to spend time with the word of God. You need to know what the possibilities are. Now, there are three ways that we can do that. First of all, you need to study and read the word of God. That's our authority. That's our basic source - our primary source of data about all the possibilities. You need to read and study the major passages concerning gifts, repeatedly. Don't just sit down and, five minutes before you fall asleep, read through I Corinthians 12 & 13, and think you've got it made for the week. You won't learn a blame thing (except how tough it is to stay awake when your laying in bed reading I Corinthians 12). So what I would recommend is that you take Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, and Ephesians 4, and spend time with them, deeply digging in, using your cross-references. And if you don't know how to use cross-references, or you don't have a Bible that has them, learn how or get one. The scripture says, "Study, to show yourself approved." And in this crazy age of instant mash potatoes and instant everything, we expect instant spiritual maturity, but you're not going to get it. There is no formula, there is no magic, there is no position to assume, there is no act that you can do. There is just the good, long haul, where you "study to show yourself approved unto God a workman who accurately handles the word of God" and that takes work. I'm not talking about buying secondary sources and reading what everybody else has to say about the word. I'm talking about studying the word.

Now, if you can use it in different translations - and I think most of us have so many Bibles around our house, we'd be surprised if we ever put them all in one pile. If you love the King James - you think that somehow King James was the thirteenth man that Christ chose, and you believe that somehow the king really had an inside track and that's the word of God and anything other than that is just of the devil and all that (and I've read some dumb stuff about that) - but if you like it, go get other translations. Incidentally, I love the King James - nobody can match the beauty of the language of the King James translation, but its a little bit obscure, let's admit it, because we don't talk that way today. Use that as the primary, or New American Standard, or Revised Standard. Do not use the paraphrase or the Living Bible as your primary source. Use it to inform, but it's not your primary. Its a paraphrase - it's not a translation. Get a translation. Better yet, get a Greek/English Interlinear. You say, "Oh my goodness, the only Greek I know runs a delicatessen downtown!" That's beside the point. A Greek/English Interlinear is just that - it has the Greek, and it has the English translation literally translated just right above the words so you can see what each word really means. Most churches have study helps in their library. Use them! Dig in. Discover the possibilities that God has placed at our disposal. Not as something to add to, but something of the vast storehouse of God's richness that He has given to us. So the beginning discovery of the gifts of the Holy Spirit operative in your life is to study the word of God. But let me also suggest that you search the scriptures for examples of the gifts in operation in the lives of those described in scripture. You see, the Bible is not only a book of teaching, and a book of history, it is a book that describes the demonstration of that which it taught. So spend some time really seeking it out. Become familiar with the indications and the clues to gifts described in other than the "big three" passages, which I suggested to you before. Get familiar with the cross references and the translations. Get to work! Stop just going to church and and expecting your preacher to chew all the

food for you. Spend some time with God's word.

After you've done that, look at secondary sources. But I say after! By secondary sources, I've got to warn you to be careful here. There are some very popular books and some very popular authors that just write pious pap. Just baloney! Holy baloney, but just baloney. Its bad teaching, it is non-Biblical, and it is divisive. So when you go to secondary sources, use your head. Don't go in to a bookstore and say, "Give me a terrific book on gifts". Don't do that. They may give you something they're trying to unload or they may give you the most popular book. And it may not be the best.

And when you go to secondary sources, let me suggest something that may surprise you, but its very practical: buy authors you don't agree with. If you happen to be a charismatic (by the modern definition of that term - you believe that tongues is for today), in fact, you even go so far as to believe (which is erroneous) that tongues is the sign gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit - its the entryway and all that - then your bookshelf should be added to by J. Vernon McGee, John McArther, and some of those boys. Read it and get good and mad. It will drive you to the word. And that's the point of the whole thing: get into the word! If you read about "Oh wow...terrific!" you're not learning a blame thing - you're having your biases supported.

On the other hand, if you believe that tongues ceased with the apostolic age; that the book of Acts is purely a book of transition, and therefore the occurrences of tongues that appeared in the book of Acts are simply transitional appearances; then you need to buy some books. But be careful here, because there's some real strange ones who are writing in this area. I suggest that you go out and get a book by C. Peter Wagner, Rick Young, or Bob Ryrie. There are some great authors - some wise men and Biblical scholars that are writing. Oh, I always find it a lot more exciting to read books that really just get me excited. I can't read at night before I go to bed, because I usually read books I don't agree with, and I get so wound up I couldn't possibly get to sleep. But if you're going to go to secondary sources, get in secondary sources that force you to think and drive you to the word. And when a book says, "And just like it says in John 15:42...", look up John 15:42 and read verses 30 through the end of the chapter. A verse out of context is purely pretext. And there are a lot of writers who go smorgasbording their way through the Bible. So spend some time with the word of God so you know your groundwork is done and then go to secondary sources and have a good time. And you will have a good time.

Then I suggest, also, that you talk about gifts with people that you view as gifted. Now, don't look for the superstars on the spiritual horizon. Don't look for the people who always come to your mind when you think in terms of leadership and all of that kind of thing. Look around you in the body of Christ and try to have an honest - not judgmental - evaluation of somebody else. And then come up to this person and say, "you know, I've been kind of watching you, and you know, I think you must have the gift of..." and then tell them what that gift is that you think. "And I'd like to talk to you about it sometime to find out how you got into this and what are the joys and what are the problems, etc." Talk with people. They may say, "Me?" and then you'll both have a good time. The point is, discover your gifts by talking with gifted people, by reading books concerning the gifts, but first of all by grounding yourself in the word, concerning the gifts. And don't become super-specialists. Be a general practitioner with the word of God.

Seek information and broaden your experience. But here's another warning: do not spend time talking with people who are gift pushers. I don't care what their gift is. If it's tongues, or if its prophecy, or if its exhortation, or if its mercy, and they say, "You've got to have it. You've got it? Oh boy, this is it!" Take a walk, because gift pushing is one form of abuse that the scripture condemns as "gift exaltation" or "gift projection". And that's divisive. But find brothers and sisters who exhibit gifts.

So first spend some time examining the possibilities, but then plan on going to work. Fulfill your Christian role - your responsibilities - and you will discover some exciting things about gifts. If you look over the Biblical listing and teaching concerning spiritual gifts, you'll recognize that a lot of them are descriptive of what's expected of every single Christian. Some of the gifts are also every Christian's role as a Christian. We are all commanded and exhorted and instructed by scripture to witness, to share our faith, but not everybody has the gift of evangelism. We are all expected to show mercy and to comfort those who are afflicted and assist the unfortunate, but not everybody has the gift of mercy. We are all called to give with liberality, but not all have the gift of giving. And just because I don't have a particular gift does not mean I can abdicate my obedience to the role. There are many things that I am called upon to do as a pastor that I do not believe, in all honesty, I have any spiritual gift for whatsoever. But I do it. And I do it, not because "it's God's will for my life", but because it's part of my job. Just that plain and simple. And there are things that we can discover about spiritual gifts by simply doing our job as a Christian. Obedience. You will never discover your spiritual gift by sitting back and saying "lay it on me!" You will discover your spiritual gift when you're moving.

Paul writes to Timothy and he says, "Timothy, stir up the gift of God which is in you." And then he says something that has confused a lot of people: "which is in you by the laying on of hands". So people are "Ah, so that's the way I find my gift" and they run around and find somebody to lay hands on them and pray that they'll receive a gift. If they have hands laid on them and they do not have some particular understanding or insight as to the gifts that they've received, they're still confused - they think, "I had the wrong hands on my head" and they look for another set of hands. When Paul writes to Timothy and says, "that gift that was in you by the laying on of hands", he's saying "that's what happened in your life, Timothy", but that is not a formula. Don't make formulas out of the Holy Spirit's work. It may be by the laying on of hands and, if so, then ask your brothers and sisters in Christ to lay their hands and pray for this. But don't expect it as a result of that. Don't say, "well, God, I had hands laid on me, You've got to!"

If you want to discover your spiritual gift, examine the possibilities and then go to work with experimentation. When Edison was trying to discover what would work for a filament in the incandescent bulb, he was asked - after he had had 1,200 failures of different materials he'd used for the filament - "aren't you ready to give up?"

And he says, "No. I must be closer to the truth: I know 1,200 things that won't work."

Don't be afraid of failure in the body of Christ. Be afraid of not obeying.

So don't copy or ape another person's experience, or another person's place, or another person's position, or another person's prayer, or another person's action or experience. That's not important. The Holy Spirit works the way He wants to. Some have come to me and said, "Now wait a minute pastor, I know I received the gifts of the Holy Spirit and discovered them when someone laid their hands on me in pray."

And I replied, "Well, praise the Lord for that! You know how I found my gifts (and am discovering my gifts)? By working!" By really working - I've tried everything. We are instructed to evangelize, and exhort, and show mercy, whether we have the gift or not. There are hundreds of Bible commands, which operate in the area of gifts. So if you go to work and obey those commands in the obedience, you will discover that the Holy Spirit will unveil the possession of gifts you didn't know were yours. And there are clues to that. You see a need in the body of Christ? Then volunteer to meet that need

and go at it. If there is a need, what are you going to do about it? Some of you don't want to do anything about it - you just want to be need discoverers instead of need meeters. The body of Christ is thoroughly furnished for every good work. Therefore, everything that needs to be done within the body of Christ should be able to be done. You may discover a gift you never dreamed was yours.

Let me illustrate this. Let's call the woman "Helen". Helen was very, very fearful. She was a shy kind of person. Kind of introverted, and she knew the word of God commanded that she be a witness to her neighbors - to be ready to give an answer to the reason that lies within you, for those that ask. But she hid out so much that nobody had a chance to ask her. And every time she'd come driving down the road past her neighbor's, she'd see them in the yard and they'd wave at her or something like that, it was like a little voice inside of her that said, "You really ought to talk to that person about the Lord. You really ought to." And she'd say, "Oh boy, I don't have the gift of evangelism. I don't have any gifts." And she was just very introverted. Finally, one day, it became so heavy on her heart that she decided to just get the bit in her mouth and obey. And so she tried to think of the easiest way she could do it and the easiest way she can do it is to bake fresh bread and take a loaf of bread over to the neighbor, or to have the neighbor over for a cup of coffee and then give them a loaf of fresh bread and she said, "just something I like to do, and this is an act of my affection for you. We've lived together but hadn't known each other very well and I just kind of wanted to find out about you, you know." She discovered, after three or four of these sessions with one neighbor lady at time, that she did not have the gift of evangelism. Nobody said, "Oh yes, I want to know Jesus." And she told them about Christ, because they all seemed to give her opportunities. They'd say things like, "You're a pretty religious family, aren't you?" Well, now that's an opening. Even the slowest witted of us understand that that's an opening. And she would be faithful in simply following through on that opening and sharing in all candor and honesty - no hard sell, no big deal - about what Christ had done for her. Nobody said, "Oh I want that." So she was really discouraged. I encouraged her to keep this up. Just keep being faithful. Keep obeying. I didn't know what she was going to discover - I was pretty sure it wouldn't be the gift of evangelism either. Then she came one day, really excited. She'd been at this about three or four months; she'd had just about everybody on the block in at least once. And the people were starting to call her. And the ladies would say things like, "You know, I've been watching your family since we got together the other day and you have such a fine son and we're really having problems with my boy. Can I come over and talk to you about my boy?" Or, "My husband and I are really in conflict, do you mind if I share? I've got to tell somebody and I don't have anybody I can trust enough with it". And she began to have the opportunity to exercise what I call the gift of exhortation. She had the chance to build up these people - to draw them. She didn't win them to Christ, but she was exercising her spiritual gift and the net result was they, through her, became involved with the church, encountered those who did have certain gifts, and the Holy Spirit won them anyway. Now this woman says, "what am I going to do? I've got a heavy counseling appointment and I haven't even had psychology 101."

I responded, "No, but its quite possible you have a gift. So exercise it. By the way, take psychology 101 too. It won't hurt you. You can inform, and flesh out, and exercise, and develop the gift."

The other person, we'll call Him "Fred", was elected to an office in the church. He kind of wanted the office. It was his turn. You pass those things around. It was his turn for the office and he had no legitimate an excuse he could come up with quickly enough when the nominating committee contacted him. So he took the job. And he discovered, after he had been leading and administrating and ruling for a period of time that he did not have the gift of administration. He was leading, but nobody was following. Instead of quitting in a huff, he filled out his term. At the end of his term, he said, "Let's not do that again, but let's have a different opportunity for ministry. I have discovered I don't have the gift of administration, therefore please give me a chance to serve in some other way." And he

discovered his gift - a place he never expected to discover it: he is teaching preschool children. He said to me one time, "people who have more than three children are masochistic." And the man we're calling Fred, goes into that Sunday school and its like a piece of bread with honey on it set next to an ant hill. He is just covered with these little kids. He gets juice and jelly and stuff all over his suits and he says, "the most fun I ever have is paying my cleaning bill when I realize that it was put on, not by some sloppy drunk, but some darling child with sticky hands." See, you discover your gift by going to work. I don't care how big your ship is, how powerful your engines are, how great the rudder is, if you're tied up at the dock you'll never establish direction. You've got to be moving, and moving frequently comes by obedience. Its important to discover your gift. Its important to obey the scriptural roles. And its important not to quit prematurely. A few failures may really be required before the gift is developed, and before you can discover your gift without getting arrogant about possessing that gift. Dr. Charles Ryrie said, "Many lay men and women miss the full use of their gifts simply because they will not tie themselves down to a regular Sunday school class or even to a simple administrative job in the church. We must be unreservedly willing to do anything if we would know the fullest use of our spiritual gifts."

A good Biblical illustration of this is the story of Phillip. Back in the first part of the book of Acts, when it tells the history of the very early church. The disciples were doing everything. Among the things that they were doing, because they held all things in common (they sold property and then they put it in a common pot and supported everybody out of that according to their needs), there were two groups of people within the early church - the Hebrew Christians and the Greek-speaking Christians (or Hellenists), and the result is there was a kind of subtle discrimination that took place between the Greek-speaking and the Jews. The Hellenists felt that they were receiving second-class treatment in the distribution of goods. So they began to complain, and this brand new burgeoning church is already having squabbles. The disciples are trying to do everything. They are trying to spend time with the word, they're spending time in prayer, they're spending time teaching and instructing and are also distributing everything, and it was a mess. Then the Holy Spirit instructed the disciples, "come on you guys, wise up" and so it says in Acts 6, "it isn't reasonable for us to leave the word of God to wait on tables. Therefore, brethren, look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business." Ever wonder why its always deacons who serve communion? They're still waiting on tables! That's a job they got way back in Acts 6. That's a job they've still got - waiting on tables. Don't think the deacons are the superstars of the church. They have been chosen by God and elected by the congregation to be your servants, not superstars. They're table waiters. And if any of my deacons get a little bit big for their britches, I'm going to make them wear an apron! Because its a service capacity.

By the way, the selection process started with seeking out men of character - not gifts. They looked for fruit. Once the fruit was manifested and they said, "yeah that guy's got fruit in his life," then they moved on to the gift. And the gifts are there, my goodness, look there: we've got wisdom ("full of wisdom"), they had the gift of wisdom; you move on down, "put in charge": they had to have the gift of administration; they had to have the gift of helps: they were involved in this task of distributing food. They were multi-gifted people. One of the guys chosen was a fellow by the name of Phillip. Now don't confuse him with one of the twelve. Phillip's an interesting guy and he had an interesting family too (he had some daughters that went into the ministry as well). Phillip was one of those chosen and that was a tough job. The first deacon they chose was a guy by the name of Stephen and he was killed within just a couple of chapters, not too long after that. In Acts 8, it describes after the execution, by stoning, of the first deacon, Stephen, that persecution came down upon the church, and it says they were scattered everywhere - everybody but the apostles. So Phillip the deacon (not the apostle) went. They had to get out of town for their own safety. You look at Acts 8:5, Phillip goes to Samaria and

there he begins to share the word of God. Verse 6 says there was a terrific response to it. Now, why is a Jew sharing with Samaritans? There's a barrier crossed. There's a prejudice ignored. No wonder scripture says that "He has broken down the walls of partition." He had a job in Jerusalem, but it didn't last very long - he had to get out of town - and now he's out there simply obeying the scriptures. He's obeying the call to witness and he discovers he has the gift of evangelism. So in Acts 21, when Paul is sharing his testimony, the great apostle Paul refers to going down to Cesarea and staying at the house of Phillip "the Evangelist".

You see how gifts are discovered in ministry? I can't come out to your house with a catalog and let you select. You have been given. But you'll never discover it unless you're really moving down the road in ministry - in service. But please hear me and understand. As you accept new responsibilities and God reveals His gifts to you, and as you work to develop these gifts, and in the process He unwraps others for you, always always remember gifts are not a reward for hard work. They are not a merit badge. Its in the work that they are discovered and developed.

I am sincere when I say that if you are serious about discovering your gift of ministry then get to work. Undertake to fast and prayer. Find a need, fill it, and don't quit prematurely. Every single need in the church ought to be oversubscribed with a waiting list of volunteers. I am not being facetious - I am absolutely in earnest. And don't take it for three or four weeks and then bail out. That's not honoring to God. Find a need and fill it. Put yourself in service. Experiment. Have a broad range of experience. If your experience demonstrates inadequacy rather than giftedness then pass the task on to somebody else at the appropriate time and relocate. Relocate, not retire. God has no social security system. His Kingdom has no room for rocking chairs. Don't ever say, "Well, I've served my time. I'm going to rest now." Some people have said this to me in the past - and I've said it myself. But that is non-Biblical and, therefore, unacceptable. If you are working with your gift, you will experience joy. When Jesus said, "take My yoke upon you and learn of Me" He did not say it because He wanted us to be weighed down and crushed by the burden of it all. He said, "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. And you will find rest." Where? In the yoke.

In I Corinthians, in the passage from the 2nd chapter, the RSV says in the 12th verse, "now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things but is himself is to be judged by no one, for who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

And then the first verse of the third chapter says, "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh. As babies."

And it is in order that this not be accurate of us that we have been spending as long as we have been in seeking to understand the scripture's teaching with regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit - who He is, what His role in ministry is in our lives, and how He has gifted us for what purpose.

The next thing I wanted to bring to your attention is that after you have studied the word of God and know the options; after you have begun to experiment, you will begin to discover that you can also find whether you have the spiritual gift in the area where you're working by evaluating your reactions. What are your responses? What is your enjoyment level in the work you're doing? Where did we ever

get the unBiblical idea that serving God was not fun? Where did we ever get the idea that the more miserable you are, the more Godly you must be? I used to think that apparently, when I was a young fellow. Part of my spiritual struggle, my resistance of the will of God in my life, was I suspected if He got ahold of me without reservations, He would send me to a mud hut in New Guinea. Or even worse, He'd make me a minister. I could not, for the life of me, understand how anybody could hope to serve a God who wanted them that miserable. But then I had an older pastor who said to me, "you know, it doesn't make sense. If your son or your daughter comes to you and says, 'Daddy, I love you with all my heart' and they express their love and say, 'I'll do anything you ask me to do, just give me a chance to serve you', would you send them out to clean the garbage cans? That's highly unlikely. And if you aren't going to treat your earthly children that way, isn't it just as unlikely that God is going to send you into a mud hut in New Guinea?" Unless that is where your happiness lies. I know people who are in mud huts in New Guinea, who wouldn't trade places with you or me for anything. And the idea that I am full of joy in the ministry is still a surprise to me after all these years. But God, you see, in His mercy, knows and understands so you need to check your interest and response level. How did I discover that God had called me into the ministry? I'll tell you. I went into the ministry. I didn't have any Damascus road experience or bright lights, or blinding, or anything else. I did the next logical thing: when I graduated from college, I applied to seminary.

I applied to seminary and everybody said, "Oh, my aching back, what's happening to our seminary!" But I still went. After I'd been there for a year, I had a chance to marry my wife, and we served a church in southern Alabama, down on the edge of the swamp on three sides, and the Gulf coast fifteen miles away. That was really quite an experience. No radio, no television, no telephone, no money to buy gas to go any place. We spent more time together in the first two years of our marriage than most people do in the first twenty. And we went through all the trauma most people do in the first twenty in the first two years. I can remember that Sunday after Sunday as I would preach, and week after week as I would prepare and do the work of the ministry, I am continually saying, "what in the world am I doing here?" I would get in there and spend time with the word of God and it was just spade work and the ground was so hard I used a pick and shovel - I couldn't get any place. I didn't have enough knowledge, I didn't have enough background, it was hard work. And, thank God, He had sent me to some very simple, faith people, who ministered to me more than I ever did to them. They taught me more about faith in two years down there - more about trust in God's word and in His mercy - than I had learned in seminary up to that point, or would subsequently learn. Praise God for His people. But I can recall that it was on the second night of February, after I had been serving that church as its pastor for several months that there came a realization - not a thunder and lightning storm - but just a quiet dawning of realization. I was at peace. For the first time in my conscious memory, I was deeply at peace. A sense of "this is where I belong." This is the task to which God has called me, and it has never left. Now, I do not suggest thereby that it is really gravy, because there is a lot about the pastorate that is pure pain. A lot of dealing with people that I just don't like and dealing with some people that I don't like, who have to deal with pastors that they don't like. The whole business is sometimes very unpleasant, but in the middle of the whole thing, God gives that joy.

So, examine your emotion - your response - your feelings. Psalm 37 (GNGW) says, "delight thyself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart." But if your delight is in the Lord, He can trust you with the desires of your heart. St. Augustine said, "love God with all your heart, and then do as you please", knowing full well if you love God with all your heart, you're going to do what pleases Him. Ray Stedman says in his book "Body Life", "Somewhere the idea has found deep entrenchment in Christian circles that doing what God wants you to do is always unpleasant. That Christians must always make choices between doing what they want to do and being happy, and doing what God wants them to do and being completely miserable." Now that is liable against God. It is simply not true. The

exercise of the spiritual gift is enormously satisfying. It brings enjoyment, even though the occasion which calls forth its exercise might not be, in fact, enjoyable. I may be called to exercise my gift of exhortation in a situation that is fraught with pain and discomfort, but the exercising of that particular gift brings joy. That is because it is in harmony with God's plan and purpose for us. He knows every detail of my psychological and physiological makeup. He knows my hormonal balance, my basal metabolism, my glandular function or dysfunction, my total personality, my feelings, my fears, my anxieties both known and unknown, both conscious and unconscious. He knows that I will always do my best job when I'm enjoying the job. So will you. And so part of God's plan for us is to match His gifts to the person. That's why the matching is not on the basis of our knowledge, but His knowledge. Not on the basis of our sovereignty, but His Holy Spirit's sovereignty, "Who gives severally His gifts as He wills". He's got a better plan. And with that enjoyment comes fulfillment.

I sat in the motel in Eagle Rock, California. It was a major smog alert - I wanted to go out and go swimming and I could hardly see the swimming pool. I decided to stay inside my air-conditioned motel room. I was down there for some meetings in a church. I had studied until I didn't want to study anymore. I just reached a saturation point. I prayed until I was done praying - I couldn't think of anything else to pray about and I was starting to repeat myself and I'm sure it was boring God. So I decided I was going to do something different. I turned on the television set and just as I turn on the TV set, the picture came into focus and there was a man laying on a pallet on a dirt floor. The man was an emaciated bag of bones. His body was covered with some awful looking sores. He looked like he was terminal - that he would die while the camera was focused on him. The bugs ran all over and the flies lit all over his sores. And I thought, "Oh man, this is not what I need" and when I reached for the TV set to change the channel, suddenly, off camera right came the robed figure of a sister - a nun. She was carrying a basin of water and a towel and some kind of disinfectant. She knelt down on the dirt floor amid the bugs next to this man, who must have smelled as bad as he looked, and she began to bathe those wounds and bind them up. This went on for what seemed like a long time and I sat watching with fascination. No words, no music, no voice over. And then, at last came a voice off camera of the announcer, who said, "sister?"

She didn't stop. She just said "Yes?"

The off-camera voice said, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars."

She turned around and looked full into the camera and said, "Neither would I."

Do you understand? The exercise (in this case, of the gift of mercy) bears rewards that could never be compensated for by the kind of reward system the world and society is set up to reward. There is enjoyment even though, in the middle of the enjoyment of the exercise of that gift, that there is squalor and misery and everything else. She did not enjoy the pleasure of this man's suffering, but the pleasure of exercising that gift of mercy to minister to him in suffering. She was right - she would not do it for a million dollars. You know men and women who are busily engaged in serving the Lord in various capacities that you say to yourself, "I'd just be exhausted if I tried to do that!" A few months back, we were having some problems finding people who were responsible enough to accept the challenge of serving in children's church. We still have some problems there. And so I said to those in charge, "Alright, we're going to take the membership of this church and we're just going to assign them, a month at a time." Man, the fall-out from that was enormous. But it was kind of fun - I just fastened my seatbelt and let her come, because I thought, "Alright, this is a need in the body of Christ and you will never know if this is your gift unless you get involved." 'd stand there on Sunday and people would come past - and they hadn't been in the worship service - they'd been with children's church and

they'd say, "Man did you preach a long sermon today!"

"Well, how do you know?"

"I've been with the kids!"

They were exhausted. They looked totally spent. They looked as though I had run them around the island behind my car. And then there were others that came out of that as fresh as a daisy! Excited and chattering about what God had done in their midst. The difference is that one couple had been working with their gifts and the other couple wasn't. And how do you find out? You put them in the job. And you'll never really know. I discovered that the most unlikely places are where joy comes in service. It is frequently unlikely, because God in His mercy will gift us in ways we did not expect. So, examine your feelings. There are those who do tasks that would exhaust me. Just watching them exhausts me. But they seem to be energized by the doing of that task. That's the difference between working with a gift and not having a gift. When members of the body of Christ are in right relationship with His head, the members should delight in the ministry of his gift. Conversely, if you just endure, instead of enjoy, if you just know constant frustration instead of fulfillment, maybe your task is not lined up with your gift.

Let me look at one more indication. You see a need that you want to do something about, you have a burning desire to see people come to Jesus Christ. Or you see organizational confusion and lousy, inefficient methodology, or poor policy planning, and you would really like to get in and do something about it. Or you see the lonely and sick or the deprived or the retarded and your heart just goes out to them - you just are filled with a desire to become involved. You are experiencing the touch of the Holy Spirit to motivate you into the areas where He has gifted you.

So, once you have looked at the word of God; once you have experimented and spent some time (not just a one-shot deal) experimenting and working and seeking God's will and being obedient in your Christian roles; and then when you have examined your enjoyment level, then take a realistic look at your effectiveness. That's also a very important key. You see, if you just look at your reactions and feelings, that's so internal and can become very subjective. So you need a little bit more objective view and the Scripture suggests that you look at the outside - take a look at the effect. Are other people helped? Are they encouraged? Are they won to Christ? Are they given insight? Are they comforted? Are they built up? Do they grow? This is no time for phony false modesty that masquerades as Christian humility. I believe in humility, but I don't believe in false modesty. If God has given you a gift, then don't say, "Oh, I can't do anything." Just roll up your sleeves and say, "This is a task I can do!" And do it! The question, therefore, is when you do a task, does the task get done? And is the body, as a result, built up? Is that ministry successful? Don't be spooked by that word. There's nothing wrong with being successful. God has no premium on mediocrity and failure, although you'd think so sometimes. God wants us to be successful. He has gifted us, by His Spirit, with gifts in order to be successful. Now, don't judge success by the world's standards of success, which are cockamamie. The scripture says, "The last shall be first and the first last", so if you get things right side up (not world side up) you'll be able to understand what success really is. Gifted people get results - without exhaustion. Therefore, it's in order when you are gifted, to expect those gifts to work and to be effective.

If you experiment with a gift and you consistently find that what is supposed to happen is not happening, you've probably discovered one of the gifts the Holy Spirit has not given you. C. Peter Wagner tells in his book of the frustration he had because his professor of evangelism in seminary was

continually thrilling the class by telling stories of how he'd get on the bus, he'd ride three blocks and by the time he got off, the seatmate on either side had been led to the Lord and C. Peter Wagner just used to feel awful about it - just guilt-ridden about it. So he'd get on a bus, and by the time they'd gone six blocks, they were all mad at him and he'd say, "something's wrong." He felt so guilty - what he was doing was discovering that, while he has the responsibility of witnessing (that is the Christian's role and responsibility), he did not have the gift of evangelism. And by evangelism, I'm not just talking about the mass Billy Graham full Kingdome type meetings. Some people lead one person to the Lord every week or so. It happens with a certain degree of regularity. You say, "why does it happen for him and not me? I share just as faithfully; I seek to live a life just as committed to Christ; but here's one who bears fruit, and I just seem to be one of the planters." So? It's God Who gives the increase.

Gifts are for a purpose. When true gifts are in operation, whatever is supposed to happen will happen. If you have been called and given the gift of evangelism, people will come to Christ regularly through your witness. No big deal, just the fact. You've been given the gift of exhortation, people will be helped with their problems, you will be able to discern steps they ought to take for the correction of their lives, they will be encouraged and built up. It just happens. You've been given the gift of administration and you walk into a mare's nest of organizational inefficiency and before too long, things are just humming right along. Or if you have the gift of teaching, students learn! There's nothing Holy about ineffectiveness. We are called, the scripture says, "to bear much fruit." The exercise of our gifts should produce fruit in us and in other people. So, we ask ourselves, "Is my competence and my joy increasing? Is the exercise of this gift effective?" You see, gifts are instruments - they're not ornaments: does this lead me to grow and other's too?

And that leads to the last step in the discovery of spiritual gifts and that is that confirmation has got to come from the body of Christ. Otherwise, you see, we can become so subjective and so wrapped up in ourselves that it has no checks and balances. And confirmation of the body comes as a check on the other steps. Do other people recognize these gifts in you? Look at Acts 6:3. It says that they were men of wisdom. But it was the body that recognized those gifts and confirmed those gifts and confirmed these men in ministry. As we obey the commands of Christ and serve Him in obedience in our roles, others in the body may see gifts operating in our lives before we do. You know that? We may be just doing our job and then, low and behold, somebody says, "You know, you have a real gift in this area." And you begin to look at it - and isn't that amazing? Sometimes our joy and preoccupation in what we are doing with effectiveness - in accord with the giftedness we've received - makes us kind of oblivious. A very important duty therefore, of Christians, is to encourage fellow believers. When we observe a gift in operation in somebody's life, don't be jealous - share that good news with that person. Gifts are for that purpose.

And the confirmation of the body, by the way, works both negatively and positively. Here's the negative side:

- if you say, "I believe God has given me the gift of teaching" and people stay away from your classes in droves
- or you believe God has given you the gift of preaching, but nobody seems to have the gift of listening when you're preaching
- or you believe God has given you the gift of administration and you never can get elected so you have a chance to use that gift
- or you believe God has given you the gift of wisdom and nobody asks you for counsel.

Proverbs 25:14 says, "Whoso boasts of himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain".

But, praise God, it works positively and its wonderful. Look at the Biblical examples of the confirmation of the gifts by the body. I referred to the one in Acts 6, where the deacons had the gift of wisdom confirmed by the body. In Act 16, when Paul chooses young Timothy to join him on his missionary team, he made sure that Timothy was "well reported by the brethren." That is, both moral and spiritual evaluation took place. In Paul's very early years in the Christian ministry, his gifts and his mission to the Gentiles were affirmed by the church. Listen to what he says in Galatians 2 - he goes down to Jerusalem and there he kind of lays out before them his plans and his experience and all the rest, and "when they perceived the grace" (that is the gift) "that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles." That's confirmation by the body of the gifts. That scripture reminds me of another teaching on gifts that was the experience of an early disciple. You know that there was a follower of Christ in the very early days of the church whose name was "Joseph"? You don't even know him by the name of Joseph, but that's his name. He was a Levite, he was a native of the island of Cypress. He had the gift of giving, he sold everything he had and brought it and laid it at the feet of the apostles. He was an amazing kind of a guy. But the major gift that was exercised in his life was that of exhortation. So much so that he was nicknamed "Barnabas", which means "son of encouragement".

Barney was the kind of a man that, every place he went, was just a build up to everybody else. The early disciples loved him - he was a favorite of the whole crowd. But it also has to be said that not always is the exercise of a gift appreciated by all parts of the body of Christ. For instance, Paul and Barnabas team up as missionaries to the Gentiles. And Barnabas thinks its a good idea to take along his nephew, by the name of John Mark, who is just a young fellow who needs encouragement and building up. So they take John Mark, and he bailed out - he quit. He found out missionary activity was not just sitting around on a rickshaw or taking pictures of snakes - it was real work. So after he'd had a few weeks of that, he just ducked out. Now in Acts 15, Paul is making up another team for another missionary journey and he goes to Barnabas and says, "Barnabas, let's go and check those churches that we started up last time we were out."

Barnabas says, "Great! I'm ready to go! Let me tell John Mark to get ready."

And Paul said, "Hold it! That guy bailed out on us in the middle of the thing. I'm not hauling him around again."

And Barnabas thinks, "Well, you know this boy, he's suffered discouragement, he suffered defeat, he feels like a failure, he's sitting at home wondering if he's any use to God or anybody else. Come on, Paul, this guy's spiritual life hangs in the balance. We've got to take him." Barnabas, true to his name, Son of Encouragement, he wants to take John.

Listen to what the word says: "after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of God and see how they are.' And Barnabas wanted to take with them, John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphillyia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp contention so that they separated from each other." And Barnabas took Mark. He didn't quit, he didn't give up. He took Mark and he went to Cypress, which was his home territory. And Paul teamed up with Silas. So now, instead of one missionary team, God gets two. You see, God works through strange ways - even the contention of men. So don't get shook up about that. We are called to unity in the body of Christ, but that is nowhere in scripture described as "unanimity". That's okay.

Now, that Biblical final step in the discovery is confirmation by the body. It is the Biblical pattern.

The gifts are for the building up of the body, and so the body will provide a system of accountability for your use of the gift. Once your gift is recognized and known by the body, don't expect to be able to sit back and retire. The body will expect to see it in action. That's why I said in the prerequisites to the spiritual gifts: you'd better be ready to work. You must be willing to go to work before you will discover your gift, because once that gift has been discovered and confirmed by the body, you will be held accountable by the body. Gifts are not some kind of adornment that we wear - they are tools. And that's why Paul writes to Timothy and says, "Now look Tim, you stir up the gift of God which was in you by the laying on of hands." Get at it! The existence of a gift is the call to exercise it. Listen to Weymouth's translation of this in I Timothy 4: "Do not be careless about the gifts with which you are endowed. Habitually practice these duties and be absorbed in them so that your growing proficiency in them may be evident to all." Don't feel like you need to come into this giftedness at graduate level. Allow the growing proficiency, which comes as a result of your obedience to God, to become evident to all.

If you suspect you've got a gift because God has awakened an interest in your heart, roll up your sleeves and get at it! Don't sit around and wait. Go to the adventure of discovering giftedness in the work. You have been called to multiple roles and a life of obedience as His disciple. Go, and in the process of fulfilling those roles in obedience, discover the grace of the gifts.

Chapter 9. One Spirit, But a Variety of Gifts

But to us, God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except God's Spirit. But we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. Now the natural man doesn't receive the things of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to him; and he can't know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual discerns all things, and he himself is to be judged by no one. "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct him?" But we have Christ's mind.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are extremely important. The task we're called to do, which is to build up the body of Christ, is so enormous that it demands supernatural power. God, in His wisdom, has provided us with the Holy Spirit in order that what we accomplish will be accomplished in His strength. The Old Testament says in the book of Jeremiah, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord" Now we have to remember, as we begin to look at specific gifts, the basic Biblical principles underlying all teaching on the gifts that the scripture gives. That is, that they are given to unify and build up the body of Christ. Secondly, they are given in great variety. Thirdly, they are given - not chosen. That is, the Holy Spirit is sovereign. They are given to unify, not divide. They are given in great variety, not unanimity. And they are given, not chosen.

I Corinthians 12:4 (we've gone over this passage before but emphasizing a little bit different aspect), "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God Who inspires them all in every one." When we went through this the first time, we emphasized the unity and how the whole trinity is involved in the giving of spiritual gifts and their administration. "Variety of Gifts, but the same Spirit, variety of service, but the same Lord, variety of workings, but the same God" (the Father). And so the trinity is involved. But I want to emphasize the first part of those phrases. Notice the three expressions of the subject of spiritual gifts we have here. The first one is there are varieties of gifts. The word translated "gifts" is the word that you're familiar with - it's the root word for "charismatic". It's the word "charismaton" here, and that simply, in translation, means "gifts". So when the scripture says there are varieties of gifts, the definition of that phrase is there are a variety of specific capacities or functions. The Holy Spirit is busy doing something through the believer and using the believer to accomplish it. That's what that means. A variety of charismata. A variety of gifts.

The second aspect: there are "varieties of service". Here I would prefer the translation that would call it a variety of ministries. The word is "theokia". It means "service". It's a ministry. The variety of ministries is the area, or the sphere, in which the gift operates. Let me reiterate. There are a variety of gifts. There are a variety of ministries. That's the area where these gifts have been given are put into operation. An illustration: John 21, Jesus appears on the beach, after the resurrection, to His disciples. John records how Peter had denied Christ three times, in spite of his great protests that he would never deny the Lord. He then encounters Jesus on the beach, and after the breakfast meal, Jesus comes to him and says, "Simon Peter, do you love me?" The word that Christ used in the first question was "do

you agape", "do you have that kind of self-giving Godly love."

Peter's response, since he was no longer going to be saying more than he was able to back up, was, "Lord, you know I love You", but the actual Greek word is "phileo". Jesus says, "Do you love me with self-giving love?" And Peter says, "You know I love You with a self-interested love." Three times, Jesus asked him the same question and each time, its almost as though He is giving Peter the opportunity to erase one of those denials. But also with each one of those questions and answers, Peter is given the opportunity to hear his ministry. So Jesus says, "feed my lambs", "feed my sheep", "feed my sheep". Peter's ministry then, is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ. It says here in I Corinthians 12, "there are varieties of service" (or ministries) "but the same Lord", speaking of Jesus Christ. Now, that means to me that Peter was called to be a pastor. He was gifted with the gift necessary: the pastor/teacher gift. Feeding the flock of God. If you read the book of Acts, you will discover that the first half of the book of Acts is a description of Peter exercising his spiritual gifts in the sphere (or in the arena) of ministry to the Jews. The last half is Paul exercising his spiritual gifts in the sphere (or arena or ministry) to the Gentiles. These are the assignments given for the use of the gifts, and they are under the sovereignty of God the Son. Now, you may not be called to work with Jews or with Gentiles, as a group of people. You may be called and gifted to work with elderly, or with the young, or with Christians, or with non-Christians. You may even have the same gifts as someone else, but your area of ministry may be very different. Peter and Paul had many of the very same gifts, but the area of ministry for those gifts were different: one to Jews, one to Gentiles.

"There are varieties of gifts, varieties of ministries," (or service), "and there are varieties of working. But the same God Who inspires them all in every one." The word "working" translated is "energeman", which is the same root word we get our word "energy" from. That is, the working (or the energy) that corresponds to the exercise of our gift in the area of ministry is really up to God. Let me try to define it clearer. It is the effect of the exercise of our gift he's talking about here. It describes the degree of power by which a gift is manifested or ministered on a specific occasion. Every exercise of a spiritual gift does not have the same result. The same sermon, given in different circumstances, has different results. Every so often when I'm really pressed for time or I get an opportunity to preach someplace else where I haven't preached before, I'll be tempted to reach in the barrel and pull out an old sermon that really blessed me when I preached it and prepared it and seemed to bless the congregation that I love and serve, and I'll think, "Well, I'll give them this one." And frankly its like serving yesterday's mashed potatoes most of the time. I preach it with the same enthusiasm. I use the same notes. But, it's a variety of energizing. In other words, God the Father does not take the exercise of my gifts in that particular sphere of ministry and use it the same way.

Time magazine came out not too long ago with the "Ten Greatest Preachers in the United States". Now, I happen to have heard several of those, but one of them I have heard six times, and I have heard him preach the very same sermon all six times. So complete is his rehearsal of that sermon, that he times his gestures to correspond and, to draw exactly the response he desires from the congregation. He is a master preacher. But I've heard him preach that same sermon in all kinds of settings. The last time I heard him preach it was at the covenant annual meeting in Fort Collins, Colorado. There must have been close to a thousand people there - probably the majority of them, lay people. And they just went crazy over the man's sermon. This was the sixth time that I'd heard it, so I was kind of yawning a little bit to it. The man's name is Hill, he's the pastor of a big church down in Watts - he's a masterful preacher - I just love to hear him preach! And when I heard him that very same sermon - the same man exercising the same gifts in the same arenas - have discovered that there are a variety of effects. It isn't always the same. What's the difference? The difference is that it's God's choice. There are varieties of energies (or of working). It is the same God that inspires them all. The Bible records, for instance, that

Jesus thought of John the Baptist rather highly. In Matthew 11, Jesus said, "Among men born of women, there is nobody greater than John the Baptist." And yet nowhere in scripture can you find that John the Baptist performed one single solitary puny little old miracle. Not one. Why? That was not his gift. That was not his ministry. And that was not the energy which God used to move him.

Let me illustrate these three aspects in another way, because I really think it's important that you understand them. Let's take one of the gifts. You may have the gift of evangelism. I think you have a pretty good idea what that means, even though I haven't yet defined it for you. Say that you have three people with the gift of evangelism. One of them is Billy Graham. One of them is a pastor friend of mine by the name of John Wimber. Another one are some of the people in my congregation. Now, that's the same gift, but the scripture says there is a variety of service. In other words, areas or places where these gifts are exercised. Billy Graham exercises it in a stadium with 80,000 or 100,000 people. John Wimber exercises it in a congregation of 300 or 400 at a time. And some in my congregation exercise their gift in a one-on-one confrontation. The same gift, but a variety of ministries. Also, a variety of workings - or of the energizing of the Father. That is, not all the same result. Billy Graham may have 3,000 converts in one week. John Wimber may have 30 converts in one week. And you may have one convert in a month. Does that mean that your gift is different than theirs? No, it's the same gift. It's just that God in His wisdom - Who by His Spirit has gifted you - has, by Jesus Christ, assigned you your area of ministry, and by the power of the Father has energized the ministry in the way that meets His planned program. Not yours.

Now, with all this variety - with the variety of gifts, the variety of ministries, the variety of workings - we have to remind ourselves that there is one Holy Spirit. There's not a Baptist Holy Spirit, and an Episcopalian Holy Spirit, and a Lutheran Holy Spirit, and a Covenant Holy Spirit (although you may find some variation in doctrine). There is not an Oral Roberts Holy Spirit, and a Dennis Bennett Holy Spirit, and a Demos Shakarian Holy Spirit, and a Bug Palmberg Holy Spirit, or a John Wesley, or a Ray Stedman, or a Chuck Smith, or a Charles Swindol Holy Spirit (and did you notice I slipped my name in that list of heavyweights?) I did that for the purpose that you might understand that the gifts are different. The ministries are different. The results are different. But it is one body, and that's the whole point of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I couldn't handle the assignments that these brothers that I mentioned, have. Some of them have international areas of ministry. It would scare me to death. Or it would tempt me to such a pride and ego trip that nobody could come around me. But God, in His mercy, has assigned us not only the gifts, but the ministry - and has energized. That's what Paul is saying when he says "there are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit, a variety of ministries but the same Lord, there are a variety of effects but the same God Who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Some readers may expect a classification of the gifts. Many popular and effective teachers and writers do so, and there's beneficial insight to be gained from them. Bill Gothard speaks of the spiritual gifts in this way: there are,

- Motivational gifts
- Ministry gifts
- Manifestational gifts

Dave Hocking speaks of:

- Speaking gifts
- Serving gifts
- Supernatural gifts

Ken Kinghorn says:

- Enabling gifts
- Serving gifts
- Tongues and interpretation

Larry Flynn says:

- Speaking
- Serving
- Signifying

MacGorman says:

- Intelligible utterance
- Power
- Spiritual discernment
- Ecstatic utterances"

(he has four categories!)

Now I remind you of that to say this: the approach that I'm going to use is open-ended. I don't reject these classifications, or these approaches. Nor do I find them more or less Biblical than the one I'm going to use. It's just that I find that the open-ended approach is a lot simpler and, therefore, more generally helpful. You start breaking things up in categories and you know the Devil uses it to allow us to use that tendency that we have to fill a whole bunch of little tiny pigeon holes, label everyone and stick somebody or something in every one of them. I want to resist that idea. I don't want someone to say, "What's your gift?" and then your response is, "well in category 3 I have 2B". I don't want that stuff. But check these out in your study. Study these categories, especially Gothard's, because I think there's some real insights to be gained by this, although I don't agree with some of his conclusions.

One other thing: I do not accept the opinion of other people that there are a specific number of gifts, and only those. Because then you run into problems. Such as: some say there are only nine gifts. Bill Gothard says, for instance, there are the motivational gifts and everything else is an expression of that. Well, that's interesting, but I'm not sure that's the conclusion that I draw from scripture. I have one book that says in its title, "The 19 Gifts of the Spirit". What happens if the poor brother finds another one? He has to come out with another book! I have one book that says that there are at least 23 gifts of the Holy Spirit. And I happen to believe that it is altogether possible, with certain hyphenation of gifts and combinations of gifts, that the mathematical possibilities are extravagant, there you can wait for my book, "The 376 Gifts of the Spirit"! I'm being facetious, but I want you to realize the Bible doesn't make it nice and tight and neat. You see, God by His infinite wisdom, has always resisted running His railroad on the tracks we put down. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The Holy Spirit is like the wind." Don't try to put it in a bottle. But that's what we try to do, with our neat little old categories. It satisfies the orderly mind, but it does not describe God's wonderful Holy Spirit.

The Bible lists vary in length, they vary in detail, they vary in order. I interpret this to be adequate, and hermeneutically correct, to say that the lists, therefore, are not exhaustive - they are indicative. It's almost as though God is saying as He empowered, by the Holy Spirit, holy men of old to write the scriptures, "Now I'm not telling you all the gifts, but I'm saying the gifts of the Spirit are sort of like this" and then He give a bunch of them. Otherwise, the Romans have one set of gifts, and the Corinthians have an entirely different set of gifts, and the poor guys who received the letter from I Peter got a little tiny share, because it's a short little list. I believe, instead, that they are really indicative rather than exhaustive. Now there is, as I mentioned, a gift mix or a hyphenation of gifts,

and an explosion of mathematical possibilities. I illustrate with Ephesians 4, which speaks of the Pastor-Teacher. It also speaks in other scriptures concerning separate gifts here, but there's a hyphenated gift as an illustration.

Chapter 10. The Word of Knowledge

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of Wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, the another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another diverse kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues, all these are inspired by one in the same Spirit, Who apportions to each one individually as He wills.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

The first observation that I have here is that Paul is making a very basic point. No matter if your gift is sort of ordinary or spectacular, they are all for the common good. Wisdom and Knowledge and Faith is not very glamorous or as spectacular as the sort of "wow" kind of gifts, but they are desperately needed if the body of Christ is to be healthy. We need a lot more knowledge and wisdom and faith than we need some of the other gifts. At least it would seem that way to me – but that's up to the Holy Spirit.

The first gift that is listed here is the Word of Wisdom. I want to hop over that and go to the second one, which is the word of Knowledge, because Knowledge has to do with the discovery of truth, and Wisdom has to do with the proper application of that knowledge. So I think that, sequentially, from our understanding of knowledge and wisdom, it's best if we start with knowledge. While the Word of Knowledge (and I'm using it specifically as it's translated: "the word of knowledge") is the second gift named, we need to deal with it first. Knowledge is information; wisdom is the right use of that information to achieve the proper ends. And in my study of the gift of the word of Knowledge, I have discovered there are two aspects to it. I want to refer to these two aspects as first, interpretive, and second, revelational. But I want you to understand that I am not describing separate gifts - I am talking about two sides of one coin. In my study of the word of Knowledge, there seems to be two different aspects in which this is exercised. On the one hand (interpretive), the word of knowledge seems to be applied, scripturally, to the ability to perceive and to systematize great facts concerning the word of God. That is, the ability to recognize key and important facts of scripture as a result of deep study and investigation. This gift of the Holy Spirit is an "interpretive" gift: the Word of Knowledge.

I can illustrate it this way: How many times have you heard somebody say something and you say, "Well, I have read that passage of scripture at least forty times! I have never seen that! Where did he get that knowledge, that insight, that understanding?" That comes from the Holy Spirit. It does not come because he didn't do anything. It came because He applied all of his energies to seek, to search out the truth. Then God, by His Holy Spirit, gave him the word of knowledge - that opening.

When I was in Alabama, I was laying in the hospital in Mobile, Alabama, thinking I was going to die. And when you think that, you think of all kinds of auxiliary thoughts as well. I remember laying there on the bed and telling the Lord at lot of things: I was too young to die, and things of this nature. It was just anxiety. I remember having my wife, who was my bride of about a year or so, bring me a briefcase full of books. When you're in a hospital room, there's not a lot of people coming around you, and they'll keep the door shut and nobody really knows you that well in the area (in fact, nobody in Mobile knew I even existed, except my doctor, and I was questionable about that sometimes because it took so long to see him). As I was laying there in the hospital reading and reading and reading, my roommate spoke up and said, "whatcha reading?" So I told him I was reading a whole bunch of books of theology and Bible studies and all kinds of things.

And he said, "What do you do for a living?"

I said, "I'm a minister."

He said, "You're a preacher?"

I said, "Yes, I'm a preacher."

He said, "You preach God's word?"

I said, "That's exactly what I want to preach, is God's word".

He said, "Then y'all are sinning!"

I said, "What do you mean I'm sinning?"

He says, "Y'all are messing up your mind with that learnin' - that book stuff. If you want to preach the word of God, you take nothing but the word of God!"

He said, "I bet you even went to college."

I said, "Yes, I had a couple of years of graduate school. In fact, I'm not done yet."

He said, "Boy, you're just gonna mess up your head. God can never use ya."

I found out he was a minister. One night he discussed with me what the scripture meant in a particular verse, and I had never heard the verse. He said, "He that gathereth not with Me, scratcheth a board." The guy couldn't even read. It says, "scattereth abroad". And he wondered why God would have people scratching boards.

Now, what I'm saying is, the word of knowledge is not somehow a Godly shortcut to wisdom so you don't have to study. That is not what it is. It is the word of knowledge that comes to a person when they have applied themselves to the word of God, when they have searched deeply into His word, and then in some charismatic way, God by His Holy Spirit, opens their eyes, and they see that which cannot be gained through the natural convolutions of the mind's intellectual processes.

Here's an illustration from I Corinthians 2, Paul says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak - not in words taught by human wisdom but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, because they're foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Now, with this interpretive aspect of the gift to the word of Knowledge, I believe there's a close connection with the gift of teaching (maybe one of those hyphenated gifts).

You go to the second aspect of the word of Knowledge, and that is a revelational aspect of that gift. Let me define it this way: the gift of the word of knowledge is the ability to understand truth that is unknown by natural means. Scripture writers experience and exercise this gift. II Peter 1 says, "But know this first of all: that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no

prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. But men, moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." But if scripture writing were the only time that the word of Knowledge were used, then that gift would have ceased, because the canon is closed. But the Holy Spirit is still giving His gifts. The word of Knowledge is given to those and it has little, or nothing, to do with a person's IQ. It is supernatural in its origin - it's not how smart you are. It is given when the Holy Spirit reveals facts and information and data that cannot be known apart from the Holy Spirit. Hear me carefully: one of the great problems of the whole (what is popularly called) "charismatic" movement has been that they emphasize so strongly the gift of the word of Knowledge in its revelatory aspect that they are in serious danger of the same kind of heresies that the Mormon church does in adding to the scriptures. Therefore, any time a word of Knowledge is given, it is in absolute clear alignment with the revealed and written word of God. Never at variance to God's revealed word! Ever! If it is, it's from the Devil.

Let me give you a couple Biblical illustrations. You remember in the Old Testament: David's on his rooftop, he's a king, and he looks down on a neighbor's roof (of course, the king had a higher house - he's in a penthouse) and he sees a neighbor lady by the name of Bathsheba showering outside on the roof, and because a king can have anything he wanted in those days, he wanted her and he sent for her and she came and she got pregnant. Now he thinks, "I've got to do something about this" and so he sends for her husband, Uriah, who comes back from the front, gives a report of the battle to David and then David gives him a weekend pass, thinking that he'll go home, that he and Bathsheba will have sexual relations and that will explain (for the public consumption) how she got pregnant. Maybe even explain to Uriah. The only thing is, Uriah was too honest a man to do that. He said, "How can I go home and enjoy my family and my home when I have brothers that are dying on the battlefield?" And he refused to go along with the program. So David had to come up with a plan B. Plan B was to call in Joab the general, and say, "You put Uriah at the hot spot - you put him at the point of the battle - so that when the mortality count comes out, he's at the head of the list. So that's what Joab did, and Uriah is killed in battle. Word comes back to David and he, in the eyes of the public, did a very magnanimous thing: he married the poor destitute widow of that war hero. Everyone said, "What a great guy!" He had rationalized the whole sordid affair so carefully in his mind that he was able to walk around with his head up. He'd gotten away with it - not only with his society, but he'd gotten away with it with himself it would seem.

Then one day, a guy comes into his court - a prophet by the name of Nathan - who says, "I've got a word to tell you." He said, "A real rich man has a whole flock of sheep. And he lives right next door to a guy who just only has one little sheep. Just one. Oh, he loves that sheep - its part of the family. And some unexpected visitors dropped in on the rich guy one day, and you know what he did, King? He stole the one sheep that the poor neighbor had, killed that and fed it to the..."

David came out of the throne and said, "You give me that guy's name - he's had it!"

And Nathan said, "It's you, buddy! You are the man!"

This carefully constructed facade of perfection, paragon of virtue, and all the rest, that David had so carefully constructed just cracked and crumbled. Read Psalm 51, which is David's prayer of confession, and read Psalm 32, which is how he felt when he finally did confess. Psalm 51 he says, "Oh let the bones which you've broken rejoice. Restore to me the joy of my salvation." He didn't even pretend he was suffering at all, so how did Nathan know about this whole thing? Palace grapevine? Maybe. But II Samuel 12:1 suggests that God told him, and he was exercising the word of knowledge.

Here's a funny one that is told in II Kings. Did you know the king of Syria planned an attack on Israel

one time. He had said, "We're going to ambush the Israelites at this particular spot."

The word of knowledge came to Elisha and he goes trotting off to the king of Israel and says, "Now, King, the Assyrians are going to attack you at a certain spot, so you'd better be ready." So, when the Syrian army comes roaring up there to set up their ambush, guess who got ambushed? And it says they tried many more times. Every place they went, no matter where they went to set it up, there was the Israeli army waiting for them.

Finally the king of Syria said, "We've got a problem here". He calls his chiefs of staff together and he said, "There's a leak in this organization someplace! I want to know which one of you guys is giving the word out." Nobody answered with anything.

Then a servant spoke up and he said this: "No, my lord, oh king, but Elisha - the prophet who is in Israel - tells the king of Israel the words you speak in your bedroom." How about that? Every time the Syrian king spoke in a top-secret strategy planning meeting, Elisha was tuned in on the conversation by the Spirit of God. He had the gift of knowledge.

In the new testament in Matthew 16, when Jesus said, "Who do men say that I am?", Peter responded, "Thou are the Christ!" And what did Jesus say? "Blessed are you because flesh and blood has not revealed this, but my Father revealed it." That's the word of knowledge.

Remember how Jesus and Nathaniel meet each other? Jesus says of Nathaniel, "Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no guile."

Nathaniel says, "How in the world do you know me?"

Or in John 4, Jesus meets the woman at the well in Sychar, the Samaritan woman. And He says, "Go get your husband."

And she says, "I don't have a husband."

He says, "You're right, you've have five. The one you're living with isn't your husband."

She's thinking, "how did He know that?"

Annianias and Sapphira were part of the early church in Acts 5. The practice then was that you gave everything to the church. (you didn't have to do this, but if you started to do it, you had to go the whole way). They held all things in common. Annianias and Sapphira sold a piece of property, kept back some of what they had sold it for, and then with his wife's full knowledge, it says in Acts 5, "he brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostle's feet." Which was exactly what you were supposed to do, if you were giving the whole amount. It says, "But Peter said, 'Annianias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the price of the land?'" How did Peter know that, without reading the Wall Street Journal for the latest report? He knew it because he had the gift of knowledge. And when this gift is exercised, it's supernatural.

There are times when what I am told by people who come to me for help is not the whole story. I recall one time, about seven or eight years ago, a person told me a story that was complete. It was complete in such minutia that there was no reason to doubt its veracity from beginning to end. Just as I was ready to make some kind of response, it was like a little light went on in my head, and the Lord said,

"Wait a minute". A question formed in my mind - I had no idea where that question came from. It was so far from left field, as far as it applied to this person in front of me, that I was embarrassed to even think it, let alone ask it. So I decided not to ask it, I simply stated it as a statement. And this person just came unglued. He sputtered, "How did you...? Nobody..." There's no way I can explain it. Now that, as I understand it, is the word of knowledge.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernatural. So is this one. They are not eerie or weird. The person who is gifted with the word of Knowledge is not operating on his feelings - his eyes don't bulge, and he doesn't stare, and his voice doesn't get spooky. He simply knows a truth that is not knowable by normal means.

But, here's a warning. If God has given you this gift, or you think He may have, I want you to know that there are some built-in problems with this gift. One is: you will wrestle with a superior attitude. Knowledge brings power, and when you have that sense of power, you will begin to think that you really have "got it." Secondly, you will be tempted to attribute every stupid thought that enters into your mind as being a word of Knowledge. You will make some dumb statements and you will lay some heavy trips on people that are not from God at all. If someone believes they have the word of Knowledge and something crosses their mind and they say, "I have a word from the Lord." It may not be from the Lord at all. You've got to be careful.

Apart from the Holy Spirit, there is no way to explain the source of the knowledge that a word of Knowledge implies. But the person with that gift, simply knows. And he knows that he knows. Not in some sort of superior sense, but there is a deep absolute unshakable assurance that this is a word of Knowledge that comes from God. By the way, I believe that the use of the term "word of Knowledge", rather than simply "gift of Knowledge" emphasizes the practicality of this gift. It's not knowledge for you to just hang around in your head. It is the word of Knowledge that is to be put into action. It is to be put into use. But remember that the knowledge is to be used to build the body of Christ and to bring glory to the Head of the body, who is Christ the Lord.

Go into a world that likes to be attracted to centers of power and wisdom and knowledge and draw attention to men. And recognize that His giftings, by His Holy Spirit, are not for the attention of men, but for the glorification of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 11. The Word of Wisdom

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. I will bring the discernment of the discerning to nothing.

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom didn't know God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs, Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brothers, that not many are wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, and not many noble; but God chose the foolish things of the world that he might put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world that he might put to shame the things that are strong. God chose the lowly things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that don't exist, that he might bring to nothing the things that exist, that no flesh should boast before God. Because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, as it is written, "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Remember: the three basic Biblical principles concerning the spiritual gifts are:

- 1) they are given to unify and build the body of Christ;
- 2) they are given in great variety;
- 3) and they are given, not chosen.

From I Corinthians 12, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, there are varieties of working, but it is the same God Who inspires them all in everyone." Remember, that is not just a tumble of words. The varieties of gifts is the word *Charismata*, which means "gifts" specifically. That is, the specific ability to function. That gift, that specific ability to function, takes place within the second category, which is the varieties of service. That is, the areas of ministry. You may have the gift of evangelism, but you may work in a different area of ministry - it may have a different application. It may be one on one, compared with a gift of evangelism of someone as well known as, for instance, Billy Graham. Same gift, different areas of ministry. And then the third area is there are varieties of workings. And the "workings" there is *energiam*, which is the same word we get our word "energy" from, which means it is God Who energizes that gift. And there's a variety of that. Sometimes the very same exercise of the very same gift in all matters equal as we can make it from previous exercises, produce different results. And that is of God. That's to keep us from going around breaking our arms patting ourselves on the back at the tremendous effect that God gives to us in our ministry. It's up to Him.

"For to one is given by Spirit the word of Wisdom, and to another, the word of Knowledge by the same Spirit." Which was our subject last chapter. Because wisdom is applied knowledge. So we started with knowledge. "To another, the faith by the same Spirit. To another, the gifts of healings" The King James translates it a little erroneously, and so do a couple of the other more modern translations.

Actually, that should say "gifts of healings by the same Spirit. To another, the working of Miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, discerning of spirits. To another, divers kinds of tongues", etc. All these are "inspired by the One and the same Spirit, Who apportions to each one individually as He wills." Before we get to those super-exciting kinds of gifts, we are dealing with some super-necessary gifts. Last chapter, we talked about the gift of the word of knowledge. Now we cover the gift of the word of Wisdom. There's a strong connection between the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom, because knowledge without wisdom is dangerous. If you impart to an illiterate person the knowledge of how to communicate in writing, without wisdom, then that illiterate, who is now literate, may write a stick-up note or forge a check. You teach someone how to handle a gun, how to load it and fire it, how to aim and how to discharge the bullet in the direction that he wants to, without teaching them the wisdom of where to aim and where not to aim, he may blow a hole in you. There's a connection between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge without wisdom is dangerous. It is also useless.

They tell the story about an American student who had attended the Continental University over in Europe. He had been there for four years, and as he's returning back to the United States, he's standing on the after-deck of the ship with four years of notes from his classes and all his education. And he's going over them, reminiscing about the marvelous time he had in his class when the ship hit a sudden swell and he was thrown against the railing and his notes went overboard. He wasn't hurt, but he had to go back to Europe for four more years to get some more notes. His education consisted entirely of knowledge, but not wisdom, and the knowledge was on paper.

A computer stored with the vast array of information is of no use unless you know how to draw it from that computer and put it to application. Well, the same thing is true of spiritual knowledge. I believe that's one reason why the scripture says it is the logos (or the word) of Knowledge. And the word of Wisdom. Because it is a practical thing. It is not just wisdom contained in a jar on the mantle and admired and looked at and wondered at. It is applied - it is the word of Wisdom. That implies the practical nature of the gift.

Now, Let me give you two definitions. The first definition of the gift of the word of Wisdom is a long one: the gift of the word of Wisdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to receive insight into how given knowledge may best be applied to specific needs that arise within the body of Christ. Its a marvelous definition - it's not mine - it's C. Peter Wagner's. Here's another, simpler one: The word of Wisdom is the ability to apply God's truth to specific - and often complex - circumstances and situations.

Let me illustrate. I was sitting in a national board of home mission a number of years ago. I can remember there were fourteen people on the board, counting the executive secretary, and an issue came up. It was hotly debated back and forth and back and forth and came to a vote and the vote was seven to seven. We spent another hour and half examining different approaches with different possibilities. We changed the issue and we voted on it again and we got seven to seven. We tried it again. This time we changed the question we were voting on and we got seven to seven. I said, "I'm ready to go home. This is nonsense. We're not going to come to some kind of conclusion." But there was a man who was a farmer from Wisconsin who was on that board for maybe two or three months, but he had never said anything except "aye" for a vote. All of a sudden, this man spoke up. He said in a very quiet voice, "I wonder if I could share some thinking I have. I'm not sure why I feel this way, but I think we're dealing with the wrong issue here." In about four or five statements, the whole thing was clarified so crystal clear that the rest of the thirteen of us looked at each other as if to say "You dummy! Why didn't you think of that?" So we voted on it, and it was fourteen to zip! And we went to lunch. Now, did that

mean that this man had an intelligence and an IQ far surpassing everybody else on that board? Well, I'll tell you this much: he couldn't have topped Dr. Bob Larsen, who is a former Pastor and is now executive secretary of home mission. Bob Larson's got a brain that just doesn't quit. It's kind of disgusting to be around him very long. Yet this simple, very modestly-educated farmer from Wisconsin was able, I believe, to apply the truth to receive the insight from the Holy Spirit to apply revealed truth and knowledge (which is the word of God) to a very complex and confusing situation in such a way that clarity results. That, I believe, is the scriptural gift of the word of Wisdom. It is the application of knowledge to that which is complex.

Here's another illustration. Have you ever had the experience of being in a conversation with somebody and you knew you were way over your head? They are looking for counsel and guidance and insight and understanding, and you're sitting there just trying to keep your nose out of the water. Then, as you are speaking with this person you begin to listen to what you are saying, and you are surprised - no more than that - you're stunned by the insight and the wisdom that is proceeding from your own mouth that you know is not the result of acquired experience producing common sense. In fact, it's so good you want to stop and take notes on what you're saying yourself! I believe that is the word of Wisdom.

Don't get the crazy idea that with the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom, and any of the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, as a prelude to its being given, there's kind of a "oooooooooooooh" sound in the background, and your flesh starts to crawl and you say, "Oh here it comes!" We have that impression and that's wrong! The gifts of the Spirit are tools. I never hear "oooooooooooooh" when I go to True Value Hardware. What makes you think when God gifts His body for the ministry (and that He knows is beyond our capability to do, therefore He gives us the gifts to do the job) that there's got to be something spooky about it? No, it's very logical.

I am not talking about natural wisdom. The word of wisdom is not natural wisdom. You see, natural wisdom is a natural intelligence that an astute and smart and shrewd Christian can have. But that's not the word of Wisdom. Natural wisdom can be accumulated through experience. I remember when I grew up in a church in Nebraska, I looked around me on Sunday mornings and everybody in the place was grey. I mean, grey hair. I mean really grey hair. I used to think, "Oh, wow, what a bunch of old guys these are!" Then I started to serve a church in western Illinois, and I had an awful lot of older people. My deacon board must have had an average age of about 75, and I thought, "boy, you can't move these old guys. They're just like a bunch of rocks." I always thought that old Christians are the strongest people in the world, because they can throw a wet blanket farther than anybody I've ever seen in my life. Then I came to a new congregation, where the average age was younger than I am. It didn't take me very long before I began to ask God, "Please, give us some of the old saints, who have walked with God. Who have been through the fire. Who have been tempered. Who have undergone suffering. Who know the word. The accumulated intelligence of experience in walking with God." How I praise God for the grey heads. Because I find now, that this natural wisdom which, as a young person, I impugned, the scripture says, "Hey listen! Give high regard and high respect to the hoary head. That head which is crowned with the glory of grey." That is a Biblical principle. Now I understand, because there is a natural wisdom that comes from God that's just simply infills these people. Oh let me sit at the feet of Pastor Paul Theorell or at the feet of Pastor Gilbert Otteson, and just drink in the wisdom of experience and of walking with God. Let me sit at the feet of Doc Hansen. I have sometimes unwillingly, sat at Doc Hansen's feet (because he had some wisdom he wanted to give me and I didn't want to receive it). That's one of the problems of youth too. But thank God for that kind of natural intelligence. However, that's not what I'm talking about. Natural intelligence is the fruit of the intellectual reasoning process drawing from experience. That is not the gift of the word of Wisdom.

Nor are we talking about worldly wisdom, because worldly wisdom is antithetical to God. Remember I Corinthians 1: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Do you know that we are in such a knowledge explosion today that those who tried to describe, graphically, the accumulation of the explosion of knowledge in our generation almost boggle the mind? Yet, with all of the knowledge that we have, and with all of the information that we have, when has an age such as ours ever demonstrated such a lack of wisdom and such a hunger for meaning and purpose? Jean-Paul Sartre just died. If you haven't the essay on him in Time Magazine or in some of the other weekly periodicals, do so. Better yet, read his books. Read "No Exit", for instance. If you want your heart to just be shredded by a man of enormous knowledge and enormous intellect - whose conclusion is that the world is a bad joke - man is totally void of meaning and purpose. The whole thing is a freak that is based on an accident. So he finds himself, in his old age, with all of the knowledge that he has; given a Nobel prize which he refused; and yet a man who was able to say at the end of his life, "I have searched all my life for meaning and a place to stand - for that which would qualify as true wisdom - and have found it exists not." Now, that's the kind of worldly wisdom that scripture says is antithetical to God. I'm not talking about natural intelligence, but I am saying that natural intelligence, devoid of Godly understanding and wisdom, leads eventually to "No Exit". What Malcolm Muggeridge calls "one of the culdesacs of life".

I'm not even talking about that general wisdom which is available to every Christian that James describes in James 1:5 when he says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God Who gives generously to all men who ask without making them feel foolish or guilty for having asked." We are talking about a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit. Not one accompanied by ghostly sounds and crawling flesh, but one that meets a need at the point of that need. The gift of wisdom is a supernatural gift beyond the natural - God's word applied to a specific situation. It offers the application of knowledge to the spiritual life. And it is always, therefore, consistent with the revealed and written word of God. If somebody comes up to you and says, "I have a word knowledge" or somebody says, "I have a word of wisdom," I always start to get a little bit spooked right there. I think its self-evident - they don't have to run around with banners. But if they come along and there is, seemingly, a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge, but it does not square with the word of God, it is not of God.

Let me illustrate it from two different situations. In Genesis 41, Pharaoh had a dream. Now Pharaoh is not some kind of a mossy old Biblical character, who runs around in a robe and was a character in the escape of the Jews from Egypt. Pharaoh was the most powerful governmental leader of his whole civilized world at that time. This is no small potatoes! Pharaoh had a dream and he called in all of his counselors and his cabinet members and he laid the dream on them and said, "What in the world does this mean? It's some sort of an omen or forecast or something and I've got to know what it means." None of them could answer. Its kind of a weird dream: he dreams there are seven big fat cows grazing by the Nile river. And out of the Nile river comes seven emaciated, starving, skinny cows. Those seven cows ate up the fat cows and never got any fatter. My interpretation would be: you'd better check what you ate before you wend to bed. But nobody could give him the answer.

And then his cup-bearer (kind of his butler) said, "you know, when I was in jail a while back, I had a cellmate by the name of Joseph and this guy... Hey, he could maybe answer." And so Pharaoh sends to the prison and they bring Joseph and he listens carefully as Pharaoh explains the dream. Then there's an expectant hush, and then Joseph interprets it. I'm not even going to tell you the interpretation - if you're not familiar with the story, read it yourself in Genesis 41. Now, the point is, after he had interpreted the dream, he spoke with such wisdom that Pharaoh realized the wisdom couldn't have been

his own. And Pharaoh, this man who was not honoring the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph - this heathen - said, "Since God has informed you of all this, there's no one so discerning and wise as you are." That's the gift of wisdom, you see. The gift of the word of wisdom. Even witnessed to by those who are non-believers.

In II Chronicles, David has died. He's the greatest king the Israelis ever have had. Solomon's about to take over and God comes to him in a dream the night before his inauguration, and He says, "Solomon, you know you've got a big job ahead of you, and I'll give you carte blanc what do you need?"

And Solomon says, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Thine?" So God gave him that gift of Wisdom. He received it to such a degree that his fame spread throughout his world at that time, until the Queen of Sheba came all the way to Israel to sit at his feet to check it out. And after she had been there, she says in her witness in I Kings 10, "It is a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. Nevertheless I did not believe the reports until I came and my eyes had seen it and behold, the half has not been told to me."

In the new testament, in Acts 6, they set aside deacons, because they've got a super problem in the church. They're ready to have a major split. This church, which is now made up for the first time in Israeli history of Jews and gentiles in the same body, is at the point of almost fracturing over such a thing as who gets the best distribution of food. So they are led by the Holy Spirit to appoint seven men. Of these seven men that are appointed, they are required they be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. That solved the problem. One of them, by the way, was Stephen. He was the first Christian martyr. The more he talked about Jesus, the more his opponents opposed him, until finally, they stoned him. But the significant thing about this is: we have the word of wisdom, which was obvious because of the statement in scripture that he qualified to be one of the deacons. Finally they are ready to execute him, but speaking of his opposition, the quote is, in Acts 6, "And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen was speaking." This is the witness of the non-believer. They didn't like what he said, but they knew he made sense.

There are several instances of when believers spoke with wisdom beyond themselves. Peter and John are hauled in before the same bunch that interrogated and caused Christ's execution. Peter and John are challenged and they are examined and cross-examined, and when Peter replies to their charges and questions, the text says at the very beginning, "Now Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit..." and then it says at the end of the defense in Acts 4, "Now as they" (that is, as the council - the opposition) "observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus." That's the whole point of the word of Wisdom - is that it authenticates the reality of the fact that we have been with Jesus. It's not for some sort of special buzz. It's not to impress somebody else with "My goodness, how smart you are!" It is to equip the body that we might more adequately reflect Him Whom we are called to conform to - that is, Jesus Christ.

The person who is gifted by the Holy Spirit with the word of Wisdom becomes evident from time to time because that person will consistently make wise decisions. They will consistently give Godly insight into problem situations. The results of his exercising his gift is consistent with the standards laid down in James 3: "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be pled with, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." It rings true all the way through. A person with the gift of the word of Wisdom is also looked to by the body of Christ. He or she is a person that others have come to look to. They are shapers of opinion. Whether they hold a

position in the church is irrelevant. They just weigh a great deal. They are recognized as persons whose speech and counsel is wise, and their opinion is sought and highly respected.

But one of the major evidences, according to my understanding and study of the scripture of this gift, is those who have been given this gift have **an accompanying humility**. This is one of those gifts that if you don't have that humility, it can carry you away. So God, in His mercy, has given humility to go with it. The result is: the glory goes to Christ, and the building up of the body of Christ. The Wisconsin farmer that I referred to earlier, when we said to him during a lunch break, "That was phenomenal! How did you..."

The poor man was just absolutely overcome with embarrassment, and finally he said, "Please don't talk about it anymore. I just somehow feel like God wanted to use even me. That's all." That is one of the evidences of this gift.

Go to a world that, in their knowledge, will evaluate you as a man of faith as being simple-minded. And go, willing to bear the reproach of the cross, because therein is eternal life.

Chapter 12. The Gift of Faith

Therefore let's also, seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

I want, so much, to communicate with you what the scripture means when it talks about the gift of Faith. When Paul writes to the Corinthians, and he says that there are "a variety of gifts but the same Spirit, and a variety of service but the same Lord, and a variety of workings but the same God Who inspires them all in every one" he is emphasizing the need that we have as the body of Christ to recognize (here we go again) that the gifts are given to build the unity of the body of Christ - not to divide it. The gifts are given in great variety, for the purpose of building the body. And the gifts are given, they're not chosen. When he says that there is "a variety of gifts", the word is *charismaton*, which means "that thing which is given a specific function or a specific capacity." There are a variety of gifts as exercised within the body of Christ. He says "there are a variety of ministries" and the word there is *theokineon*, which means a "variety of services". So that I exercise my gift in a variety of different places. You exercise, perhaps, the same gift that I do, but you exercise it in a different sphere of service (or ministry) than I do. Then he says that "there are a variety of workings, but it's the same God Who inspires them all and in all". There the word is *energmaton*, which means "energy". In other words, the gift that we exercise in varying places, carries with it varying effects. The same gift, exercised in the same place will still bring a variety of effects. That is really up to the work, of course, of the Holy Spirit. It is not our concern. Our concern is simple faithfulness.

Now, we've talked about the gift of Wisdom, the gift of Knowledge, and in this chapter I want to consider the gift of Faith. Since faith is such a Biblical term, we need to have it defined, because we get it confused in our minds. Remember, we are talking about the Spiritual gift of faith - that is that Holy Spirit given gift. As such, it is supernatural in its origin. We are not talking about "saving faith". When Paul writes in Ephesians 2, "for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves - it is a gift of God, not based on works lest any man should boast" he is referring to "saving faith". Saving faith is that faith by which we appropriate what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. God the Father in loving the world, sent His Son into the world, emptying Himself, becoming obedient, taking upon Himself the form of a servant." And from Hebrews, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is now sat down at the right hand of God." What was the joy set before Him that enabled him to go through the pain? It was that of reconciliation, of man to God. That act of atonement on Jesus Christ's part, when He died on the cross, and when by the power of God He was raised again from the dead, was for all men everywhere. But, hear me: it is understood and experienced only by those who have appropriated it. Who have accepted it by faith. Who have received it. "He came to His own and His own received Him not," John tells us in the first part of his gospel. "But as many as received him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God." John 6 says, "Him who cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Romans 8 says, "There is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ." And all of those factors are involved in saving faith. That's not what the gift of Faith is talking about.

Nor does the gift of Faith refer to that which is known as "the walk of faith". Here we can say that faith

is seen and manifested as a fruit of the Spirit. For instance, at the end of I Corinthians 13, Paul says, "Now there abides faith, hope, love". What are those? Those are fruits. So faith which comes because a walk by faith is a fruit of the Spirit. I have a lot more faith than I did when I first became a Christian. When I first came to Jesus Christ, I wasn't even sure he could accept me. Now I know He can accept anybody, *because* He's accepted me. And my faith grows. So our walk by faith needs to be a progressive - a growing - walk. But that's not the gift of faith. That's an exercise of faith.

Faith is just believing what God says He will do. Now there are a lot of people who have saving faith - they have entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, by faith. But they then lapse into what can only be called a "walk of feeling". They determine how spiritual they are - how close they are to the Lord - by how they feel. People will say, "Oh, wasn't that a marvelous service! Oh! I just had goose pimples running up and down my spine. Oh!" and they say that has to happen every time. Then the next service that they go to, it's not there and they think "Oh boy, something's missing!" You see, that's walking by feeling. That's not a walk by faith. Feelings are changeable. Maybe you're getting the flu. Maybe that's why you feel that way. We are not called to walk by our feelings. Because our feelings are so changeable and varied. So when the scripture says "without faith it is impossible to please God", it describes it in Hebrews 11 as a walk by faith. Not supernatural faith. A walk by faith. Not visions and glorious things, but just putting one foot in front of the other in a trusting, obedient relationship to God and His word. That's the walk by faith. Some people say, "Oh I feel so spiritual. I know things are right with me and God." It may be that they've just become insensitive. Other people say, "Oh I just feel like God is so far away". Like the bumper sticker says, "If God feels a long ways away, who moved?" It isn't God. If He just *feels* a long way away, that could just be a temptation that Satan brings into your life to find out. Or something that God allows to check out and see whether you're walking by feeling or by faith.

And some people walk by sight. "Boy," they say, "if I could see signs and wonders and various things, why then I'd believe!" The fact of the matter is we don't walk by feeling, and we don't walk by sight. Some people say, "Well, I'll try it. And if things are not evident within a certain length of time then I tube it." And that's what happens. You see a lot of people - not just young people - but you see adults (who should be more mature than this) walk with the Lord for a period of time and then they run into problems. Maybe husband and wife start to squabble with each other and the relationship starts to disintegrate. They say, "Hey, I thought God was supposed to solve my problems. There must not be anything to this faith in Christ." You see, they're walking by sight. Now, if they had a lot of sight, they could understand that their marriage is falling apart because it hasn't been nourished - it hasn't been fed.

Remember when Thomas said, "If I can put my finger into the nail prints in His hand, and my hand into the side of Christ, then I'll believe He rose from the dead"?

And Jesus graciously always meets us where we are. He comes to him the next week and says, "Thomas, go ahead. Here's my hand." Then He said, "You're blessed because you see and therefore believe. But I tell you more blessed are those who not seeing, yet believe." Faith honors God, and the walk by faith honors God. I hope that today you are farther along in the walk by faith, your faith is more robust and strong, and that you can believe God for greater things now than when you first came to know Him. But that's not the supernatural gift of Faith. That's a walk by faith.

Paul says in Colossians 2, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord by faith," (that's saving faith) "so walk in Him by faith." Hebrews 11:16 says "Without faith it's impossible to please God." If you don't have this walk of faith, then you become problem-centered. "Oh that's a mess!" You are not filled with view of the potential that God places in everything. I am, by nature, pessimistic.

I operate on the principle that if anything can go wrong, it probably already has. That's why God has given me a wife who is so optimistic that she's just unreal! And that's why God's given us to each other. I keep her from hitting the sun and she keeps me from Gehenna. But I've got to tell you something. When I sit in my counseling ministry, when I deal with people who are in crisis - sometimes in such proportion that it just blows my mind - I never really, honestly, have trouble believing God can do something with it. I used to think "Woah, God can You handle this?" And the answer comes back, "That's not the question. Can *you* handle it?" God can do anything.

I saw a sign in a pastor's office that says, "God is here. Expect anything at any time." I honestly believe that. People come to me and say, "here's the broken, shattered pieces of my life. Can anything be done?" And it's a joy to be able to say, "Oh yes it can!" Not because I'm gifted, but because I serve a Master. My faith in Him is so enormous because I've seen what He's done through the years in your life and in my life. As a result, my walk by faith becomes a stronger walk by faith. That's still not the gift of Faith.

So, beyond the gift of saving faith and beyond the common faith we are all called to exercise in living the Christian life, lies the spiritual gift of Faith. The gift of faith is the ability to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for the future of His work in one's life, in the church, and in the world. Some people would use the word "vision". And that points in the right direction (as in, "that person really has a vision"). But it doesn't carry quite enough freight. The gift of Faith sees a need as met even though its impossible to have it met. It just can't happen. That's why it's often called "mountain moving faith". Now, it's not manipulative. It's not "well if I pretend I've really got the faith then God's obligated." A lot of people pray that way. They say, "if I get on my knees in the right position, or I have the right people lay hands on me, or I go to the right kind of services, or I fast for thirty days or forty days or three days, then God is stuck - He's got to answer." That's manipulation - it has nothing to do with faith. By the way, God won't play those silly games with you. But the supernatural gift of Faith sees with extraordinary confidence the thing that is needed being done, even though there's no evidence, whatsoever, that it can or will happen. That's why the gift of Faith can, very often, be confused by many as foolishness.

Like the old lady who used to wake up in the morning and she was bothered because the mountain outside, fairly close to her house, cut off the sun from her bedroom until about noon. She loved the morning sunshine and she read Matthew 17 that if you have faith like the grain of a mustard seed and you say to this mountain, "Be removed and cast into the sea" and it will go. So, she prayed that night, "Lord, get rid of that mountain - I want the morning sun." And in the morning, she dashed to the window and raised the shade and there was the mountain. She said, "just like I thought." That's not faith. She was manipulating. She was saying, "Well, I'll try this and I'll work the formula. And if the formula works..." She didn't have any faith in that.

I have seen people move mountains. Let me tell you a story. There's a pastor of a church in southern California that I am acquainted with. He said that they actually had to have a mountain moved. It was a small mountain, but in southern California it was a mountain. Here's the deal: they had this property to build a church on. They had enough money to get going on the church, but they had no money to prepare the land. Of course, the city wouldn't let them do anything and they had to get rid of that mountain. They estimated it would have cost them \$78,000 just to cut the hill down. Then it would have cost them another who knows how many thousands of dollars to haul the dirt away. He said, "There's a man in my congregation, with his wife, the two of them have what I have to call the gift of faith. And they came to me and said, 'Pastor, we just want to let you know that God is going to move that mountain.'" Well, when somebody comes to a pastor, if he's like me, he says "Thank you" and

ignores it. But he said, "You cannot imagine the shock I experienced, and how God really rattled me, when I received a phone call from the telephone company saying, 'We have a construction site that is desperately in need of fill, and if you will permit us, because we understand you're trying to figure out what to do with that hill, we will remove it and we wonder if \$14/load is a sufficient price.'" They got the mountain moved and got \$14 per load! Nobody knows how the telephone company found out it. Only God knows, and the pastor says that God hasn't told him yet, but he's really curious. The point is that he knows that there are this couple in his church that have the gift of faith. They came to him and said, in all honesty, "Pastor, we just want to let you know you need not worry about that hill. God's going to take care of it." That is viewing with extraordinary confidence God's will and purpose. The pastor viewed that exercise of the gift of Faith as being, really, kind of dumb, and he was very skeptical. But that is what the gift of Faith really means - if the blind man has the gift of Faith, he's not going to ask for a white cane. He's going to ask for sight.

If you look at Biblical illustrations in Genesis 6, you see Noah, building that boat on dry land. Three stories high that boat is! He commits himself and his three sons to the labor of building that boat for a long time. They didn't just put it together on weekends - those guys were at it the whole time. You know what those neighbors had to say! Now that's an exercise of the gift of Faith. Noah didn't say, "Well, I'll build a little boat and see if it rains a little bit. That's kind of like a walk by faith. It rains for a couple of days, so then I'll trust Him for a little bit more. But when you build a three-story boat and start rounding up all those creepy crawly things, you've got to have faith.

Then along comes Paul and Silas in Acts 16. And they are preaching all through Phillipi and this little girl is tagging them around and she's interrupting them all the time. She's saying good stuff. She says, "Oh, these men are messengers of God. Listen to them." But Paul knew that this little girl had the spirit of divination, the scripture says. She had a demon. She had the ability to see and understand that which could not really be seen and understood. It was not a spiritual gift - it was from Satan. So they cleansed that little girl and she lost her productivity, economically speaking, for those that kind of used her. The result is, they have Paul and Silas badly beaten, and placed in stocks in the innermost dungeon. Now, for one thing, that was illegal - they were Roman citizens - and the Philippians in northern Greece didn't have the right to do that to a Roman citizen. Besides, it hurts. They're in stocks with their backs raw, salt rubbed in their back (which was the standard procedure because they didn't want infection to take place, but that hurts too). Now what do Paul and Silas do? "Let's sing Hymn #355!" They're sitting in the dungeon singing! How unlikely to find us singing in those circumstances. How more likely would we say, "Now God, something's wrong here"? Yet they sang. They exercised the gift of Faith and they saw themselves out of that place, and it came.

There's a lot of modern illustrations. You've heard of George Mueller. I referred to him a few chapters ago. Brother Andrew, the Bible smuggler. Some of the limbs he walks out on, completely confident. Or the late Dr. Ironside, a giant of the faith. Dr. Ironside was one of the original founders of Dallas Theological Seminary in 1924. If you know anything about American history, you know 1924 was leading into a tough time, economically. It wasn't very long before that school was in financial trouble. In fact Dr. Ironside had been notified that the bank was going to foreclose by noon the next day. And there go the end of their dreams - shattering it all. Dr. Ironside and some of the other founders gathered together in their office and they had a prayer meeting. You and I would have been out hitting the bricks trying to raise our credit rating or raise some additional sources of revenue. But Dr. Ironside was a man who had the gift of Faith. He also had a very direct way of praying. This is the prayer he prayed that morning at about 9:30 in the morning of the day they are going to foreclose : "Dear Father, Your word says you own the cattle on a thousand hills. Please sell some and send us the money." Now that's faith.

At 11:00 that morning, while these guys are still in there praying (Ironside, by the way, didn't pray any more - he said it, that's it, and he believed it would be done), this big old Texan walks into the front office, says to the secretary, "I've been working for six months to put together this big land deal." And he said, "It was all set to close this morning, so" he said, "yesterday I sold 2,000 head of cattle to get the money so I'd have the liquid facility, economically, so I could move this deal. And this morning, that so and so backed out of the deal and here I am. God kind of makes me think that maybe you guys could use the money." She took the check and of course, she was so excited that she broke up the prayer meeting (which is a good idea - when God answers, don't keep praying, you know) and she handed the president of the school the check.

He looked at it and reached over and threw his arms around Harry Ironside and said, "Harry, God sold his cattle". Literally.

Now I could tell you a lot of stories like that, because I've heard a lot of stories like that. But all they make me feel is small. And that's one of the temptations that comes with the gift of Faith. With every one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit there comes special temptations. One of the temptations that comes with that is the temptation to be impatient with those of us that don't have the gift of Faith. "Oh you of little faith" Have you ever had anybody lay that on you? Or gift projection. Remember the quote from Mueller from a few chapters back? I read that book and in his book, he says, "Let not Satan deceive you in making you think you could not have the same faith. I pray to the Lord and expect an answer to my requests, and may not you do the same, dear believing reader?" That does two things for me: it depresses me and it makes me mad. Brother Mueller was a man of enormous faith, but he had the gift of Faith, and that is supernatural. He is wrong to project that on me just as certainly as, if God has given you the gift of Tongues, you are wrong to project that on me too. Just as certainly as I am wrong to project my gifts on you. The sovereign Holy Spirit gives His gifts, as *He* wills.

We have some with the gift of Faith in my church. People who have never been stymied by the seven last words of the church: "We've never done it that way before." These people who have the gift of Faith say "don't worry". I had a Jewish friend of mine in Chicago who used to say, "Not to worry. Not to worry." And people with the gift of Faith are the kind of people who are able to say, "Not to worry." Not because they've got something up their sleeve or know some kind of a special way out, but because they have a clear vision of what God is going to do in that particular circumstance and they have absolute confidence in it. You can't conjure that kind of faith up. You can't whip it up. You can't manipulate that. In Matthew 17, Jesus and Peter and James and John had been on the mount of transfiguration and there had had fantastic experience. They come down the mountain and at the bottom of the mountain they meet a world in desperate need. A father comes up and grabs Jesus and says, "Oh my son is so sick. Can you do anything? I've asked your disciples and they've tried everything, but they can't do it." What was wrong with those disciples? They were trying to exercise gifts they hadn't been given. That's all.

Now the person with the gift of Faith has some temptations, such as impatience or gift projection. But, oh are they an encouragement and a challenge to me.

Our world really doesn't believe. Our world is hungry to believe. But they want evidence. So, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within those of you who are His, go into our world and be that evidence. Be that light in the darkness. That salt in the spoiled situation.

Chapter 13. The Gifts of Healings

Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. A certain man who was lame from his mother's womb was being carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask gifts for the needy of those who entered into the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive gifts for the needy. Peter, fastening his eyes on him, with John, said, "Look at us." He listened to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

He took him by the right hand and raised him up. Immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength. Leaping up, he stood and began to walk. He entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God. They recognized him, that it was he who used to sit begging for gifts for the needy at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. As the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

When Peter saw it, he responded to the people, "You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this man? Why do you fasten your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, to which we are witnesses. By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Acts 3:1-16

Once again, I'd like to remind you of three things: The gifts of the Spirit are given to unify and build up the body of Christ, not to fragment and tear down. Secondly, The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in great variety, not in uniformity. Thirdly, The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given; they are not chosen.

Remember that Paul says in I Corinthians 12, "There are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit, varieties of service but the same Lord, varieties of working but the same God Who inspires them all in every one." What he is saying there is that there are a variety of gifts - the specific capacity or function - the charismaton - the gift has a variety and no one has the same one as everybody else or the same combination as everyone else. There are a variety of gifts. And then he says there are varieties of service (or the word could better be translated "ministries"). Theokineon is the word and it really means that there are varieties of spheres, or arenas, for those gifts which you have received will be exercised. My gifts may be exercised in an entirely different sphere (or arena) than yours although we may have similar gifts or the same gifts. Then thirdly, he says there's a variety of workings, or energiamaton - energies - or effects, of those gifts but the same God Who inspires them all. In other words, one person may speak a word of prophecy and in that prophetic utterance thousands of people come to know Christ and another time he may speak the same word of utterance and the same kind of a sphere, or arena, and yet without that kind of response. There are varieties of energizing, or of effects of the workings of the Spirit.

Now, if you will look at I Corinthians 12, picking up with the 4th verse again, "there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, varieties of ministries the same Lord, varieties of effects but the same God Who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Where one is given, by the Spirit, the word of Wisdom, to another the word of Knowledge by the same Spirit, to another Faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healings by the same Spirit..." And that's where we are now: the gifts of healings, as the original has both words in plural.

This is a controversial gift in our society. Partly because of the fraudulent exploitation of this particular gift. People buy a tent and they start traveling around the country and they beat their tambourines and advertise that they have the gift of healing, and people flock because people's needs are enormous. They frequently want the easiest way possible - which is, if I can see some person who can touch me in a particular way. A man in a former parish of mine in Alabama spent most of his livelihood spending his money running all over the country seeking the person who had the magic touch that would heal him. He saw an awful lot of frauds, and he was very much exploited by many of the people that he went to.

The viewpoints on this particular gift are so extreme, and they run the gamut so much, that I believe blatant dogmatism at any extreme is a pretty tenuous position. So I am not taking a dogmatic position on it. I believe that there has been fraudulent exploitation of this gift. There has been bad Biblical teaching and distortion on this gift. And there's been an awful lot of interpreting the scripture on the basis of my experiences rather than interpreting my experiences from scripture. Two or three weeks ago, we were in a hotel in Jerusalem, and the first of our party (of some 42 that were in the Israeli part of our tour) got down with what we call "the crud". And we had a kind of sharing time that night and one of the ladies, from another congregation who was with our tour, began to pray. As she prayed, I got upset. I hope God didn't get as upset as I did, because she started to pray, quoting Isaiah 53, claiming "by His stripes we are healed, therefore God we claim healing on behalf of this person" who had a gastrointestinal distress. Frankly, one has nothing to do with the other. The healing talked about in Isaiah 53 is not referring to "by His stripes we are physically healed" and therefore God is on the line and He's got to produce, and you can use that as kind of a pressure point to get God to deal. But that's the kind of teaching and interpretations a lot of people are subjected to.

As I said, the viewpoints are marked by extremes and so I'm not going to be blatantly dogmatic. But you'll find people who have one of three positions, or some variation thereof.

1. some people believe that anyone who has the gift of healing has the ability to heal anyone at any time that they wish
2. others believe that the gift of healing is entirely dependent upon the faith of the recipient of the healing - that is, the sick person
3. other people say "No, the gift of healings is for the new testament time only - it does not exist today."

Any one of those three dogmatic statements is an extreme statement that I believe is really a tenuous position to hold. I agree with Alan Redpath, former pastor of Moody Memorial church in Chicago, who said, "Healing is a gift and I believe without any shadow of doubt God has given it to some - that is, the ability to command sickness to be removed from a person in the name of the Lord. But I believe that for every ten who practice the gift, probably only one has it, in the sovereignty of God." There is no gift so trafficked with and so commercialized today as this one.

Now, with this understanding of my concern, let me try to define what I mean by the gifts of Healings. The gifts of Healings are the abilities to intervene in supernatural ways as instruments for the curing of illness and the restoration of health. The person who has the gifts of healings does not have power over disease. That person is, instead, only a channel through which God works when God desires to work. The sovereignty is His, not mine, or yours, or the person with those gifts. Oral Roberts is probably one of the best known public persons who has, on occasions, experienced and demonstrated the gift of healing. He says in one of his books, "There are many things about healing we do not know. In my brief experience I have prayed for some people with all the faith that I possess, and the person was not healed. In other instances, my faith was not as strong as I thought it should be, and still the person was healed. I don't know how to explain that, except to say that there's only One Who knows what is inside you and me and what it takes to really bring it about. A doctor may work with all his skill and compassion and faith at his command. Some he helps and some he does not. And it is that way with the gift of healing."

This may disturb some people, but I have to say it to be honest with you. I don't believe anyone fully understands God's position on sickness and health. I don't. I read in Exodus 15 where God identifies Himself and He says, "I am the Lord, your Healer." But I know that when He dealt with Job, the illness that Job endured was part of God's plan and thereby, in His sovereignty, was permitted to come to Job. I know that no healing of physical illness is permanent - everybody dies eventually. We know that His healing is not the result of a specific exercise of a type of ritual or routine, no matter how much we try to reduce His healing to formulas. We do know that God retains His sovereignty.

Now because the text refers to the gifts of healings, I take it to mean that every healing is a gift from God. Whether that healing happens at the level of human need physically or emotionally or spiritually - if it is a healing, it is a gift from God. But I want to touch on physical healing in this chapter.

We know that Jesus was the Great Physician. The Bible records absolutely no instance in the New Testament where a sick or ill or injured person came to Christ for healing who did not receive that healing. But there was no set formula or ritual, which is contrary to a lot of people today - they want you to come in a certain way, kneel in a certain way, stand in a certain way, react in a certain way, touch them with either left hand or right hand, three fingers or the whole hand... who knows what. They all have their cute little formulas. But Jesus didn't have any formula or ritual. Take, for instance, His dealing with the blind. He healed the blind in many different ways. Some He spoke to, some He touched, some He made mud and put it on their eyes and sent them to the pool of Siloam and they washed and came back seeing. Some He touched twice. No formulas, but He healed them all.

What about the apostles? We have the impression that the apostles all had the gift of healing, but you don't find that in scripture. Actually, apart from Jesus Christ, the gift of physical healings was extremely rare in the New Testament as well as today. For instance, Acts 3 tells the story of Peter and John going to the Beautiful Gate. There they find a man who was crippled, who was begging alms. Peter says, "Look at me. Silver and Gold I don't have. But what I have, I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk. " And he took him by the hand and helped him up, his ankle bones became well and strong, and he began walking and leaping and praising God. The first holy leaper! You can imagine how upset the people were in the temple that day - it was not all decorum, I'll tell you. I wonder what would happen in my congregation if we got a holy leaper who had been healed by God and just couldn't possibly stand not jumping around on those new bones. Now that ought to happen to us, spiritually, when healing comes too. How in the world can we sit there all buttoned up when God has done a marvelous work in our lives? When we've been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son!

In Acts 5, we find Peter had become so well known for the gift of healing, that the Holy Spirit had given to him, that people are now checking to see what side of the street the sun is on so that they could lay their sick on the side of the street where Peter's shadow would fall when he walked past. And they were healed. Amazing! In Acts 9, Peter heals Aeneas of Lydia and Samaria. In Acts 8, we find another person, Philip. The persecution has come down, chapter 8 begins and they were scattered everywhere, except the apostles. They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Gospel. Philip also went up to Samaria, and there begins a healing ministry. In Acts 28 we find the apostle Paul shipwrecked on the island of Malta, and he comes to the father of the head of the island - the clan leader - and heals him. Aside from Peter and Philip and Paul and Jesus, I don't find evidence of the gifts of healing, physically, in the scripture, in the New Testament. That surprised me. I thought it was all over the place. Which leads me to some tentative conclusions. The book of Acts records only these three who use the gift of healing and they use it sparingly. James is the only epistle that even refers to healing and he does not command it, but he offers it. He said, "Is any of you sick? Let him call the elders of the church together and let them pray, laying on hands and anointing with oil. And the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It's a statement of offering.

Therefore I come to this conclusion (at least tentatively) that in the New Testament, and perhaps today, the gifts of healing physically are primarily a "sign" gift to authenticate the messenger. Look at Acts 3: Peter and John heal this man who is crippled, who's asking alms. What is the result? Everybody comes crowding around this man. They recognized him as the lame man who, for years, lay by the Beautiful Gate. Then they listened as Peter begins to preach. And what does Peter preach? "I have the gift of healing"? No. Instead he says, "No, no, don't be so shook up. I didn't do it. It's not by my goodness or piety. It is through the power of Jesus Christ" and he proclaimed Christ and (because standing right next to him, jumping up and down, was a man whose miraculous healing authenticated Peter's words) 5,000 men alone came to know Christ. You will find that wherever is the incidence of divine healing in the scripture, it is always in connection with the authenticating of the messenger so that people will hear his message. It's not just a special buzz to give to people.

Having said that, I conclude it is a very rare gift in the New Testament and a rare gift today, but I will not dare suggest that we limit or dictate to the Holy Spirit (Who is sovereign) what gifts He gives, when, and to whom. He is the sovereign Giver of gifts. Should He choose to give the gifts of Healing to me, or you, praise His name - it is for the building up of the body of Christ and for His glory alone. I do know that there is Biblical evidence that not every illness is cured. In fact, the contrary is true. Just three illustrations: Paul in II Corinthians 12 struggles with the fact that he has a "thorn in the flesh". I don't know what it is. I have my theory and I'm not going to burden you with it. All I know is three times he asked God to remove it. And he got the same answer: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." God did not heal Paul even though Paul had exercised the gifts of Healing, he was not able to exercise those gifts on his own behalf. Instead, the apostle Paul says that he received from God grace to see him through (and also let me say God also provided him with a physician as a constant companion, Dr. Luke, which is God's sense of humor there too I think).

In I Timothy 5, Timothy's got a problem. I think he had ulcer. He has some sort of gastrointestinal distress. He is a young man with the responsibility of all of the house churches in the city of Ephesus. A powerful position for a young man. Nero's persecution is starting to come down on the church and it's moving toward Ephesus and Timothy's not sleeping well and his stomach is upset all the time. Paul does not exercise his gifts of Healing, but instead he prescribes the medicinal use of wine. Interesting.

Then when Paul's in prison in Rome the church at Philippi hears about it and they send a young man by

the name of Epaphroditus to minister to Paul. Epaphroditus no sooner gets there than he gets sick. I don't know what he got, but he almost died. There is no record, whatsoever, in scripture that Paul (or any of the others) exercised their gifts of healing on behalf of Epaphroditus. In fact, Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and he says, "I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need. For he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also lest I have sorrow upon sorrow. Because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me." Paul says, "God spared him" not "through my intervention or my exercise of the gift of Healing"; God simply spared him. You see, God is a Spirit of variety.

Some people He heals instantaneously. I could tell you a story that comes from the ministry I had in a church in Illinois that I still don't understand what happened. But God healed and it was instantaneous. There wasn't any kind of a long progression or anything else, it was just instantaneous. And when healing does take place like that (and boy wouldn't we like to put God in the position where He had to answer that way every time) the temptation is to start an international movement to promote ourselves and our ministries, start up a magazine and a headquarters and maybe a TV show. Some people, God does heal that way. Some people God heals gradually, like Epaphroditus. Some He heals through the application of medicine and medical knowledge.

Speaking of medicine, there's an interesting application of folk medicine, way back in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 38. Hezekiah's the king and he's going to die. Isaiah comes and tells him, "Hezekiah, you're going to die" and Hezekiah didn't like the idea, so he petitioned God very strongly. He prayed and prayed and prayed. God heard his prayer and told Isaiah, "You go tell old Hezekiah, I heard his prayer, stop moaning so much. I'll give him 15 more years." And so Isaiah goes to Hezekiah and says, "Hezekiah, God says you have 15 more years, now roll over on your back because I'm going to apply a fig poultice." Now that's folk medicine. I don't know what the healing properties of fig poultices are, I have no intention of putting them on me or applying them to anyone else. All I know is that God deals in some strange ways and I'm not going to dictate to Him how He heals. Physicians sometimes get very self-important, but let me tell you that the best surgeon in the crowd only removes the deterrent to health. God takes care of the rest, if He's going to. They remove the deterrent to health. Enormous skill, enormous talent, extensive training, true. But healing must come from God or it doesn't come.

Now faith is clearly important in the Biblical healings of Jesus. But that does not mean that if there's no healing there was not enough faith. That idea comes from a wrong idea that sickness is always the result of the sick person's sin. The rabbis taught that if you had dropsy, it was because you'd been immoral. If you were jaundiced, it was because you had hatred in your heart. If you were poverty stricken, it's because you had pride. If you had liver trouble, you'd been back-biting. And if you had leprosy, you had a bad mouth. Now, some sickness is due to sin. Read I Corinthians 11 (which talks about the abuses at the Lord's table and says that's why some of you are weak and ill and some have even died). God does not hold sin lightly, but not all sickness is a result of sin or the lack of sin. To say that a sick or a shut-in person is sick because of sin is a devastating and damnable lie. It is not Biblically based and it can create false guilt and lead to despairing conclusions. How many have not had the experience of talking with a brother or a sister in Christ with superior saintliness and yet they say things like, "Oh, I must be such a bad sinner because I'm not getting well." "I lack faith, I'm not getting well." "I'm a poor Christian or I'd get well." That is not true.

Why does God allow illness? I don't presume to know the mind of God, but I know there's Biblical

evidence to suggest some of His purpose. Sometimes illness comes as a discipline because of sin. That's amply demonstrated in scripture, and you can look that up yourself, and from modern medical journals we know that much. Secondly, sickness may be allowed in order to add to the glory of God. Remember in John 9, the young man who was born blind. The disciples said, "Who sinned, this young man or his parents?"

And Jesus said, "Neither one. But that God may be glorified."

Or in Paul's case - the thorn in the flesh - "My strength is made perfect in weakness," the word of God came to him. So sickness may come as a discipline because of sin or it may be simply allowed to add to the glory of God. Or it may be allowed for my personal growth. Paul says, listen to his testimony, "Three times I besought the Lord about this that it should leave me, but He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness.'" Then Paul says, "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then I am content with weakness, and insults and hardships and persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I'm strong." Not only in order to have humility but also to develop empathy - to enable a ministry to take place. Paul goes on in II Corinthians 1, "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 afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves were comforted by God." God knows, people who have gone through the valley of the shadow of death and experience great loss and enormous suffering, physically and emotionally, have frequently discovered that God has equipped them thereby for an extensive ministry - a powerful Spirit-filled ministry - for which they could never be trained in all the schools of the land. God in His wisdom knows His plan. The gifts of Healings may or may not be given to us. But whether I die or whether I live, whether I am well or whether I am weak, I - with Paul - want to be content in whatsoever state I am that God Himself may be glorified in my body.

Before I leave this subject, I need to touch on two other aspects of the gifts of healings. The first case we need to recognize that not only does God heal in miraculous ways and is the gift of Healing given for physical healings not as frequently today as in the New Testament times, with our world as filled with fear, with as much real anxiety that is taking place in every facet of our society, there is an enormous need for emotional healing, which is every bit as miraculous, and as of God, as physical healing. Early in Christ's ministry, He demonstrates His recognition of this need when, in His hometown synagogue, He was invited to take up the scroll and read and He read from the book of Isaiah, and this is what He read (identifying Himself): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captors and recovery of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised." And the phrase that is translated "broken-hearted" refers to the emotionally and the mentally shattered people of Christ's day. He said, "I have come to heal the broken-hearted." He's not referring to physical healing here. It's clearly an emotional healing that is referring to: them that are bruised. Later on in the same scripture, in Luke 4:18, He says, "Them that are bruised" (which also refers to the emotional healing) "that God has come" to give, in the Person of Jesus Christ, and is therefore legitimately a part of the gifts of healing that the Holy Spirit gifts us with as part of His church.

How desperately needed today are the gifts of emotional healing, when we are told that one of the most conservative estimates is that at least 50% of the hospital beds in America are filled with people who's illness is emotionally related, and when one out of every ten people born today will be confined to a mental institution at some period of their life. Now that is frightening. That's anxiety-producing except for the fact that I believe very clearly that the gifts of healing - operative not only in the Person

of Jesus Christ, but operative today as well - includes the gifts of emotional healing. How I praise God for those in our family with those gifts to be useful to God in touching the broken with healing - not just with compassion, but with healing. Touching them and having their hearts knit together within them as God, through that person with the gifts of healing, brings healing. Frequently given an exercise gift of Healing today is the gift of emotional healing in contrast with the rather rare experience of physical healing. Now parenthetically I can say that I believe one of the reasons why physical healing is rather rare today is because it is not as necessary as it was in the day of Christ. Not that people aren't sick, but that God has allowed men to understand some of the workings of His will and His creative powers in order to discover medicine, procedures, and surgical procedures, etc.

There is also the aspect of Spiritual healing and I believe that worse than any body sickness is soul sickness. To live with an ill body must be hard and lonely and heavy and difficult. But to enter eternity with a sin laden soul unforgiven - that's tragic! To see a person who has been crippled standing straight with crutches discarded must be a thrilling sight. How much more exciting is it to see someone who has been crippled and distorted by sin standing freely before God because they have been spiritually healed and knit together and made whole. Don't get so excited about discarded crutches when, in front of you, you see men and women whose lives have been set free, who have been healed spiritually. I think that's much more exciting and is certainly included in Jesus' reference to the gift of healing. For in that passage in Isaiah, as recorded in Matthew 13, Jesus said, "For this people's heart is become gross and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed. Lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal them." You see how He ties together spiritual healing and conversion, "lest they be converted and I should heal them"? What else can you use to describe man sick with sin set free. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. That's a miraculous healing. God has gifted some with the special gifts to minister the gift of healings, spiritually, to men and women. I've seen it happen in many people's lives. I've seen people touch those who are spiritually dead, and seen them come to new life in Christ; to call "come forth" and see the dead really come forth; to stand and recognize that when you called the wandering and disobedient and unfaithful disciple, that they respond and come back to that life in Christ. And you must recognize that is an exercise of the gift of healing, as certainly as Peter and John saying to the man who was crippled by the Beautiful gate, "get up and walk".

Go to a world in pain, in need of a healing touch, as men and women who have met the Healer and who they, themselves, have been healed and have been given the ministry of introducing the dying to the physicians.

Chapter 14. The Gift of Miracles

In I Corinthians 12, Paul says, "...to one the gifts of healings, to another the workings of miracles" That's a spectacular gift and this is another one that we sometimes get either dogmatic or close-minded about. I want to avoid both of those, but the words that are translated here "working of miracles" are really two Greek words: energama and duetamea. energamatōn, is the same root word we get "energy" from, and duetameas is the same word that duetamas or "dynamite" comes from. So if you put them together, it's the exercising of dynamite. That's a pretty explosive phrase! When it says "the workings of miracles" it's not talking about a parking place suddenly appearing when you need one. That's not nearly enough. It's got to be explosive and awe-inspiring! So we have to find a definition that's a little bit better than just "causal convenience" or the exercise of God's general providence. Now let me say again: inadequate positions such as dogmatism or closed-mindedness are inadequate because they lose sight of the fact that we serve a God Who is not limited by the laws of His own creation. There is no Biblically clear teaching that the gift of Miracles has ceased. And if there were, there's no clear teaching that says it couldn't be renewed. But it is a gift that is terribly trafficked in and we've got to be careful that we are not guided in our understanding of any of the spiritual gifts, especially the more spectacular kind, by our exposure or our experience with those gifts, whether positive or negative.

I had an experience with the gift of healing when I was a young fellow and for years anybody talked about the gift of healing and I said, "that is really freaky and only freaky people are involved" because I shaped my whole theology and understanding of the gift of healing on the basis of my experience, which happened to be a very negative, dumb experience. But let's not base our theology on experience - doctrine is Biblically-oriented or it is not solidly built. That's why it's important for us to recognize that there's an awful lot of nonsense going around about the working of miracles. Not too long ago, our newspapers reported a rather terrible illustration of this: a small hilltop church in the state of Tennessee (it was a snake-handling group of people), at the close of the evening service, the assistant pastor and one of the laymen got up in front of the congregation and drank a potent mixture of strychnine and water. After the service was over they walked outside and collapsed in convulsive agony and though the entire congregation prayed over them all night long, by dawn they were both dead - a horrible, agonizing death. They were buried with the coffins open and Bibles laying on their chests with the scriptures open to Mark 16 where it says, "they shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them". If you, as an unbeliever, walked into that funeral and saw these two bodies laying there - knowing what had happened to cause their death - and then saw the scripture laying on their saying that it wouldn't happen, what would you think? You'd think either it is not true and the Bible is a fraud, or these people were absolute fools.

Now we have to deal with some hard questions when we talk about the working of miracles. We have to ask, "Do people really work miracles today under the power of the Holy Spirit as in New Testament times" and "if not, why not". "What are miracles anyway?" and "Are there any kind of miracles that are happening today?"

Number 1. What are Miracles?

Let me try to define miracles Biblically. Pat Boone has a book out called "A Miracle a Day Keeps the Devil Away". We had that on our table and we read part of it - and that was a fun book. It's interesting and faith building, and you say "Man, ain't that neat!" But Pat's got a pretty liberal and loose definition of "miracle", because included in that book are events that come about simply as a result of a greater understanding of the use of the laws that God has built into His creation. For instance, man on the

moon. I remember, we were on our way to California when the first moon landing took place, and you'd pull into a gas station, you couldn't get gas. You could rob the whole station, because everybody's sitting there looking at the TV at these guys getting ready to land on the moon. Everybody was saying, "That's a miracle!" Well not by the Biblical definition I want to use. I want to use a little bit more strict miracle, because that's not a miracle. That is simply men applying a greater understanding of the laws that God has built into His creation.

Other people say, "Well, you know, just when I need it, I tried and I tried and I tried and it didn't work and just when I tried the last time, it started." Well, that may be nothing but the exercise of the law of averages. That may not necessarily be a miracle. Or other people - I referred to this before and I don't want to denigrate it because God knows He has provided me, in His gracious goodness, a parking place when I desperately needed a parking place. Not for some selfish purpose, but because there was someone in great need, and the only way I could see them is if I could get a parking place." But that's not a miracle. That's just God's providence and the fact that I went around the block ten times.

So let me try to define a little more restrictive definition of miracle. Ray Stedman says in one of his books that a miracle is the ability to short-circuit the processes of nature by supernatural activity. And then he goes on to say two more things. Number 1, he says, "I have never met anyone with that gift". And the second thing Ray Stedman says is "But I don't have any doubts that the Holy Spirit can give it any time He wants to." I say, "Amen" to both of those. Leslie Flynn in his book says that a miracle is an event of supernatural power, palpable to the senses, which accompanies the servant of the Lord to authenticate the Divine commission. I like this definition because it is Biblical. Three phases of that: 1) it is an event of supernatural power, 2) it is palpable to the senses, and 3) it is accompanying the servant of the Lord to authenticate the Divine commission.

Let me illustrate. When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, is preaching to the people who gathered around by the sound of the mighty rushing wind and the tongues of fire and the people speaking in tongues, Peter spoke to them about Jesus Christ, and this is what he said: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know." He uses all three of the definitions that Les Flynn does in his definition of miracles. He says that Jesus was testified - or approved - authenticated - by God in their midst by miracles (one translation says "power", but it's the same word) - that's an event of supernatural power. And by wonders - that is palpable to the senses. Miracles, you see, are designed to be seen. You're supposed to say "Wow!" when a miracle happens. Somebody says, "Did you see that? It was a miracle!" Nobody has to tell you that. If you saw it, you know! So Jesus of Nazareth was authenticated by God by miracles and wonders and signs. The sign means that His ministry was authenticated. His credentials were given that He was a man of God, from God, indeed was God. The connections are seen all over the pages of the New Testament. Paul in Romans 15, for instance, says, "You Romans doubt whether I'm really an apostle? Let me tell you about some of the things God's done through me." And he refers to miracles to authenticate his apostleship. Men in orbit, unexpected and needed funds arriving in the last minute, and the parking place - these are not miracles by that kind of a restrictive definition. They're neat. They're wonderful. Praise God for them all. But, they're not miracles.

The Old Testament is full of miracles. Just three people I want to refer to that God frequently used for miracles. One of them was Moses. Moses, you recall, one day is out with God in the wilderness and God says, "What do you have in your hand?"

He says, "Why I've got a staff."

God said to Moses, "Throw it down on the ground." So Moses threw it down on the ground. It became a snake and sucked the wits out of the poor guy. Then God said, "Pick it up!"

Moses said, "You're kidding". Well, it doesn't say that, but I know that's what he said. Because you've got such a clear glimpse of Moses' personality throughout all of scripture that that's entirely consistent with his personality. He says, "Wait a minute!" But then he finally picked it up by the tail and it became a staff again. I bet you Moses held onto the staff night and day after that - scared to lay that thing down. But we are told that was only the first of at least ten miracles he performed in Pharaoh's court. When our group was traveling, just not too long ago, we came way down in the southeast of the Dead Sea, down in the wilderness area toward Petra and we stopped and drank from a rock that's got a split in it and water's just pouring out and everybody says that's the rock that Moses struck, and I don't know if it is, but it's good water. Moses was a man with many miracles.

Or you take a man like Elijah. You think of Elijah and right away most of us think of Elijah standing on top of Mt. Carmel with 400 prophets of Baal and 450 prophets of the grove and the odds are 850 to 1. And then, since that wasn't wide enough odds for Elijah, he dumps water over the whole business and then he stands back and what did he pray? "God, in order that these people know You're God, You've got to do something big." And the fire fell and what was the people's response? "Yup, He's God!" You see, it was an authenticating wonder and sign. Then along comes Elisha, following Elijah. In fact, at the end of Elijah's life he turns to his protegee, Elisha, and he says, "Elisha, before I go to be with God, what would you like me to do? I'll ask the Lord for a special blessing for you."

And Elisha said, "You know, I would like to have a double portion of your spirit." Now, this is interesting. If you go through the accounts of Elijah and Elisha, and count the miracles Elijah performed and then count the miracles Elisha performed – it is double. But then the Old Testament closes and for 400 years there is silence. No more revelations, no more miracles, no more prophets. No nothing. Then, according to Paul in Galatians 4:4, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a virgin." Jesus comes in and once again revelation, miracles, power, the Word from God. It's flawless this time, because the Messenger is flawless. It's the Son of God Himself. When Jesus spoke they said, "Man! He speaks with authority!" They did not say, "He quotes authority". They said, "He speaks with authority." He healed the sick and He cast out demons and He silenced the wind and He walked on the water and He gave sight to the blind and mobility to the paralyzed and raised the dead and everybody said, "Wow!" Then along come His followers. And they were authenticated by the same set of supernatural signs. And, boy, did they need it! Why would anybody believe them otherwise? Remember where Jesus got most of His disciples. He did not go to the leading universities of the day. He got guys from the sticks - Galilee - way up north, that little province of semi-literate and half-educated people. He called fisherman - not even the leaders of that society. Then He is bringing His message to that sophisticated metropolitan area of Jerusalem. Do you think when these hicks from Galilee got down to Jerusalem and started talking about Jesus rising from the dead that they had any credibility? No way. They had no degrees behind their name, they had no prefaces written by famous people in their books. They had nothing but the message that "God had sent Christ into the world that men could be saved by relationship with Him and that God authenticated the whole thing by raising Jesus from the dead and you could know Him too!"

Everybody said, "Oh yeah?"

Then God said, "I'll authenticate it." So signs, wonders and miracles accompanied them. When the sign gifts were given, they authenticated the messengers of God. When the need for such credentials is

not present, neither are the credentials given. That's Biblical. Since the New Testament, God has given His church no new revelation. It is full and it is complete. All things are summed up in the Person of Jesus Christ. Read Colossians. So if people say, "I've got a new word" and it's not backed-up by the Bible, in fact it's a little contradictory, but it's a "new word", I say that's false. But God has directed men to translate and to get the revelation that has been given to men everywhere. Whenever the gospel has gone out, breaking new ground, frequently we hear of the sign gift of Miracles accompanying it. J. Oswald Sanders says, "If miraculous happenings sometimes occur in missionary work today, it is largely because - in those areas - conditions closely resemble those faced by the early church. In countries long enlightened by the gospel, miracles are not so necessary," he goes on to say, "yet this is a realm in which we cannot dictate to the sovereignty of God." I say "Amen" to that. You see, in regions freshly open to the gospel, God may suspend a law of nature to demonstrate His power over heathen idols, His miraculous answers to prayer to simple faith. He may protect His servants in miraculous ways. He may deal with scoffers in miraculous ways. You've heard of that. You've read of that as it relates to missionary experience around our globe. It reminds one of the apostolic period of history. But do we need that today? Does God need to accompany my life with signs and wonders and miracles? Or is what God longs to see in my life and your life, to authenticate our message, a life that authenticates it?

So, what are miracles meant to accomplish? Well, according to the Bible, they're meant to accomplish three things, primarily. First, they are given to demonstrate not the power of the miracle worker, but the power of God. Secondly, they are given to demonstrate the authority of the miracle worker. Remember that late night interview Jesus had with Nicodemus in John 3? Nicodemus comes to Him and this is what he says, "We know, rabbi, you are a teacher who came from God, because no one could do these miracles you did except God be with him." In other words, the miracles authenticated Christ's own ministry. In the third place, that miracles are given not only to demonstrate the power of God and the authority of the miracle worker, but they are also given to cause men to listen to God's message. You see Acts 8, remember Philip is performing some miracles and it says, "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." God's power and message expanded explosively in the first century. Apostles preached and men listened. Why did they? Hebrews 2 says, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." That's what miracles are meant to accomplish.

Number 2. What do miracles not accomplish?

According to the teaching of the Bible, miracles do not guarantee a response of faith. Sometimes we make a mistake and we say, "God, if You would just perform this miracle, they would believe." Not necessarily so. Moses stands in Pharaoh's court and produces one miracle more astounding than the last. Ten times. And what was the result? Pharaoh hardened his heart. Jesus Christ came into the world and performed miracles such as the world has never seen. And what was the result? They crucified Him for blasphemy. Peter and John (we referred to this previously) in Acts 3 where they met the man at the Beautiful gate, and they said, "silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And they took him by the hand, raised him up, his ankle bones got strong, and he became the first holy leper. Let me tell you something, you'd say "that is going to be guaranteed to produce faith". Not necessarily. Look on at Acts 4:16-17. This is the response to that miracle. "'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. 'Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they've done an outstanding miracle and we cannot deny it, but to stop this thing from spreading any more, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this Name.'" Miracles do not guarantee the growth of faith.

Secondly, miracles do not guarantee an increased faith. You see, miracles are designed to appeal to the eyes, not to the will. A miracle is to be seen, and what happens when you do some kind of a stunt for a child? What's their response? My mother used to do a trick where she put a little piece of paper on her fingernails and put that one finger visible on the table and then made some kind of a mumbo jumbo and put it back down and I didn't recognize she was switching fingers on me. I'd think, "Isn't that amazing! The paper went away." Do you know what my response always was? Not "I believe my mother is a miracle worker." My response was, "Do it again! Do it again! Do it again!" And that's the same response people have in Biblical times and today. If God performs some marvelous miracle, we would pass the word and next Sunday they would come here at 7:00 in the morning to get in. Because they wanted to believe? No! They wanted to see you "do it again!" That's the way we are. That's why miracles are not given nor are they promised nor are they used in scripture to increase faith. They don't always do so. We're like children: "Do it again! Do it again!" We are childish - not child like - if we chase after and thirst after miracles. Because to do so means we are walking by sight and not by faith. Remember Jesus' words to Thomas in John 20: "Because you've seen Me you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed." The very act of seeking a sign contradicts what the Bible says pleases Him: faith. Jesus said, "Oh man, this is an evil generation - they seek after a sign." Because they kept saying "Do it again! Do it again!" So to depend on sign gifts for greater faith is walking by sight, not by faith. Miracles don't guarantee the birth of faith or the increase of faith.

Number 3. Not all miracles are from God.

Remember when Moses stood in Pharaoh's court again? He stands there and thinks, "Boy this is going to zap them." He's got that rod in his hands and he's seen it turn into a snake and he thinks God is going to do this again and boy are they going to freak out. He stands there and he says, "watch this Pharaoh!" and he throws it down and it becomes a snake. And the magicians in Pharaoh's court they did likewise and theirs turned into snakes. And Moses went back to the drawing board again. Every single miracle that God produces through man can be counterfeited - every one - except new life in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 24, speaking of the last days, "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and *perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect*, if that were possible. See, I've told you ahead of time."

There's a lot more that could be said about wonderful occurrences and remarkable answers to prayer and extra strength and abundant provision and timely protection and all that. These are not defined as miracles in the narrow sense, because the laws of nature are not upset. They are not interrupted. But my definition in my heart gives room for a little broader sense of what we call "miracles" because the unusual and the timely providential entry of God into human affairs is always miraculous to me. I think one of the greatest thrilling things in my life is the realization that Jesus loves me! Now that's miraculous. That will match up with walking on the water any day. Because I happen to know me. I think with joy of Jesus' promise to His disciples that they would do "greater works than these". Did that come true or did that not come true? Is that valid today or is it not valid today? If by "that", He means "more spectacular miracles" in the terms of raising the dead and making the blind to see, then it's not come true. But that's not what it means. I don't want to seem to "spiritualize" this out of meaning, but I've got to tell you that I can't find any indication in scripture that, while calming the sea is a remarkable accomplishment, it comes anywhere near to calming the deeply stormed breast of a human friend. Feeding 5,000 people - that's really an exciting kind of a thing. But just a few hours later they were hungry again. How much more exciting to see multitudes fed the bread of life when they no longer hunger, and the sight to the blind. But oh how exciting to see those blinded by sin for years, see. Raising the dead - wow! That's so amazing when Jesus stood in front of Lazarus' tomb and said, "Lazarus come forth!" And everybody could hear him coming. What do you think their reaction was? Well, I love to speculate. I wish I was an artist. I'd paint a picture of it. Some guys are standing

there and they can't move. They hear it, they don't believe it, and they're saying, "move feet" and the feet aren't moving. They're just standing there. And other people, their feet are moving. They're on their way. I don't think there are hardly anybody that's on their knees before Christ. I mean they're just stunned by the whole thing. In fact, when Lazarus stands there at the door of the grave he's all wrapped up (and they did a heavy job of wrapping in those days) and he can't move. Everybody's standing there, thinking "wow!" So Jesus said, "Untie him. Let him go."

I think that's really exciting - when I see men and women, whose whole lives have been in bondage to sin, come to new life in Christ and then be touched and untied and let go, and they begin to grow in the freedom and the marvelous grace of God. That's miraculous. That's the gift of Miracles being fulfilled in our midst. "Greater works than these shall you do!" In the power of His Holy Spirit. Well, these are bigger miracles, I think. I think reordered lives are fifty times more exciting than reordered molecules. God is still at work.

Number 4. Is the gift of Miracles exercised today?

Absolutely. I remember a few months ago, talking to a person that had been referred to me. I talked to them three times. I laid on some of them the best theology that they're going to hear for a long time. I got into hermeneutics and I really gave them top-grade information. But at the end of those three sessions they merely said, "It's really been interesting, but I just can't see it." Blind! But then they met a believer who touched them in a way that I couldn't touch them. The result? They see! That's the gift of Miracles. I see young people touched by their counselors and by buddies in our youth program, and they come to new life. The crippled and the halt, the purposeless become motivated to fulfill Christian living. The lame start to walk in the paths of Godliness. Even those people that we have said so often concerning, "Oh it would be a miracle if they ever became a Christian", do. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

Go into a world that really longs to see something spectacular. And if it happens, are going to come from all over and say, "Do it again." Go into that world that's skeptical, and has plenty of good reason to be, as men and women whose lives ring so true that it points to Him. Let us then, to His praise, be faithful in that ministry.

Chapter 15. The Gift of Discernment

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being aware of it, then brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? While you kept it, didn't it remain your own? After it was sold, wasn't it in your power? How is it that you have conceived this thing in your heart? You haven't lied to men, but to God."

Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. Great fear came on all who heard these things. The young men arose and wrapped him up, and they carried him out and buried him. About three hours later, his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." She said, "Yes, for so much."

But Peter asked her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

She fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. Great fear came on the whole assembly, and on all who heard these things.

Acts 5:1-11

In the United States House of Representatives, there is a marvel of bureaucracy that is known as the Committee on Committees. I am assuming that it is to coordinate and to regulate the work of all the other committees. But I can remember the stress that I felt when I first recognized that there was such a committee on committees. In a similar way, I suppose the gift of the Holy Spirit that we are now considering from I Corinthians 12, the gift of Discernment of spirits, could be called a gift on the gifts. Because it is given to determine if what purports to be of God is of God, or if it's merely natural, or even from Satan.

It's odd to me that when I mention "from Satan", there are some believers that react with either disbelief or with a kind of soft chuckle at such a medieval idea. I say "odd", because the non-Christian world we're a part of believes very much in spirits. 10,000 full-time, and 175,000 part-time, astrologers ply their trade in 20th century America. 40 million of our citizens dabble in the occult. Major universities of pride and learning give credit courses in the occult. 6,000 spiritist meetings happen, weekly, across our country. The First Satanic Church in San Francisco numbers 10,000 members and advertises "every member with his own demon controlling him". One quarter of a million Satanic Bibles are being sold in our cities, including Seattle. You see, the world knows the reality of what Paul calls "the principalities and the powers and the rulers of darkness of this world." It is tragic that part of the church is busy smiling indulgently at such things. By the way, the Christian is specifically forbidden by God's word to in any way be involved with such things as those spiritism matters. Read Deuteronomy 18.

The New Testament makes it very clear that whenever God is manifesting His power, there will be a corresponding abundance of the manifestation of evil. I've been in the ministry for a very long time and I don't recall ever a time when there has been such a hunger for the meaning and reality that only Christ can give; when there has been such receptivity to the gospel on the part of young and old people. Yet, whenever there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the church, there has

always been a corresponding outpouring of the counterfeit, the false, and the activity of evil: false prophets, lying signs, deceiving spirits, and counterfeit wonders. So people begin to ask "how in the world is the body of Christ supposed to know the true from the false?" How is the body of Christ supposed to know what is of Satan, what is simply of the psyche, and what is really of God? Some people respond in two different ways. They ignore, laugh at, or ridicule the whole idea of Satan and his minions of evil as being medieval. Or they become so paranoid they become preoccupied with it, they find him under every rock and behind every pew and behind every seat, they're scared to death of him, and they lose sight of the sovereignty and power and majesty of God. We need balance. One reason why the Holy Spirit has given, among that glorious list of gifts, one that is called the gift of the Discerning of spirits is for this very purpose: to keep the body of Christ safe, protected, corrected. So it's kind of gift on the gifts.

The word of God says in I John 4 that we are to test the spirits to see whether they be of God. Then it gives us some very simple tests. For instance, I Corinthians 12:13 says, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." So one of the first tests that we must know and apply to the things we see and hear and are exposed to is: is Jesus Christ clearly Lord of that person's life? If not, don't worry about it. Forget it, set it aside, and don't follow. I John 4:2 says, "by this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." So the second test is: is Jesus Christ acknowledged as God's Son? Is He divine? If not, it's not of God. Matthew 7, (see also II Peter 2), Jesus says, "Every sound tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. Thus you will know them by their fruit." Not their words, their followers, their number of books, their television, their radio, their newspaper columns, or their gifts. But by their fruit. So the third test is: is there evidence of true Godliness and holiness in that person's life?

Now, together with these three simple tests, God has given, by His Holy Spirit, to His church, a spiritual ability to distinguish between the spirits. This ability's given on two different levels to Christians. On one level, it's given to all Christians. All who have been born of the Spirit have been given the spirit of spiritual discernment. But the gift - the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, called the gift of the Discerning of spirits - is a more precise and greater power than the general spiritual discernment.

Now, let me suggest that there are three levels at which the body of Christ is to exercise discernment. Every believer is to be discerning, and it's a crying shame when I see so many believers who believe absolutely anything that is told them. I mean anything. You see, there has been given to all men the ability to develop what is called "natural discernment". Natural discernment is the ability to make wise decisions. Natural discernment means you observe, you collate and gather information, and you use that information to make a sound judgment. That's discernment. You'd call it "good judgment". In my hometown, they always called it "horse sense". It means the same thing: it's just natural intelligence - the exercise of discernment - gathering information and making sound judgment. There's nothing magical about that. That's a skill you learn, and parenting is largely guiding our children in the development of this skill, so that our children will be able to gather the information and make sound decisions without mom and dad having to stand there and say "do this" and "do that". It's tragic when you have to do that when children are in their teens. They ought to have learned by that time how to make sound decisions. If they haven't, you have not done a very good job of parenting, because you've been making too many of the decisions for them. But that's another subject.

The second level of discernment that takes place is what is called "spiritual discernment", and this is not available to those who are not born from above. But those who have a relationship with Jesus Christ have spiritual discernment. However, spiritual discernment comes as the believer grows in

Christ. Spiritual discernment comes to be developed in you and in me only as we come to know, and obey, the word of God. Spiritual discernment does not come by osmosis, reading books, running to religious movies, or meetings of any kind. Spiritual discernment does not come by seeking superficial. Listen to what Hebrews 5 says, when it addresses the immature Christian: "I have much to say about this, but it's hard to explain, because you're so slow at learning. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you still need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, *who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*" That is clearly developmental spiritual discernment. How does it come about? By constant use and training of the things of God. That's the way you grow in Christ. Not by getting perfect attendance pins that say you've been to every meeting every time the lights go on in church you're there. You're not going to get spiritually mature that way - you're just going to get tired out. What you need to understand is that the general spiritual discernment is our responsibility. It is our responsibility because it says "solid food is for the mature, who by constant use" - not something laid on us, but something applied in our own lives. "...by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." The result of this kind of spiritual discernment is being rooted and grounded in the word of God. Once we're rooted and grounded in the entire word of God we become spiritually mature.

The third level is what I believe the scriptures refer to when it speaks of the gift of the Discerning of spirits. Every believer is responsible to be discerning, but to some the Holy Spirit has given a special gift and a special power to do so. The word translated "discernment" here, or "the discerning of spirits", that word is *diakrino* which has meaning of "to judge, or to evaluate". It carries with it, in its connotation, the ability to gather the information and to make a judgment - not based on the passage of time, but based on knowledge. Based on certainty.

The definition of the gift of Discerning of spirits is that special ability that God gives by His Holy Spirit to some members of the body of Christ which enables them to know with assurance whether certain behavior or teaching purported to be of God, is in reality of God, if it's of the flesh, or if it's of Satan. Here's a shorter definition: it is the ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error before the difference is manifest to everybody by the results. Anybody can figure out whether it's good or bad on down the line when the fruit comes on the tree. But the gift of the discerning of spirits is earlier than that - it is God, by His Holy Spirit, protecting His body from that error. It's the ability to discriminate between false and true; to recognize false teachings and teachers; to see the false before others finally get around to seeing it; to be able to read a religious book and to sense - instantly and confidently - the subtle errors that it may contain; to listen to a sermon and to be able to put the finger right up on any deficiency of the full gospel that is presented; to be able to tell what the atmosphere in a service is just emotion, or it is emotion based solidly on Biblical truth.

Let's look at the Bible for some illustrations of this gift that Paul refers to. Matthew 16 tells the story of Jesus, in His relationship with His disciples. He's just beginning His trip to Jerusalem for His betrayal and death and resurrection, and He says to His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?"

They report back, "Well, some say Moses, some Elijah, and some say John the Baptist back from the dead."

Jesus said, "But who do you say?" That's a very crucial question. These men have followed Him now for some several months and He is now asking them, "Alright, now that you've had a chance to walk with Me and listen to Me, and see Me at all hours of the day and night and in all kinds of pressures and

situations. What is your evaluation of Me?" He didn't say, "What's your evaluation on the basis of what I said when we stood on the Mount of Beatitudes?" He said, "You've lived with Me. Now tell Me what you think." Believe me, brothers and sisters, that's when the rubber hits the road - when people who live with us evaluate us. I want my congregation to think highly of me. I want them to say, "Pastor Palmberg is a man of God." But far more than I want that, I want my children and my wife to say I'm a man of God. That is tough, because they see me on my day off, and my off days. Jesus turns to His apostles and He says, "Alright fellows, who do you say that I am?"

Peter, bless his heart, speaks up and says, "You're Christ. You're the Son of the Living God."

Jesus perceiving the spirit within Peter says, "Simon, blessed are you, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." There's a spiritual source to that knowledge.

Yet, just a few verses later, Jesus has told His disciples He's going down to Jerusalem there to be betrayed, suffer, and die. And Peter, being emboldened I suppose, by the compliment he just received, steps up and says, "No You're not going!"

Jesus had just said, "this knowledge came from God", But now He turns to Peter and says, "Get out of My sight, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." You see, Jesus would never tolerate, throughout the entire Biblical account, even true statements about His own Person if the statements came from the Evil One.

Then the story of Peter in Acts 5 very clearly shows an illustration of the gift of the discerning of spirits as exercised by Peter. Many of the early Christians sold their property and turned over all of their assets to the church and they lived from a common fund. As they would work, they would just continue to put their wages in and then live from the church according to their particular need. Barnabas was the one who had done this - he had extensive real-estate holdings. He liquidated his assets and turned over the assets to the church. Ananias says, "Boy, people really think he's something." So Ananias sells a piece of land and come trucking in there, waited until it was a good-sized service so that everybody would see it.³

Ananias comes trucking up to Peter and he says, "Alright, here's the money. I've sold my land. Here's the money." And the implication he very clearly gives is "I am doing what others are doing - I am giving it all."

Peter did not ask to see a financial report. He didn't ask for a Dun and Bradstreet rating on the man. He just simply looked at him and the Holy Spirit, speaking to him - gifting him with a spirit of discernment - said, "Ananias, why do you lie to the Holy Spirit?" That is such an awful thing. He fell dead. Then Sapphira comes along, thinking she's going to get in on a little of the glory rub that's going

³ We had a man in my home church that everybody knew owned more property in Nebraska than anybody else we knew. And he would come to church about once a quarter. And every time he'd come to church, you could see the trustee board would just relax, because when he would come to church, he'd pull an envelope out when the offering was given and that envelope (I've never such long envelopes in my life - it would just come out so that everybody could see that. "Aha! Here it comes"). And he'd lay it in the offering plate. Now there's a lousy \$3,000 every time he gave it. And for that guy, \$3,000 was small change and coffee money. But everybody said "ahhhh", you know. But that's kind of like Ananias.

around because Ananias had been so generous. Instead, she met her own death. "Ananias, why has it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit." I'm sure that the other people didn't know what in the world is Peter talking about. Ananias knew. The Holy Spirit knew.

Then you remember the story in Acts 16, when Paul and Silas are in Philippi. They're trying to get the church started in Philippi and things aren't going too good. In fact, every place that they go in the city of Philippi and Paul is preaching, there's a little girl following them around there. She's a little slave girl owned by a couple of guys. She had the spirit of divination, which means she could foretell the future, and she's following these guys around. Every time Paul really gets wound up in his preaching, this little girl stands up and starts to holler. Now what does she holler? "These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved." True, right? Every word was true: they were servants of the Most High God. They were telling people how to be saved.

Finally Paul turns around and he says, "In the name of Jesus Christ, get out of that little girl," and she was healed.

I'm sure there were people saying, "Isn't it wonderful to hear that little girl testify to the truth of these men?" Except that every time she did, she kept disrupting the preaching of the gospel. Satan is never shy about even telling the truth, if it will serve his purposes. This little girl's clearly true witness was designed to disrupt the preaching of the gospel and to break down the possible establishment of the church at Philippi. What happened as a result? The two guys who had this little slave girl saw that she lost her profitability to them. So they pressed charges against Paul and Silas and said they're setting off riots. Paul and Silas got put in jail and they were singing at midnight, then they got set free and the Philippian jailer and his whole family became Christians. And what do you know, there's the nucleus of the church at Philippi. God can take some of the most destructive, disastrous things Satan can do and if He gets all the pieces, He can make a beautiful thing out of it.

We, as a body of Christ, need the gift of the Discerning of spirits today. We need it exercised within our body. I praise God for it, because every genuine work of God is going to be challenged and counterfeited by Satan. He can come as an angel of light, so the body has got to be protected from the error of both words of error and ways of error. That requires a gift of Discerning of Spirits.

That gift can operate on several levels. One is, it operates on the level that a person will know when the apparently good behavior or teaching of another is - in fact - not of God. Let me illustrate it. There's a man by the name of Petrus Octavianus, who is a native of Indonesia. He served on the Luzon Committee of World Evangelism. He was preaching to over 3,000 people in Stuttgart, Germany, a couple of years ago. And at the end of his message, he just felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to call the people to stand silently to their feet and wait while he prayed. He said there was such an absolute confidence in his heart and mind that the Holy Spirit was moving through that silent standing 3,000 people and touching hearts. All of the sudden, behind him a man on the platform leaped to his feet and grabbed the microphone and started to speak in tongues. Now, don't get shook up. If you think I'm all against tongues, read the next chapter, because that's the next gift on the list. But this man began to speak in tongues and Petrus turned around to him and said, "In the name of Jesus, be quiet." The man dropped the microphone and sat down. He was a preacher and he was speaking in tongues. That's a religious-sounding activity from a religious-acting man. Yet Petrus recognized - and he says in his own writings concerning this - "when I prayed for clarity in the situation, it became so clear I could not deny it. That this speaking in tongues was not brought about by the Holy Spirit, but by the enemy in order to disrupt the work the Spirit was doing in the hearts of the silent throng." It was evidenced by the response - by the fruit that was born - he was right.

At another level, there is that of discerning whether someone who is a Christian brother or sister does something from a Godly or a carnal motive. That is the Ananias and Sapphira story. On a third level, it involves supernatural ability to distinguish truth from error - even when motives are proper. The exercise of this gift involves very sensitive judgment, and that's why I believe it is evident from the scriptural witness that the gift of the Discernment of spirits must be accompanied by an extra measure of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it turns into a self-styled heresy hunt. God knows we've got enough of that going on today. Or it become simple cruel harshness. Or character assassination. Because of that tendency, there are some who have that gift who are reluctant to use it, because, it takes confidence and courage to speak out when everybody's going, "Oh, isn't that wonderful!" To be able to stand up and say, "that is not of God," and tell why. It's not a popular position to be in, I can assure you. But it is mandatory for the well-being of the body of Christ. Not everything that is supernatural in appearance or origin is Divine. So, we must not uncritically accept all spirits, all manifestations, and all witness to the work of the Spirit, when it may not be the Holy Spirit. Listen to the instruction of God's word: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God, because many false witnesses have gone out into the world and this is how you can recognize the Spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antiChrist. He denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also."

Any teaching that relegates Jesus Christ to an inferior spot in any degree or measure less than the incarnate Son of God, crucified, buried, and risen again, is not of God. Such a teaching is of the Devil. I don't care how pious the phrases surrounding it and how sweet the smiles on the face proclaiming it - it is not authenticated by pious phrases or sweet smiles. It is a lie against God Himself. Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient and only way to the Father, and any teaching that adds to, or subtracts from, that, is not of God. Paul writes to the Galatians, who were so eager to accept his teaching on the grace of God, but who also were influenced by the Judeazers who came around and said, "Yes, the grace of God is great and its wonderful. It's marvelous and its necessary, but you ought to have circumcision too," and they believed it. When you read Galatians, you see that he writes to them differently than he wrote the other epistles. He doesn't start off with a big long prayer thanking God for them and all the rest. He just rolls up his sleeves and he says, "You foolish Galatians! What's the matter with you that you've been led so quickly into another area. Let anyone that preaches a different gospel than I preached to you be accursed!" Then, in case you missed the point, he repeats it again in the 9th verse. You see, we are dealing with issues of eternal life and death. There is no room for whiffling and waffling on the whole issue - or for saying, "Well, they're nice people. They must be Christians." Anything that is less than Jesus Christ the Son of God, crucified, dead, and risen again - is not Christian! I don't care what brand hangs on it. They can be the nicest neighbors in the world, but they're lost according to the word.

Some People want to add to it today. Paul says in Colossians, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. And you have this fullness in Christ, Who is the Head over every power and authority." When you have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, what more do you need? Nothing. What more can you have? Nothing! You have it all, if you will live in the fullness of what you possess. That's why Paul, writing in Ephesians says, "Be ye filled with the Spirit." Not, "Hey you have Jesus Christ, now you need the Holy Spirit." Baloney! That's not Biblical. But some of us need the filling of the Holy Spirit. We need to loose the power that resides within us, that has been given to us by our spiritual birth. Then His gifts pour out upon the body of Christ. But what more can you have than what you received when you received Jesus Christ? Nothing. Any addition to, or subtraction from, the gospel of Christ is not of the Holy Spirit. It is not Jesus Christ the Son of God plus a ritual.

Or Jesus Christ the Son of God plus another book. Or plus an experience. Or plus a sensation. It is Jesus Christ the Son of God plus nothing. So Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and warns them, "I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves, men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them." The Corinthians were warned about counterfeit teachers when he says, "for such men are false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder. For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, therefore it's not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. But their end is according to their deeds."

I have witnessed counterfeit conversions in my life. But I still seek, by every means, to win men and women to Jesus Christ. I have witnessed counterfeit spiritual experiences aplenty in my life. But I still rejoice in the reality of the true spiritual experience. I have seen counterfeit spiritual gifts exercised aplenty in my life, yet I still earnestly desire spiritual gifts. The counterfeit does not exist unless there is the true to be copied. Because God has provided a way to deal with the false prophets, He has by His Holy Spirit given some believers within our body the special gift that is called by Paul in I Corinthians 12, "the gift of the discerning of spirits". Pray for that gift to be exercised in the church. Listen to that gift when it is exercised. And praise God for that gift, which expresses His unconquerable and incomparable love for His body, the church. He says, "even the gates of hell won't prevail against it."

So go into a world that has no question of the existence of the spiritual, but has so little experience with the existence of the Divine, as men and women who - being born from above - filled with His Spirit, gifted by His Spirit, touch those who dwell in darkness and bring them, by His grace, to the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

Chapter 16. The Gifts of Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues

What should I do? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who fills the place of the unlearned say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, seeing he doesn’t know what you say? For you most certainly give thanks well, but the other person is not built up. I thank my God, I speak with other languages more than you all. However, in the assembly I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in another language.

Brothers, don’t be children in thoughts, yet in malice be babies, but in thoughts be mature. Brothers, I couldn’t speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to babies in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with solid food, for you weren’t yet ready. Indeed, you aren’t ready even now, for you are still fleshly. For insofar as there is jealousy, strife, and factions among you, aren’t you fleshly, and don’t you walk in the ways of men?

1 Corinthians 14:15-20

A couple was settling down for a quiet evening after putting their young child to bed for the night. Suddenly they heard a loud thump on the ceiling above them, from where their child's bedroom was. Quickly rushing upstairs, they burst through the door to find their child sitting, somewhat bewilderedly, on the floor where he had fallen out of bed in his sleep. “What happened?” they asked.

The child responded, “I guess I fell asleep too close to where I got in.”

The state of much of the modern church today is one of spiritual immaturity. Many people who have been believers for many years are still babes in Christ – they've fallen asleep too close to where they got in. The Corinthian church was full of spiritual babies who demonstrated their immaturity through gift envy, gift projection, and many other examples of party spirit, and it was tearing the church apart. In this chapter, we will be covering both the gift of Tongues and the Gift of Interpretation of Tongues, because they go together.

In his book on the Holy Spirit, Pete Gilquist says of these two gifts, "Buckle up, friends, because here we go on the two gifts that qualify as the biggest 'Christian friendship and oneness busters' of the century."

The Holy Spirit was given for unity. That was, and is, God's purpose in the gifts of the Holy Spirit – to bind the body of Christ together in interdependence, because each needs the other to be complete.

Remember Paul's words to the Ephesians: "be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Then how is it that these two gifts rip the unity to shreds? And boy are the varying views dogmatic.

Dennis Bennett says, "What if I don't speak in tongues? Can I receive the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues?" He states, “It comes in the package!”

Robert Gromacki says "every experience of tongues-speaking is either a result of demon influence or psychological suggestion."

When people hear that I am preaching a sermon series on the gifts, they want to know where I stand on tongues and they often withhold their fellowship and love until they find out “Does he?” Or “doesn't he?” I keep asking myself “why are we, in the body of Christ so divided about that which was given to unify us?”

Hal Lindsey puts his finger on the reason: it is the work of Satan (*not* the tongues, but the division of the gifts). He writes, "The charismatic movement has placed an unbalanced emphasis on the importance of tongues. They have drawn unscriptural conclusions about a *genuine* and bona fide spiritual gift. The more the (rest of the) Christian world has criticized their movement, the greater the claims that have made of tongues. The more that have sought to validate their emphasis with biblically unscriptural claims, the more conservative biblical scholars and Christians have resisted them. With a polarization like this, who do you think is the winner? You guessed it! Satan! He goads both sides on in their causes and then stands back and laughs while they battle each other instead of him."

Let me state right here again, as I have many times, I believe that every one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for us today. I do not think that they are all *common* today and I definitely do not accept that any one gift is for all. It is sort of sadly funny: some think I am too soft on the “charismatics” and some think I am anti-charismatic and too hard on them. But here is the only question I care one snap about: am I biblical? That is my authority and my **only** authority. My experiences and others' experiences are fascinating, but neither one is authoritative. God's word is! So now let's look at it again with regard to tongues.

1. First, what does the Bible teach that tongues is **not**? I can almost hear some say “See how negative his is about tongues!” A) Tongues are not normative. That is, not every Spirit-filled person speaks in tongues. I Corinthians 12:13 says “All are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body. But in verse 20 Paul asks, “...Do all speak in tongues?” The Greek implies the negative. Thus, it cannot be the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At salvation, every believer is baptized in the Spirit into the body. If a person has not been baptized in the Spirit, he is not in the body of Christ and is, therefore, unsaved, because that is the only way of entering Christ's body. There are a host of passages concerning the filling of the Holy Spirit where not a hint of tongues is given as accompanying it. Here are a few. In Acts 4:8 Peter is filled with the Spirit when he was before Sanhedrin and he spoke without tongues. In Acts 4:31 it says of the believers "and when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness." No mention of tongues. In Acts 6:5 we are told that the deacons were all filled with the Holy Spirit but with no mention of tongues as a prerequisite - or mentioned at all.

In fact, tongues are mentioned only three times in Acts. Tongues is not even mentioned in the Holy Spirit Gift lists in Romans or Ephesians. Each mention of tongues in Acts was on a special occasion.

1. Acts 2:3,4 "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." The noise attracted a crowd of passover visitors providing a springboard for Peter's sermon (which was not in tongues), and helped win 3,000 souls. It was a recognized language to the hearers and authenticated the message concerning Jesus. By the way, why do some want to make tongues normative but say nothing about the tongues of fire or wind as accompanying signs?
2. Acts 10:46 "...for they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God" (the folks at Cornelius' at Caesaria). These were gentiles and Jews hated them and would never accept them in the Body. But listen, in verse 54: "and all the circumcised (Jewish) believers who had come

with Peter were *amazed*, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also". This huge innovation of God, including gentiles, needed divine authentication. Tongues convinced the skeptical Jewish believers and they realized that the gospel was for gentiles also.

3. Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying". These were the disciples of John the Baptist. Their gospel was incomplete so Paul taught them of Jesus. Tongues came as an authentication of Paul's message.

Now, if tongues are normative, why are there only these three special occasions – each authenticating the gospel of Jesus Christ to Jews, Gentiles, and the disciples of John the Baptist? Why does Paul only mention it only to deal with its abuses?

B) Tongues are not the Biblical method of Christian growth. The New Testament's explanations of the life in the Spirit ignores speaking in tongues. This fact is because growth in godliness (call sanctification) is not a sudden acquisition of spiritual maturity by means of an exciting emotional experience. It is a growth process of obedience by which Christlikeness is produced by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

C) Tongues are not the exclusive domain of Christianity. Charismatics readily admit that the gift can be counterfeited. Hindus, Muslims, Mormons, Zulus, Spiritualist medium, and even Unitarians (who reject the deity of Christ) all have an experience of speaking in tongues.

D) Tongues are not the sign of maturity or spirituality. The Corinthian church is clear evidence of this fact. Paul calls them carnal, immature – babies. The mark of spirituality is fruit-bearing, not tongues nor any other gift. We are to be fruit inspectors, not gift checkers. My Texas preacher buddy, Curt Jennings, used to quote his granddad, "I don't care how high a man jumps or how loud he hollers, just as long as when he lands on the ground he walks straight!!

E) Tongues are not the text of ecumenicity. How can tongues become a test of fellowship among Christians? Pentecostal Unitarians number one-half million and they deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Am I one with them? No, I certainly am not! Full fellowship with Roman Catholics on a basis of tongues is also a problem. Pentecostal Roman Catholic priest, Father O'Connor writes, "The traditional devotions of the church have taken on more meaning. Some have been brought back to a frequent use of the sacrament of **penance** through the experience of the "baptism" of the Spirit. Others have discovered a place for devotion to **Mary** in their lives, whereas previously that had been indifferent or even antipathetic toward her. One of the most striking effects of the Holy Spirit action has been to stir up devotion to the **real Presence** in the Eucharist."

Newsweek⁴ quotes Cardinal Suenens (A bright Star in the Galaxy of Charismatic groups) as declaring, "Unity with the Holy Spirit, is unity with **Mary** the holy mother." That sort of unbiblical theology is not a basis for unity. I don't care if they do speak in tongues. "For by grace are you saved - through faith..." and that common and shared reality is the only true basis for full fellowship. Period!

I could go on and on responding to what tongues are not because so many non-biblical claims are tossed around, but let's move on.

⁴ Newsweek 6/25/73

2. What does the Bible teach us that tongues are? The greek word is “glossa”, which simply means “language”. Tongues are, therefore, languages given by the Holy Spirit. According to I Corinthians 13:1, they may be human or angelic. They are not gibberish nor “ecstatic utterances”. I find myself in strong disagreement with those who interpret the scriptures where the word "tongues" is used and refer to it in interpretation "ecstatic utterances", because the words "ecstatic utterance" carries with it the connotation of being "carried along" or being "out of control" and being "lacking in my own volitional control". And the Holy Spirit never does. "The spirits are subject". Notice the word "speaking" in I Corinthians 12:3. "therefore, I want you to understand that no one *speaking* by the Spirit of God...". That implies full control. You see the Holy Spirit's primary concern is not to produce spiritual excitement, but to produce spiritual growth, development, and to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

A). Tongues are straightforward languages with the speaker in full control of the utterance just as in any more usual prayer. I Corinthians 14:15 & 28 says "...so what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind... if there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God."

B). Normally, speaker and hearers do not understand the language. I Corinthians 14:2 and 14 says "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him: he utters mysteries with his spirit... for if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful."

C). There are notable exceptions to this and therefore there is a need, within a group, for the gift of interpretation. I Corinthians 14:13 & 27 says "For this reason the man who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says... if anyone speaks in a tongue, two or at the most 3 should speak, one at a time and someone must interpret."

D). Essentially, therefore, tongues is a private, devotional language given by the Holy Spirit. A sort of “Love Language” - an intimate form of communication between the believer and his/her Lord – when the mind is relaxed but the spirit is still praising and praying. This gift is primarily for spiritual refreshment. I Corinthians 14:4 uses “oikodorneo” which means “to build up or strengthen.” This is why the public use of tongues must have interpretation. How else can the hearers be built up if they cannot understand? The gift is not, therefore, irrational (meaning unreasonable, illogical, absurd) – it is supra-rational (transcending ordinary levels of rational communication). There are many forms of communication between persons, such as silence - "sighs too deep for words". These too, are real & they are effective. Tongues is simply another expression of our relationship of love with God through Jesus Christ given by the Holy Spirit.

E). Occasionally there may be public use of tongues not to be more than 2 or 3 at a time and always there must be an interpretation because the primary principle and purpose is always the edification of the body of Christ – His church. I Corinthians 14:5 says "... he who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified."

F). Tongues are never to be used as a demonstration of spirituality – no gift should be so used - they are given for the common good – to build up the whole body of Christ – his church.

3. Now for some observations regarding these gifts. First, the church must avoid denying the new testament gift of tongues even if you are one of those who believe that its major purpose was in the Apostolic day. You dare not try to put a strait jacket on the Holy Spirit. He will give His gifts when and where He will!!

Second, the church must avoid becoming evangelists for this gift. The gift of tongues is being hustled by many today. This is absolutely unbiblical. A number of books give "How to Speak in Tongues" tips. For instance: "Start with a simple sound and repeat it over and over and faster and faster" - sort of like priming a pump. This is not only absolutely not biblical, it is also ludicrous. Why do they not hustle other gifts that way? Imagine someone saying "If you really want the full gospel you must have my gift - I set you in a chair - lay my hands on you - praying that you get my gift (say my gift is the gift of giving) I now place an offering plate on your lap and tell you to put something in it - again - again - again - faster - faster..." How absurd!

Third, tongues are primarily a sign to unbelievers when in public. I Corinthians 14:22 say "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not..." Missiologist C. P. Wagner tells about a remote Guatemalan village suffering from a severe drought that had devastated the area - village on verge of extinction. Christians prayed, God spoke to them through tongues and interpretation, and were told to go up a specific hill which was owned by fellow believers and dig for a well there. It seemed an odd place to dig but they obeyed even in the face of ridicule by the other villagers. Ridicule changed to astonishment as the well diggers struck an abundant supply of water and the village was saved - resulting in many of the villagers coming to Christ when they saw the power of God.

Fourth, there is no biblical command to speak in tongues. It is a gift given as the Holy Spirit wills. The Bible never directs anyone to seek this particular gift. Paul never even mentions tongues in any other epistle, and here in I Corinthians he soft-pedals it and tries to correct its abuses. Considering the host of passages concerning the Holy Spirit and the minute amount referring to tongues, the over emphasis of many today seems hardly Biblical. When this gift is the rallying point of huge conferences, it seems to be majoring in what the Bible sees as minor. We must never sacrifice unity or Biblical doctrinal balance in order to emphasize or deny an experience. The authority in both cases is not to be the experience, but the word of God!

Fifth, Let me close this chapter with this statement: "Seek not; forbid not". Hear the following two major exhortations for every believer:

Paul to the Ephesians: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called - being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace..." Ephesians 4:1,3

Jesus to His disciples on the last night of His earthly ministry: "A new commandment I give you; love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." John 13:34, 35

This love is not based on a common reception of the same gift. It is based on our common relationship with, and our common love for, the same Lord and Savior - the recognition that we are born into the same forever family.

Chapter 17. The Gift of Prophecy

For we didn't follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We heard this voice come out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

We have the more sure word of prophecy; and you do well that you heed it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts, knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:16-21

Paul writes to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 12, and he says, "Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed." That has been the mandate under which we have been laboring in the previous chapters, as we have sought to understand, not only the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, but also His gifts as He has given to His church. For he says that there are "a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. And a variety of service, but the same Lord. And a variety of workings, but the same God brings it all about."

Now we are looking at the gift of prophecy. Usually when we think of the word "prophecy", we think in terms of prediction - something about foretelling. And while that does have a part of the meaning of the word, it is only a small part. Because the word translated "prophecy" comes from a Greek verb which means "to tell forth". And some of the messages that God seeks to tell forth may, indeed, pertain to the future. We see this amply described in the Old Testament in particular. But the main meaning of the word "prophecy" is to "tell forth", rather than "foretell". And to tell forth may involve some of this foretelling, but it's incidental.

People ask me, "What do you think of Jeane Dixon? Does Jeane Dixon have the gift of prophecy?" Jeane Dixon foretold the assassination of president Kennedy four years before he was even elected president. She foretold Dag Hammarskjöld's death by an airplane accident in Africa when the late United Nations secretary general had not even gone to Africa yet. She foretold Eisenhower's heart attack and subsequent recovery. But she also predicted that 1958 would see the outbreak of World War III. And that the 1960 election would see Nixon sending John Kennedy to an ignominious defeat. We need to look at scriptural teaching in order to be able to evaluate such current modern-day people who claim gifts such as prophecy.

Not everything that follows the introductory statement "thus says the Lord", is prophecy. Or from the Lord. As in all the gifts, just as certainly in prophecy, Satan is a counterfeiter. He has no qualms whatsoever about introducing his statements by saying "Thus saith the Lord," if it will accomplish his purposes. Peter Gillquist who was formerly a national representative for Campus Crusade for Christ, tells the story of being in a home where he was with a group of brothers and sisters gathered in Bible study, when one of the group said, "Brother Pete, I have a word from the Lord that is weighing so heavily upon me I have to speak out.

Pete Gilquist said, "If you have a word from the Lord, let's hear it."

And the young man, who was fairly new in the faith and a rather immature Christian, said, "I have been told by the Lord that the two prophets that are mentioned in Revelation 11 - that latter day prophets who will be slain and brought subsequently back to life by miraculous means, and then will participate in the preaching of the gospel to the end of the age - I have been told by the Lord that those two prophets are Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, who have just been assassinated. And if we will gather all the Christians in our community together and earnestly pray before sundown today, God will bring back to life Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, and they will join us in the proclamation of the gospel." Now, this was introduced by a Christian, in a group of Christians, and introduced with the phrase, "Thus says the Lord". Was that, or was that not, from the Lord? Obviously, it was not a word from the Lord. After he had been taken aside and been given a direct word of prophecy from Pete Gillquist, and others, in bringing him to correction, he came to the understanding of where he had come from. He said, "What a relief! I've been bothered by this and I have not known its source, but I'm relieved to know that this thing can be set aside."

That's why Paul writes to Timothy, the young pastor of the church at Ephesus, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." II Peter 2 says, "But false prophets also arose among the people. Just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies..." Heresy is so destructive and dangerous because it is a mixture of truth and falsehood. It's not a blatant lie - it's got enough truth in it so the uninformed and unlearned are attracted to the truth but snared by the error. That's why you need to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who rightly handles the word of God." Otherwise you'll hear just a little bit of scripture and you'll say, "Oh, if that's what the Bible says..." And you get drawn into error, because it's heresy. So Peter warns, "these will secretly introduce destructive heresies - even to the denying of the Master Who bought them, bring swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality." Have you noticed the enormous emphasis upon feeling in the body of Christ today? That is nothing less than an emphasis upon the sensual aspects of men. I feel. I have enormous feelings. Some of them positive, some of them negative. But they're feelings and they are strong. I like to have feelings. I enjoy my feelings. But I will not be controlled in my faith by my feelings. That is to be led away, following our own sensuality. "And because of them", the scripture reports, "the way of the truth will be maligned." How many times have you had people who are non-Christians, comment in a way that maligns the body of Christ on the basis of the sensual behavior of many who call themselves Christians and, indeed, are brothers and sisters in Christ?

So many people say, "Oh wow, they are just carried away - such a hyper-emotional outfit". The fact of the matter is that frequently this is the result of being carried away and following their own sensuality. That is not what prophecy means. Therefore, it's mandatory that we define it and understand it. What is it? Ray Stedman claims that the gift of prophecy is the greatest of all the gifts of the Spirit, and I can't really argue with him because he cites, for a part of the data, that the apostle Paul spends more time on the gift of prophecy than he does any other - in fact, the whole 14th chapter of I Corinthians is given to the study and presentation of prophecy. The reason for its great importance is not because Paul wants to give us a peak into the future, like we sometimes think that prophecy exclusively means. But the Bible tells us the reason for its great importance is that the exercise of the gift of prophecy builds up, stimulates, and encourages the body of Christ. Remember, we are told by scripture that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to build the body of Christ, and if prophecy does that then there is no wonder that it is emphasized as being valuable. That's why in I Corinthians 14, Paul says, "He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort."

But Paul spends more time in Corinth speaking about two of the gifts than he does any of the rest. And those two gifts are: Tongues and Prophecy.

Now remember why. The apostle Paul always, in his writing to the epistles, not only writes to encourage and edify and build, but also to correct. And in the church at Corinth, there were two of the gifts that were being particularly abused. Tongues was being terribly abused and so Paul, being a problem-centered person, writes correcting them in their treatment of the gift of Tongues. And prophecy was being neglected. So he writes to them saying that they should stir up the desire and seek after that gift. He says in chapter 14) "Pursue love yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts but especially that you may prophesy." And "One who prophesies, edifies the church." And "Greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in Tongues." And, "Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church." And, "Prophecy is for a sign to those who believe." And finally, "desire earnestly to prophesy."

The word "prophecy" comes from the Greek verb propheme, which means "to speak forth" or "to shine forth" or "to emit in a gripping manner." If you understand the word propheme, then you see it in the context of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as "to make known", "to shine forth", "to speak forth in a gripping manner." Prophecy in this context always has to do with understanding and correctly communicating the word of God to others in a gripping manner. So here's a definition: the gift of prophecy is the Holy Spirit-given ability to proclaim the word of God with clarity and to apply it to a particular situation, with a view to correction or edification, and thus building up the body of Christ.

Now, what does the Bible teach, concerning this gift? There are four things I'd like to highlight that the Bible teaches. The first is: the prophet is a person who speaks for God. A spokesperson. Moses is a good illustration. Moses stands before the burning bush, curious as to why this bush is burning without being consumed, and the voice of God comes to him from the bush and says, "Moses take off your shoes. The place you're standing on is holy ground. By the way, I have a job for you. I want you to go and talk to Pharaoh." Forty years before, Moses had fled from the presence of Pharaoh. He knew Pharaoh. He'd grown up in the guy's house and he was scared to death, because he was on the lam. He was running away - he was a fugitive from justice.

And what was the excuse Moses gave God? "I...I...I can't talk."

God said two things: "I'll provide Aaron for you in case you're tongue-struck, but remember Who made your tongue in the first place." So He calls Moses - an inarticulate felon, working as a shepherd, when he'd been trained as a statesman, and working for his father-in-law on the back side of the desert. What an unlikely candidate for God to call as a prophet. But he was.

In the old testament, it seems that the emphasis of prophecy is on predicting (or foretelling). But always, it is predicated or conditioned on the response. Illustration: how many times do you read in the old testament prophets where one of the prophets says, "Thus saith the Lord, unless you repent... something will take place..."? Their response would condition the fulfillment of the prophecy. So, while frequently in the old testament, the prophecy seemed to be a foretelling, or predictive thing, it was always to be conditioned upon the immediate response of the people. It was a word from God proclaimed and interpreted for other people. In the New Testament, God's revelation was given directly to men like the apostles. When these revelations were given, the interpretations and explanations of already written scriptures.

Illustration: on the day of Pentecost, when the signs and gifts of the Holy Spirit were so manifest that a

huge crowd came running around to see what was going on, Peter stood up in the midst and he spoke as a prophet. He received the gift of Prophecy along with the other gifts he received on that day, and he exercised his gift of Prophecy by doing what? Preaching to them from the prophet Joel and from the Psalms. He used, not a new word from God, but a fresh understanding of the word previously given, and used that to apply it to the particular situation of the time, which was: "Jesus, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, is indeed the Promised One." That's the exercise of the gift of prophecy. It did not have any "thus saith the Lord" surrounded by spooky mood music. It was simply an exposition of that which God had clearly given in His written and revealed word. But it was done by the power of the Holy Spirit. And you can see the fruit of it - 3,000 converts. What a sermon!

Second point. Not only does the prophet speak for God, but the second thing is: if the prophecy is a predictive prophecy - that is, a foretelling - it must be 100% accurate. That is why I say without any fear of contradiction, on a Biblical basis, that Jeane Dixon is not a person with the gift of prophecy from the Holy Spirit. There is no question in my mind. She fails every Biblical test. You draw your own conclusions as to where her gifts come from. Deuteronomy 18 says, "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord hasn't spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is a thing which the Lord has not spoken and the prophet has spoken presumptuously." So John warns his readers in I John 4, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they be from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

The third thing about prophets: the main ministry of the prophet is to proclaim God's revelation in such a way that it is applied to the life situation. Here, again, I simply refer you to Peter in Acts 2. He proclaimed the word of God and applied it to the specific situation of the people who had gathered around, and that brought them to a commitment of Jesus to be the Messiah.

Some people may be shook up by this, but the fourth point is the Bible demonstrates that prophecy is not limited to men. It is slanderous the way some people use the word of God. And they either proclaim it to be a sexist book or they use it like a sexist book. I can find absolutely no distinctions made in the word of God when a person comes to know Jesus Christ, he is neither Scythian, Barbarian, Greek, free, slave man, man, or woman. Those distinctions have passed away. So you find that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all. Peter in Acts 2 quotes the prophet Joel and says, "What you are seeing is that which was prophesied of old by the prophet Joel, who said (among other things), 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.'" Luke 2 reports that beautiful story of Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the temple - probably for the bris ceremony. And when they brought the infant Jesus to the temple, old Simeon found them. The Spirit of God witnessed to him that this was, indeed, the Promised One. And then you remember old Simeon's prayer, "Oh Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." But there's another character that's told about in Luke 2, and that's an old lady by the name of Anna. Anna's whole purpose is to look for the salvation of Israel, and when she sees this infant Jesus, and hears Simeon's testimony, she then told all them that looked for the redemption in Jerusalem. And she is called "Anna the prophetess". Acts 21 tells about Philip the evangelist and describes the fact that he had four unmarried daughters who were all prophets. And Paul, in I Corinthians 11, goes out of his way to give specific guidance to women who have the gift of Prophecy as to how they should exercise that gift in the church. Now, if women don't have those gifts, what in the world's all that scripture about?

I could say some more along this whole line, but some are thinking, what does the Bible mean when it says, "Women, keep silent in the church"? If that's really what the word of God meant, in terms of "Women, shut up when you come inside the door of a church" then the Kingdom of God would not

have been blessed with the fact that the mission program of the church has 85% been carried on the shoulders of women throughout the centuries. And the Christian education program of the church - Sunday school classes - are carried on the hearts and shoulders of women as well. God wouldn't have blessed it if that was against His will. When it says, "Women, keep silent in the church" what it means is "You women who sit on this side of the church and your husband's on that side of the church," as was the custom in those days, "stop disrupting service by saying 'What did he mean?' to your husband across the aisle." Study the Bible. I just can't stand by any longer and see God's women shut up and bottled up, as though they're second class citizens. Paul, writing to the church in Rome said, "hey listen. Now I'm sending to you Phoebe. And Phoebe was useful to me in the ministry, and she is a prophet. And she is a deacon. Give her everything she needs for her ministry." One can play games and say that she taught Sunday School for those 15 and younger, but there's no evidence for that in scripture. When the Bible talks about the gifts of the Spirit and doesn't make these narrow, silly distinctions that we make.

Let me give some instruction with regard to the exercise of the gift today. Is the gift of prophecy for today? You'd better believe that it is. If our definition is correct by the Biblical evidence, which I believe it is, it means then that it is mandatory that the word of God come and is freshly communicated in a gripping and compelling way to our world. So, who has the gift of prophecy today? Some preachers. Every so often, believe it or not, this preacher is given the gift of prophecy. Somebody will come up to me and say, "Oh Pastor, last week that message you preached just met me at exactly where I needed to be. And this is what happened..."

I'll say, "What was it about the message...?" And they'll tell me what they heard and I don't remember saying that at all. In fact, I didn't intend to, if I did. But God, by His Spirit, has this wonderful ability to overpower our inadequacies as well as to use our abilities. But not all preaching is prophecy, because not always is the body of Christ edified or built up or corrected or disciplined. Sometimes it's not the word of God. It is the same way with writing, music, personal one-on-one encounters, or group sharing.

Now there are some cautions concerning the gift of Prophecy today. Remember that the prophet gets his message from God and he proclaims it to others. That message was from the written word of God frequently, as it was in the case of Peter on the day of Pentecost. But at other times, it's a new revelation that comes from God, and this new revelation was eventually recorded. Every time we read our new testament we benefit from that fact. The New Testament was a new revelation from God. How many times did Paul write, "And thus I say in the name of the Lord"? Or, "The Lord gives me this word to tell you?" And the body of Christ is built up. Now, does God give new revelation today? Yes, He does. But that new revelation must **always**, 100% of the time, be in absolute keeping with the written revelation. If it is not in consistency with what we find in the pages of Holy Writ, it is not from God. Someone said to me, not too long ago, "Well, I know what the Bible says about that, but the Lord has told me..."

I said, "Wait a minute! He did not!" Because He's already told you. He changes not. Don't tell me there's some new revelation that countermands this. There is no evidence of that.

That's why the scripture says, "We have a more sure word of Prophecy." The word of God is our all-sufficient guide, and anyone that claims a prophecy that is not consistent with the scripture is a false prophet. Leslie Flynn says, "Until the completion of the New Testament during the apostolic age, prophets gave necessary spiritual and special revelation and reliable guidance. Since the completion of the Bible, in which Divine revelation is once for all written, the gift of prophecy is now primarily

identified with proclamation based upon that word." The apostle Peter, in the passage of scripture from II Peter 1, referred to some spectacular experiences. He said, "We were there when Jesus was baptized and a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.'" Wow! What an experience. "We were also there on the blessed mount" (that's the mount of transfiguration - only the inside guys got to go: Peter, James, and John). He said, "We were there when we say this Jesus transfigured." Now, if Peter had been given to following his sensual nature, Peter would have been impressed with that experience and said, "Hey if you really want to know what it means to follow God, you've got to have one of those experiences on the mountain where you hear voices." But Peter goes on to say, "We had these experiences. They're marvelous experiences. They're 'wow' kind of visions. But we have also a more sure word." More sure than experiences. More reliable than emotion. More provable. "We have a more sure word of Prophecy, where unto you do well that you take heed, as to a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawns and the daystar rise in your hearts, knowing this first: that no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." That's why I say, without fear of contradiction, that anyone who claims a word from God that is inconsistent with the clear understanding of the scriptures is a false prophet. I don't care how many books he's written, and I don't care how spellbinding a preacher he is. God is not adding to His inspired word today. However, the need to interpret and proclaim the truth of that inspired word is tremendous. That's the sphere of the gift of prophecy. It is the articulating, in a compelling manner, of what God has said. And if we have it revealed, as we certainly do, then the gift of prophecy is to proclaim this - and I don't mean just preachers. The study of the scripture is demanded.

Now, I have to touch on a word of caution. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are frequently given, in large measure to the young in Christ, as one of the means the Holy Spirit uses to give assurance. He also equips them for the work of the ministry to which, they too, have been called by the gifts. But the danger that I frequently see in American church society today is that they take the easy way out. The gift of prophecy is abused and misused every day because the study of scripture demands scholarship and study and discipline and time and it's hard. It's a lot easier to say "God give me a word" than it is to study and know what word He has given. So there's an abuse of the gift of prophecy today by many who would pull back from serious study and preaching of the Bible, and simply run around thrilled by meetings where "thus saith the Lord" is continually given, because it's easier to take it in through the ears than it is to take it in through the mind and the heart. At the same time, some of these people are grossly ignorant of the word of God. So they can't tell, on Biblical grounds, whether the "thus saith the Lord" they're hearing is really from God or not. They have no frame of reference. Anything that dilutes, or sets aside, the supreme authority of scripture must be resisted as of Satan.

How do you know when the gift of prophecy is being exercised? First, it is absolutely consistent with the word of God. Second, if it is predictive, it is absolutely 100% accurate. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit bears witness within your own spirit. There is a "mutual vibration" to the same sound. You know that this is of God. There's a witness within your spirit. But notice: that's third, that's not first or second. First is the word of God. Second is the accuracy. Third is the witness within your own spirit. Fourth, is the body of Christ edified? Is it built up? Is the body encouraged or comforted or challenged or disciplined? And fifth, do the saints (that's you and me) become more mature and better equipped? We judge the gifts by the fruit it produces, not by the noise it makes. Remember the demonstration of the reality of a gift is the reality of the fruit it produces when it's exercised.

There are so many Christians today, and I say this with sadness, that are weak and malnourished because they are seeking to consist on a diet of spiritual junk food. Instead of giving themselves to scholarship of the word of God, or any of the real scholarly writings concerning the word of God, they

are reading froth and pap. It may be religious sounding and glossily covered, but it is nothing more than religious pabulum. They'll never have the strength to stand in the days that are coming upon us, if that's all the nourishment that they have. Their intake, spiritually speaking, is too deficient in edification to ever sustain them in any decent measure of spiritual health. It is so much easier to run to meetings and just be blessed and made warm and fuzzy than it is to give myself to scholarship. I would much rather take Thursdays and just diddle around than I would take Thursdays and spend that day in disciplined study of the word of God. But if I don't, I become as weak as anyone who doesn't. I don't have an inside track with God. So it's mandatory that we give ourselves to the study of His word, that we be able to know it so that when we hear a "thus saith the Lord", we have a framework that can allow us to discern and we can be mightily used of God to share that word in a compelling and communicative way to our world.

Now, do people today have the gift of prophecy? Oh yes. And I'm not just talking about preachers. I know a lot of preachers that don't have the gift of prophecy, and I know a lot of times I just have the gift of speech, not the gift of prophecy. I pray earnestly desire to prophesy, to see the body of Christ built up through the clear and effective and stirring and gripping word from God. But the Plymouth Brethren, bless their hearts, have got the idea right. In the American church, the emphasis is always on the hired gun. But the Plymouth Brethren church know that it's a shared ministry. The word of God does not just come to one designated representative of the congregation. The word of God can come to any member of the body of Christ. And it does.

Donald Grey Barnhouse says, speaking in his commentary of the book of Romans. "I do not agree with commentators who apply some of these tests only to the giants of church history." God does not mean primarily Paul and Augustine and Luther and Calvin and Wesley and so on. God is here talking about the little preacher up the north fork of Peak Creek. He's talking about those that we call "laymen" although they form the vast majority of the body of Christ. This test really speaks to you and me.

Finally, it's necessary to remember that the exercise of the gift of Prophecy is not necessarily some sort of formal presentation or discourse. It doesn't always have to say, "Thus saith the Lord" with the sound of violins or heavenly singing in the background. Sometimes "thus saith the Lord" communication is brother and sister, husband and wife, child and parent, parent and child, co-laborers, or fellow workers, together just simply sharing their heart - what God is doing and what God is giving in guidance to other people. That is the gift of prophecy - any time the word of God is declared in an affirming and a gripping and a up-building way. Some may say I'm compromising what the Bible means by "prophecy". No I'm not. Alexander Hayes says, "There are many varieties of the gift of prophecy. The variety possessed by one may be the telling forth of God word to adults. That of another may be for witness to children or in the open air." To some people, He calls with the gift of prophecy to speak to unbelievers, or to believers, or to a small company of two or three, or just one. All are exercising the same gift: telling forth the word from God. That is prophecy.

I end with this last word: earnestly desire to prophesy. That's what His word says. That's how we're instructed to be. Let's stop sharing our mutual ignorance. Let's stop pooling our mutual opinions. Let's desire to speak His word with clarity and gripping power to a world that doesn't care about your opinion, but needs to hear His word.

Go into the world then, as men and women called by God to share His word, seeking and rejoicing in His gift of prophecy, and declaring His truth because you know His truth and are demonstrations of it.

Chapter 18. The Gift of Leadership

Romans 12 is the text. Beginning with verse 6: "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy, in proportion to our faith. If service, in our serving. He who teaches, in his teaching. He who exhorts, in his exhortation. He who contributes, in liberality. He who give aid, with zeal. He who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

A number of years ago, there was a television series called "The Family Affair", which was one of my favorite TV shows. I loved children and the stars on "The Family Affair" were the cutest little boy and the most darling little girl you've ever seen in your life, called Jody and Buffy. Jody and Buffy lived with a single adult by the name of uncle Bill. Uncle Bill liked to have dates once in a while, as single adults tend to do, and it always created some kind of confusion and power struggles and jealousy in the home. But on one particular episode, uncle Bill had the date and his babysitter was a little bit late getting there. Uncle Bill was afraid he was going to miss the chance to be on time and really impress this delightful lady he had a date with. So Jody and Buffy prevailed upon him that it was alright for him to go because the sitter would be there shortly and they'd be fine until she did. Well, as you can guess, uncle Bill went on his date and the sitter never showed up. So then you had the interesting situation of a small boy and a small girl trying to decide who's in charge. Since Jody was just a few months older than his sister, he asserted his masculine chauvinism and said, "I am in charge." Then followed their preparation of an evening meal which was a disaster on wheels. And then the chaos in the apartment as they tried to decide what they were going to do the rest of the evening, and finally it was time for bed. When it came time for bed, after he had had Buffy brush her teeth, brush her hair, and get ready for bed, he went into her room and tucked her in and kissed her goodnight like uncle Bill must have, then walked to the door and turned out the light.

As he was closing the door behind, Buffy's little voice came out of the darkness and said, "But Jody, who's going to tuck you in?"

Jody turned around and straightened up and with a voice that he purposely dropped as low as he could, he said, "Nobody. I'm in charge, remember?"

Then Buffy's voice came back to him out of the dark, "I guess that's the trouble with people in charge - they have nobody to tuck them in."

This chapter's gift is about those who have nobody to tuck them in. It's the gift that the Bible calls the gift of Leadership, or the gift of Administration. It's a gift that can be easily misunderstood and which we can be thrown off track on, because some of the translations are not very close to what I think the scripture is saying. The Revised Standard Version, for instance, says, "He who gives aid, with zeal." That doesn't quite give it. The Phillips translation is closer. It says, "Let the man who wields authority, think on his responsibility". And the New English Bible seems to be right on when it says, "If you are a leader, exert yourself to lead."

So, let's look at a definition of the gift of Leadership. There are really two Greek terms that are used. One of them is found in I Corinthians 12 in the listing of gifts. It's way down at the end of the chapter and it's kind of looped together in that series of rhetorical questions that Paul asks at the end. In verse 28, he refers to administration. The word there is *kubernesis*, which really can be translated "helmsman" - one who steers the ship, who gets the ship to the destination; the person in charge. The

word that is translated in Romans 12:8 as "aid" in Revised Standard Version is really "prohistanai", which means "one who stands in front". Now, if one stands in front, there is the inherent sense of leadership. So let me define the gift of leadership thus: It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit-given ability to preside, govern, plan, organize, and administer with wisdom, fairness, example, humility, service, confidence, ease, and effectiveness. The gift of Leadership is Spirit-given. Remember we are talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit - not about natural native abilities and training and all the rest. I want you to get all of the nuances that are involved in this. The gift is to preside, govern, plan, organize and administer with wisdom, fairness, example, humility, service, confidence, ease, and effectiveness. That's what's involved in this wonderful gift, and we must understand that this gift of the Holy Spirit is given to many members of the body of Christ in areas of church life apart from official office.

I can remember in a church that I served, a man who served for several years on the official church board. He had the gift of Leadership, and everyone recognized that. So we were always a little bit upset when a constitutional provision meant that he could no longer succeed himself in office. But this man, since he had the gift of Leadership, did not see it as something to be grasped. He did not go after the position of leadership, so when he would pass out of office, all he lost was the position. He still exercised, with effective joy, his gift of leadership. He was, in fact, one of the basic leaders in the congregation. Most churches have an administrative structure for efficiency. The scripture says, "Let everything be done decently and in order." In an attempt to fulfill that with efficiency we have a church structure - an organizational policy. Even a centipede organizes its activity or he'd fall in the ditch. So churches have organization and there's nothing wrong with that. But we need to recognize that there are members of the body of Christ who exercise the gift of leadership apart from any official office whatsoever. That's consistent with scripture, because to strive for a leadership position can create division and contention, and is a direct disobedience to the command of scripture that says, "Let us be eager to maintain the spirit of unity and the bonds of peace."

We have been treated (if "treated" can be the right word) to the spectacle of the Republican and the Democratic national conventions. If any of you found yourself watching those, you were struck with the kind of machinations of power and the manipulations and the maneuvering that takes place. Much of it heightened and blown clear out of shape, and some of it just fabricated by our news broadcasting system. Such as the "dream ticket" that was a sure thing: Reagan and Ford. But it was fascinating to watch this thing take place as they jockey for position and power, so that at the end of the Democratic convention, for instance, the big question filling our newspapers the day that the convention was to convene again that night: "Will Kennedy appear?" "Will Kennedy take hold of Carter's hand?" "Will Kennedy smile when he does it?" Now what significance is it? It's very significant, politically. Because in the maneuverings and the machinations for power and for position, that always finds itself expressed in, and reads off of, all kinds of things. So you find people voting on the basis of their response to what they see taking place. Since we live in that kind of a crazy world, for the church to understand that is not the model of leadership in the body of Christ, is difficult. We keep forgetting that. I'm a very political animal. I really like to get into it. But in the body of Christ, that's not right. To strive for a leadership position will create division and contention. Leadership in the body of Christ, on that basis, usually results in an ecclesiastical demonstration of the Peter Principle. You know the Peter Principle - man rises to the level of his own incompetence. And we see that happening. Not only on local congregational levels, but on national denominational levels. People keep maneuvering and getting promoted and promoted until they are finally so incompetent at that level, they don't stand a chance to go on any farther and there they're stuck. With incompetence.

Leadership is not to be defined as "greatness" in the world's sense. Leadership in the body of Christ, as

a gift of the Holy Spirit, is really the effective ability to serve. If you look at some of the Biblical illustrations and teaching concerning leadership and examples, you will find that one of the most fascinating illustrations of it is found in Exodus 18. It describes Moses taking this rag-tag bunch of ex-slaves – almost two million refugees (if you will, boat people in the middle of the desert) out of Egypt. They have a slave mentality because for generations they have been slaves. It has been built into them. You talk about a welfare mentality - these people had a slave mentality that was bred into them on purpose by the Egyptians. Moses had the job of leading these people, and you can guess what happened. He gets out there in the wilderness and he starts putting in longer hours. His wife, Zipporah, never saw him any more. He left before breakfast, he got home after manna. He was gone all day long, five or six or seven days a week. He kept leaving earlier and coming home later. Does that sound familiar? Jethro, who was the first management consultant of history, was his father in law. Jethro saw his poor daughter, Zipporah, getting the short end of the stick with this busy executive, so he comes forward and says, "Moses, don't work harder - work smarter." He proceeds to lay out a management plan that is so contemporary that I can show you books in my library that have been copyrighted within the last four years that have the same principles of management in them that you find in Exodus 18. Don't tell me the Bible isn't relevant and authoritative. You find such things as "span of control", "definition of roles", "decentralization", "delegation", and "leadership development". This whole proposal to reorganize the church in the wilderness, if you will, resulted in Moses exercising his leadership with more effectiveness. I'd like to make a little bit of a distinction. Although in the same category I put leadership and administration, administration is a little bit more finely tuned aspect of leadership.

Now in the New Testament, you see that there was a continual misconception of leadership among the disciples. They were so zealous for glory and position, when Jesus talked about His coming Kingdom, that they'd get goosebumps. They'd think about crowns and power and robes and white horses and all that. Finally James and John come up to Him and they say, "Now, you know Lord, we want to be first to put in our request. Jimmy and I would like one seat on this hand and one seat on the other hand when You come into Your Kingdom." Jesus knew that what they were jockeying for was position. They weren't looking for a leadership.

So He says, "Can you drink of the cup that I'm going to be drinking of? Can you be baptized with the baptism I'm going to be baptized?"

They said, "Oh sure!" But they didn't understand, and you can tell they didn't understand by Christ's response.

He says, "You indeed will" and then He calls all of His disciples together, because the rest of them, obviously (so would you) say, "...they're trying to get in on the inside track!" I'm sure Peter was really upset because he had the inside track up until that. So Jesus called all of them together. "Come here guys." He gets them all and He says, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. And their great men exercise authority." That's the way the Greek reads, it's "Authority" - you've met people like that. Pomposity all over the place. Jesus continued, "That's the way they are. But it shall not be that way among you. Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be *slave* of all."

We must not make the same mistake that James and John and the other fellows did of equating leadership with greatness. Leadership in the Kingdom of God means the opportunity to be a slave for Jesus' sake. In 3 John, John describes a man in the congregation by the name of Diotrephes, "who loves to put himself up in front, and who arrogantly asserts his authority over the church." This is what

John says, "I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge my authority. So, if I come, I'll bring up what he's doing - prating against me with evil words. And not content with that, he refuses himself to welcome the brethren and also stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church." Now, there's a person who had position and power, but it is antithetical to the whole concept of leadership according to the scriptures that Jesus wants His followers to take, that He Himself took, and that is taught in the gift of the Holy Spirit of giving aid with zeal - or exercising leadership. Of course, the perfect example is Jesus Christ, our model. For in Mark 10:45, it says, "Even the Son of man comes not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." How did Christ bring us redemption? He did not bring us redemption by coming sweeping in with a crowd of angels to drive out the Romans and to set the Jews free. He came, taking upon Himself, the form of a servant and even died the death of an unworthy slave - a criminal on a cross. That by that death on the cross He might purchase eternal life for us. That's the model of leadership we are to follow - none of this power politics within the body of Christ. In Philippians 2, He is described as "not thinking equality with God" (which He had) "something to be grasped and hung on to, but He emptied Himself and He became obedient."

In John 13, the night He was betrayed, He had been with these disciples three and half years and He comes into the upper room and there He finds the whole bunch of them in an argument. And the argument? Over who is number one. Instead of preaching and hollering at them, as I certainly would have (I would have really let them have it), Jesus - without saying anything - walks over and gets a wash basin and a towel and He washes their feet. That archaic custom was a very necessary thing in the Jewish home. They came in from walking the dusty streets. The slave that was the newest or the youngest in the Jewish household got that job - it was the one that was most demeaning, to wash the feet of everybody. And the Master - the One Who was going to be the King of kings and Lord of lords in the Kingdom that these guys are jockeying for position in - comes down from that position they were trying to project Him into and with a wash basin and towel, He washes His disciple's feet. He gets to Peter and Peter says, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, Lord, not me."

Jesus said, "If you don't let me wash your feet, you can't have any of Me."

Peter retorting in that typical overcompensation of his, says, "Then You'd better give me a whole sponge bath."

That's the model. After He had washed their feet, He sits down and He says, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. Neither he that is sent greater than he who sent him."

Then, of course, even the names that the New Testament uses to describe church offices - church officials - deacons, elders, overseers, presbyters - are all terms that in their original contexts mean "service", not "position".

I want to remind you, we're talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are not concerning ourselves with an office that may arise out of that gift. We're talking about the gift itself, and I want to point out six things.

First of all, we must not equate the gift of Leadership with a position. It is not true that if a person is elected, they automatically are given, by the Holy Spirit, the gift of Leadership. Nor is it true that it is mandatory that we have the gift of Leadership before we exercise any leading, because we have a role to fill as Christians. There are positions where there seems to be a vacuum of leadership and we know

what needs to be done and we need to step in and take it, whether we recognize we have the role of leadership or not. Just as certainly as we may not have the gift of evangelism, but we have all been called to bear witness. We may not have been called and given the gift of the word of Wisdom, but we are all called upon to be wise as serpents (and harmless as doves). So, just as certainly as we may not have the gift of Leadership, we still have a role to fulfill. If we remember that leadership in the Kingdom of God is serving, we can all serve.

I just wrote a letter about two or three weeks ago, to a member of my congregation who had just lay down a responsibility that this person has carried for quite some time, and it's one of those responsibilities that nobody knows anybody's doing, until somebody stops doing it. I wrote this dear person a letter and tried to express my gratitude for the exercise of the gift of Leadership, among other gifts this person had exercised on behalf of the body of Christ - with a true understanding of what leadership means, because it was a gift of service that was almost hidden. There was no upfrontmanship, in the sense of position; but leadership, out front in a position of service and ministry. Just because someone has a position is also no guarantee that they have the gift, and an effective operation of the body of Christ means a need to work with gifts. That's one reason why we are talking in our congregation about a complete administrative restructuring of our structure in order to be much more immediately responsive to gifts.

The second thing - we must not equate the gift of leadership with position. Neither must we equate the gift of Leadership with personality. When you look for a leader in an organization, what's the first thing you do? You look for some "go-getter"; some extrovert; some good talker; some "hotdog". You want somebody who can really do the job, who can punch us over the top. But that's not the concept of leadership in the gift of Leadership. Moses meets God at the burning bush; God's got one of the biggest leadership jobs that ever happened in all history ahead for Moses. He wasn't looking for a good talker, because when He said, "Moses!", Moses said, "Wh...wh...wh...what?" It wasn't fair! He said, "I stammer. I can't even speak."

God says, "I want you to go and be My spokesman to Pharaoh."

Moses said, "You...You...You...You got the wrong guy." So God provides Aaron. He wasn't looking for a glib speaker. He was looking for a leader that He had gifted. It's interesting. Aaron did most of the talking to the children of Israel, but the children of Israel - when they complained - knew where the leadership was - they hollared against Moses. Extroverts and good talkers can blow and generate heat and wind, but a lot of people won't follow. And that's what a leader is for, basically to be followed. Our congregation's coordinator of Christian education once in a while wears a T-shirt to the office: "See those people up ahead? I am their leader." Well, that's funny and sometimes that's distressingly close to the truth in my life, but that's not what a leader's supposed to be.

We don't equate the gift of leadership with personality in scripture. Timothy was given the gift of leadership, but Timothy apparently was so shy, and his stomach was in knots enough that Paul says, "Just take a little wine for your stomach's sake." In fact, Paul had to keep kind of reminding Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God that's in you. And remember, Tim, God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity, but of love and of power and sound mind." Timothy may not have been an extrovert and he may have been a bit timid, but when Paul sent him to the Philippian church, he says why. In Philippians 2 he says, "For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare and you know of his proven worth." When the Thessalonians needed someone to build them up spiritually, who does Paul send? Shy introverted Timothy. So he sent "Timothy, our brother, God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith."

Don't say, "I don't have the right personality." That's irrelevant. Don't say, "I don't have the right position." That's also irrelevant.

Thirdly, the person with the gift of leadership is neither manipulative nor coercive. The person with the gift of Leadership doesn't have to be dogmatic and demagogic or dictatorial. That leader will, instead, just generate confidence among those people he serves so they want to follow. I have a pastor friend that used to go to every board meeting with his resignation typed up and in his inside pocket. When things would get tight and coming down to the wire for a decision, and it looked like it was going against him, without saying anything, he would just simply lay it on the table. Everybody there knew that was the guy's resignation, and they voted with him. Now that is not the gift of leadership. That is not even nice. That is manipulative and coercive. I was down in that part of California for a series of meetings, and I met together with a group of people - many of whom happen to be on this man's board (and he's a friend of mine, remember) - and one of the pastors on the staff said, "Bud, do you ever do that to your board?"

I said, "Boy they'd pick it up. I'm not going to!"

He said, "Well, what should we do? How should we deal with this?"

I said, "What you should do is you should pray that the Holy Spirit will either prompt your pastor to knock off that style of leadership - which is dishonoring to Christ - or pray that one of you has enough courage to pick it up."

I hope it wasn't in direct response to that, but three months later, the chairman of the church picked up the letter and read it to the board. And the pastor went through such a grief and shock reaction that you know he didn't intend for anyone ever to do it. He was using it as a string to pull. That's not the gift of leadership. Thank God he still has an effective ministry in another church and he's no longer laying his resignation on the table. Because a person with a gift of leadership will just generate the confidence that people just feel that this person knows where we're going and where the next step is. In fact, the person with the gift of Leadership leads so naturally that it seems to be unconscious, although it isn't. He doesn't seek leadership, but he doesn't shrink from it. He's eager to serve - not to be the boss, but to serve. And people follow.

Fourth, when the person has the gift of Leadership, his leadership is followed. He or she has the ability to make plans and guide projects and ministries, and the ability to see future needs and opportunities, and conceive ways to meet them. And they are effective.

Fifth, the gift of Leadership finds its effective use in areas where one so gifted has interest and experience - or is willing to gain them. In other words, this gift (as well as the other gifts) can - and ought to - be exercised and developed. We are usually effective with people we know and understand. Have you ever seen somebody who is terrifically effective with college students? They understood the college student's mind. They understood the college student's language. They understood the college student's emotions, anxieties, successes, failures, fears, and all the rest. They had an effective ministry with college students. College students just gravitated to them and followed their leadership. Now, you take that same person and put him in a room full of junior highs. All of sudden, you see this person become tongue-tied, self-conscious, and archaic. All at once. I know what I'm talking about. I got my degree in secondary education and then the school board in Chicago, Illinois, in its infinite wisdom, put me in third grade. And I almost lost my sanity and my life. (I hope you college teachers

will forgive me, but I think our very best - our very most gifted - our very most committed to Christ teachers in the world - ought to be in Kindergarten and first through sixth grades. Cause when they're in high school and college, they know it all anyway.) Now, if you take this college leader and put him with junior highs and he feels this out of focus, does that mean he doesn't have the "gift of junior highs"? Hardly. If that same person were to take the time to learn about the junior high mind - to listen to the kids - to talk to the kids - to play with the kids - to get acquainted with the kids - he would soon discover that he is just as effective in leading them as he is with anybody else. It's just that his exercise of the gift - that's not the problem. It's the lack of experience and exposure and interest in making yourselves available.

I understand that some of us, by nature, just feel more comfortable with other age groupings, but the gift of leadership needs to be developed. Dr. John Alexander in his book, "Managing Our Work", says, "Management ability is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is also a science. There is a body of knowledge and principles acquired through the experience of our predecessors to be learned. Further, management is an art. There are specific aptitudes and skills to be developed through sustained practice." I have some books on management in my library that were given to me by members of this congregation who know I need some books on management. I thank God for that. I am seeking to develop and train and equip my gift of leadership with the fine-tuning of administrative abilities. Not because I love to push paper - I'd rather be with people - but because God is leading me in that particular direction. By the way, that's a good way to discover if you have this gift. Read about it. Study it. Seek to develop it. Seek to practice it. If your desire and ability grows along with the increased responsibility and training, you probably have that gift.

Sixth. And this is the most important of all. The Biblical qualifications for the exercise of the gift of Leadership are primarily the fruitfulness of the life of the person with the gift. It is chiefly to do with exemplariness of life - not with position. And that's why the scriptures make very plain that those who are going to be in leadership positions in the Kingdom of God are to have an above reproach marriage. They are to have sound family rearing. They are to be blameless, and sober-minded, with a controlled temper, self-disciplined, not addicted to wine, not covetous, not quarrelsome, just and honest, and not lovers of money. Now those are qualifications (qualities) that all believers should exhibit. But they are *required* for leaders in the body of Christ. Look at I Timothy 3 or Titus 1. Some of you may say, "Oh my goodness, then what are we going to do for leaders?" Maybe God's saying to you, "Alright, bring your family life in line, mister, and you can be My leader, and that's what I have in mind." Maybe God is saying to you, "Listen, you are entirely too much a lover of money and you know it. You are more concerned about that car in your garage, or about that boat at your dock, or about that leak in your roof, than you are about some neighbor of yours coming to know Jesus Christ. And you know it. You get that in line, brother, and then I give you that gift of Leadership." Now, that's probably what God has in mind.

It is not to exclude - it is to encourage us to qualify by bearing fruit of the Spirit. I have said for this whole book that the Biblical teaching on the gifts of the Spirit is always within the context that the validating principle are the fruits. The same thing is true here. Such qualities from I Timothy 3 for leadership within the church - for men or women, leadership in the church - those are the requirements. Such qualities don't happen in the first three weeks of commitment to Christ. That's why the scripture says that the leader should not be a novice. In fact, it goes on to say, "he must not be a recent convert or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil." Leadership in the body of Christ is by example. It's by fruit. Not by acting autocratically, but by being an example to the flock.

As I have been preparing this message the Lord's been dealing with me in this. I have become acutely aware of the fact that the message that the Holy Spirit has for me is: "Bud, if you want to be the leader I want you to be, you have got to be able to say - like my servant Paul - 'Listen, brothers and sisters, with all my failings I still challenge you to follow the exemplary nature of my own life!.' I can't yet, but I want to, with all my heart. You have a right to expect that of me. So do I, of you. You see, leadership in the body of Christ is expressed not by power politics, but by humility and example - in a word, by servant-hood.

The famous jurist, Oliver Wendell Holmes (a very portly gentleman) was on a train one time. He always wore three piece suits with long coats, and he had more pockets in his suits and coats than I do. The conductor came down the isle to punch the ticket. So Holmes started to go through his pockets, and he couldn't find the ticket. He emptied his pockets and his wallet and everything else, and finally the conductor - who was busy and wanted to get on with his business - said, "Mr. Holmes, I know who you are, and certainly you're a man of integrity and we can trust you. If you don't find the ticket before you get to your destination and you get off the train, just mail the ticket to the railroad. That's fine. We can trust you, of all people."

And Oliver Wendell Holmes turned and looked him square in the eye and with fire jumping out of his eyes, said, "Young man, I don't care a piffle over whether the railroad ever gets my ticket. But I've got to find my ticket to find out where in thunder I'm going!"

And sometimes the church acts just like that. We're running. We don't know where, but boy are we moving. It is to prevent that from ever being the cry of the body of Christ that God, in His infinite wisdom, has by His Holy Spirit given to us the gift of Leadership. The Holy Spirit has given men and women this gift and the symbol of the gift of Leadership - or of rule in the church - is not a miter on the head, or a robe on the shoulders, or a staff of office in the hand. The symbol is the wash basin and towel of Jesus.

Go into a world that is impressed with one thing: power, no matter how you get it. And be different.

Chapter 19. The Gift of Mercy

They came to Jericho. As he went out from Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him, that he should be quiet, but he cried out much more, "You son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stood still and said, "Call him." They called the blind man, saying to him, "Cheer up! Get up. He is calling you!"

He, casting away his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Jesus said to him, "Go your way. Your faith has made you well." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

Mark 10:46-52

In Romans 12, the apostle Paul says, "I ask you then, I beg you, I beseech you, with your eyes wide open to all the mercies of God" we've talked about in chapters 1-11, "that you give your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God Who is your righteous" (or spiritual) "worship. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you can prove what is the will of God..." That word "prove" doesn't mean to prove in an intellectual debate. It means "bear witness to the authenticity of". "...what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me, I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." Now, in most Christian bodies today, that's not really the problem. It's quite the opposite. We think less of ourselves than we ought to think: "Oh, I could never do that!" Yet God calls us to this kind of a ministry and he says, "We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned to him. For, as in one body we have many members and all the members do not have the same function, so we though many are one, and individually members of one another, having gifts that differ. According to the grace given to us, let's use them. If prophecy, in proportion to our faith. If service, in our serving. He who teaches, in his teaching. He who exhorts, in his exhortation. He who gives, in liberality. He who gives aid, with zeal. He who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." That's the gift for today: he who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

I believe that the gift lists that we have are not shopping lists, but are in fact indicative lists - only describing the enormity of range of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Yet, because of the great interest - and the natural human attraction to the more spectacular and dramatic of the gifts (which has, in effect, resulted in the division of much of the body of Christ because of misrepresentation or misapplied emphasis) - there is an enormous need to elevate the service gifts to the position that they belong in, rather than simply the dramatic gifts or the verbal gifts. And I'm not just referring to the gift of Tongues, because there are other verbal gifts as well. The resultant attention turns us away from the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit - which is to build the body of Christ in the unity of His love.

When one listens to the description which is given of the world of the last days, I think one is struck by the fact that it's very descriptive of our day and age. In 2 Timothy, Paul writes, "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful and arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Holding to a form of Godliness,

although they have denied its power." Against this kind of a dark background of selfishness and indifference, the service gifts - one of which is the gift of Mercy - shines and sparkles like a diamond.

I very soon will experience my 24th anniversary with my wife. And my memory is not so faded with age that I can't remember back to when I bought her her diamond. I remember that the jeweler came out in this little hometown of mine, and he opened up a piece of cellophane that he'd folded over and over and over. Inside that cellophane were several loose stones. But he didn't show them to me laying on the cellophane. He laid out a piece of black velvet, and then spilled the diamonds on that black velvet with a long goose-neck lamp over it, and they were just alive! I bought a much bigger one than I had intended, because I was so attracted by that. The thing that made them shine so was the contrast of the darkness of their background. When people wring their hands and say, "Oh Pastor Bud, what are we going to do in this world? It's just going bad to worse!"

My response is, "Shine!" The darker it gets, the brighter the light. In a very dark room, even a little tiny candle gives an enormous amount of light. So I see this world in its degenerating stage but I don't panic, I don't rub my hands, and I don't want to run away. I really want to shine and it's exciting to see, as I look around the horizon of our society, to see men and women who love Christ who are beginning to really stand out and shine. Not in power of themselves, but by the inner filling of the Holy Spirit against the dark background of our age.

Such is the gift of Mercy. What a sparkle that brings into our world! Let me try and describe where we're going by telling you a story about Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, that great Bible expositor. He tells it in his commentary on the book of Romans. He describes how he had been invited by a friend to go with him to visit someone in the hospital. The person who was the patient in the hospital had listened to Dr. Barnhouse on the radio and said to his friend, the visitor, "Oh I would love to have a chance to meet Dr. Barnhouse before I die" - not knowing that his visitor was a personal friend of Dr. Barnhouse.

So he passed the message on to Dr. Barnhouse and, of course, he went. As the two walked into that room, Dr. Barnhouse said, "I've never been a fan of hospitals. I can smell their distinctive aroma from the parking lot and that's as close as I really like to be." But he said, "As I walked into this hospital and down the hall, we opened the door to this dying man's room and the smell was just awful. There was a knot in my stomach. I was instantly nauseated. I just wanted to run." The figure laying on those white sheets and against that pillow was grotesque and distorted. And the odor emanated from other there. It was the smell of death in the room. Barnhouse said, "I just wanted nothing more than to run. My friend, however, walked over the bed and said, 'Hi John, it's me! And guess who I've got with me?' He knelt down beside the bed and cradled this dying grotesque man in his arms and talked of the love of Christ with joy."

Dr. Barnhouse said, "I have never since asked 'what is the gift of Mercy with cheerfulness' when I saw it that graphically portrayed in contrast with my obedient act of mercy."

Let me define the gift of mercy then, and as I usually do, I will give you two definitions. One longer definition which I'm more comfortable with because it's exact, then a shorter one that's easy to remember. Now, remember we are speaking about a gift of the Holy Spirit - we're not talking about something that's natural to a person. This is a supernaturally bestowed gift. The gift of Mercy is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to certain members of the body of Christ, which is a supernatural ability to feel genuine empathy and compassion for persons who suffer distressing physical, mental, and emotional problems - and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds which reflect Christ's

love and alleviate the suffering. The brief definition is: the gift of mercy is the Holy Spirit's gift to certain members of the body of Christ to work joyfully with those that the majority choose to ignore.

The verb which is translated "to show mercy" or "do acts of mercy" means "to pity". But we think in America, with our English use of the word "pity", that "pity" somehow denotes a superior position on the one who is doing the pity: "I have pity on you!" That's not the meaning. The meaning in the original is "to commiserate", "to have compassion", "to have empathy", "to show conscious, gracious favor to". It's the same word, for instance, that you find in Matthew 20 when the two blind men call out to Jesus, and say, "Jesus, have mercy" (have pity, care, demonstrate compassion, act on our behalf). The same word in Luke 9 when Peter, James, and John, and Jesus come down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and there at the base of the mountain find a father distraught over his son who was demon-possessed and has convulsions and keeps falling into the fire. The other disciples hadn't been able to do anything. So he says, "Jesus, will you please have mercy on my son." It's also the same word that is used in the scripture from Mark 10, where blind Bartemaeus keeps yelling until people say "Shhhh! Quiet!" But he won't stop - he just keeps yelling, "Have mercy upon me." Then in Luke 17, the ten lepers cried out, "Have mercy" instead of ringing the bell and hollering "unclean!", they cry "have mercy." In each case, Jesus acted in mercy because the gift of Mercy results in acts of mercy. It is a "service gift".

Now here we also need to notice that there's a difference between the gift of Exhortation and the gift of Mercy. The gift of Exhortation helps primarily with words of love. The gift of Mercy helps primarily with acts, or deeds, of love. You need also to notice that it says "with cheerfulness". And the word translated "cheerfulness" is really the Greek word halarittoi, which is the same root word that we get our word "hilarious" or "hilarity". You get the idea. Do you deeds of mercy - your acts of mercy - with hilarity. Now, that does not mean supercilious and silly humor. It's a lot deeper than that. The hilarity is a deep joy that just bubbles up from way down inside. It is a joy to do acts of mercy. That's the way in which it's to be done. The connotation is: deep cheer.

It's appropriate to remember what we said before with regard to the exercise of any gift that the Holy Spirit has given you. One of the ways you test out to see whether this is a gift of the Holy Spirit which you've been given is to check your reaction to your exercise of it. Because, if you are working in accord with, and in practice of, the Holy Spirit to you, you enjoy it - it's fun. We get this idea sometimes that serving God is a real tough thing to do. People talk about "complete commitment" and they talk about it in such ominous tones that it's scary. But if you are working in conjunction with the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given, there's joy in the exercise. So there is the possibility of doing acts of mercy with cheerfulness. So when the person who is so gifted with Mercy does it, it's not because he's such a super-special guy - it's just because he thoroughly enjoys it. He's in harmony, in step with, his acts of mercy and his spiritual gift. Now you have been asked, and perhaps you've done some asking, where you have asked someone to do something and their response has been, "Well, I guess I could do it." Now, right away, you know that person's response is not a super-positive one. If they do it, it is in response to a feeling of obligation, and they do it grudgingly or unwillingly. But to do it pleasantly, and gently, and joyously is the underlying secret of those with the gift of Mercy. The reason they do it is because they understand the secret is in Matthew 25 where it says, "to the extent that you did it to one of these My brethren, even the least of them, you did it to Me."

The gift of Mercy is different from the gift of Helps. The gift of Mercy is exercised on behalf of those that the majority prefer not to see: the retarded, prisoners, the grinding poor, the ugly, the grotesque, the chronically ill, the handicapped, the hospitalized, the aged, the infirm. Those with the gift of Mercy see them and don't see what repulses or repels the rest of the society. They're drawn to them. They're

attracted to them.

A pastor friend that I play golf with, has a wife who was the head of the Hollyridge school for the mentally handicapped in Bremerton for a number of years. I watched her work with these children and adults - some of them badly physically deformed as well as mentally distorted. I saw Helen work with a degree of love and compassion that just made me wonder at her. That's the act of mercy. Society wants to take these people - all of these people, fitting any of these categories - and put them away someplace out of sight. So we have these sad, sad institutions in our society, crammed with society's rejects of all kinds. Those with the gift of Mercy cannot abide that kind of thing.

When we look at Biblical illustrations, first of all you have to say that the life of Jesus reflects the ministry of the gift of Mercy. I've already referred to four sections of Scripture where individuals cried out "have mercy upon me" and where He responded with gifts of Mercy. Even those who would not be shut up by those who told them to shut up. Even when their needs repulsed and caused other people to fear. Who was it in Mark 1 that touched a leper? It was Jesus - an act of mercy. Precisely what the leper needed was the human touch. He was a social outcast. He had to cry out "unclean" and people ran away from him. When his disease was diagnosed as leprosy, his family had a funeral for him - counted him as dead. Yet *that* kind of a person, Jesus touched.

In Acts 9, it tells the story of a woman whose name was Dorcas (actually, her Jewish name was Tabitha, the Greek name would be Dorcas). But in English, she would be known as Gazelle. Isn't that a pretty name? She was an interesting woman.⁵ Dorcas was a remarkable woman who died. When she died, they sent right away and asked Peter to come. Peter came and was used of God to raise her from the dead, to restore her back to life again. But listen to the early part of the account from Acts 9: "Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which translated in Greek is called Dorcas. This woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did." You notice how the writer, Luke, goes over it twice: 1) abounding and 2) did it continually. Then it accounts how she died and Peter was sent for, and it says, "And Peter arose and went with them, and when he had come, they brought him into the upper room" (where they had laid Dorcas out) "and all of the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all of the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them." This is a lady who was exercising her act of mercy - her gifts of Mercy.

Another Biblical illustration of the gift of Mercy is seen in the rather obscure person with an almost unpronounceable name of Onesphorus. Now Onesphorus was apparently a member of the church in Ephesus who, when Paul was in prison in Rome, went to find him. Paul was not, at the time of his visit there, apparently in the kind of hired house arrangement he had under house arrest, but in all likelihood, was in a dark, dank, dungeon-like jail. Possibly the Mamertine Prison in Rome. I saw this Mamertine Prison in Rome. It's like a huge stone cistern. You go down these narrow steps, and look through a little tiny hole in the top, where there was a grid where they fed you - if they fed you at all. And in the wall of the cistern, there's a hole. Now it's covered with a steel door. But that hole in the wall looks down on the channel of a subterranean river, and people who died in that cramped, dank, miserable dungeon, were simply pitched through that hole down into the river and carried off.

In that kind of a setting, condemned because of his faith in Christ, is the apostle Paul. You can imagine

⁵ I remember wondering why one of the women's circles, in my home church when I grew up, was called the "Dorcas Circle". I thought, "that's a strange name! Dorcus!" Now I know.

the hardship. He who had roamed the world at will with the gospel of good news, is now chained in a dungeon filled with the stink of death. And Paul, that gregarious man with that host of friends around the world, is now all alone. Nobody came to see him, apparently, except Onesphorus (whose name, by the way, means "mercy doer"). If you listen to what Paul tells Timothy when he writes to him, he says, "May the Lord bless Onesphorus and all his family, because he visited me and encouraged me often. His visits revived me like a breath of fresh air, and he was never ashamed of my being in jail. In fact, when he came to Rome, he searched everywhere trying to find me. And he finally did."

But, of course, the most supreme illustration of the gift of Mercy is found in Jesus Christ. And the best way I can describe that is to read for you from Ephesians 2:1-5: "To you who were spiritually dead all the time that you drifted along on the stream of this world's ideas of living, and obeyed it's unseen ruler, who is still operating in those who do not respond to the truth of God, to you Christ has given life. We all lived like that in the past and followed the impulses and imaginations of our evil nature being, in fact, under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else. But even though we were dead in our sins, God Who is rich in mercy because of the great love He had for us, gave us life together with Christ. It is, remember, by grace and not by achievement that you are saved." The marvelous grace of our loving Lord expressed in mercy.

Let me list some characteristics of the gift of Mercy. First of all, I need to remind you that there is a role for all of us in demonstrating mercy, whether we have the gift or not. This is quite apart from the Holy Spirit's gift of Mercy. It is simply bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and that's expected of all who are in Christ. Every Christian is to respond to need with acts of mercy. That's it.

Let me illustrate the difference between the role of mercy giver and the gift of Mercy by telling you about myself and my mother. When I lived in Alabama with my wife, in my first parish we had a little country church on the edge of a swamp. Down further into the swamp was a family - three generations: a grandma, her worthless son, his wife, and their children. The son had only one ability, and that was to make moonshine. But he didn't even know how to sell moonshine, so he drank it all. He was really a worthless good-for-nothing. This old lady was a real nice old lady whose heart was broken every day by what she saw take place. I could tell you some of the most god-awful things that took place in that family. But this old lady, on a regular basis, used to come walking up the road from the swamp and would knock on the door of the parsonage. She would say, "Preacher Bud, my children are hungry." Now I was making \$200 a month at that time, and I didn't have an awful lot of money laying around the house. But I had more than she did, which meant I had no choice, right? If there's food on my table, there's got to be food on somebody else's table that's in need. So I'd get her in the car and I'd drive her to El Mira, Alabama, where I'd worked something out with the grocer in El Mira. What we'd worked out is that any day that old bread wasn't too hard, he set aside for me. You know how when they grind ground beef and it gets kind of brown on the top after a day or two - a lot of butchers just turn that over and put the red meat up on top. But I had an agreement with this fellow that he would take that brown meat and kind of gather it together. He'd sell me that at a special discount. And powdered milk, and vegetables that were just a little bit spongy. So I would take this dear old lady over to El Mira and would pick up a couple of big sacks of groceries of whatever we could get and afford and was on sale, including bent cans and all the rest. We would bring it home and the family would be able to live for a little while. Now I can't say that I did that with a great deal of joy.

And I share it with you, not to tell you how wonderful I am, but to expose that I'm not that wonderful, because all the way home I'm wishing this old lady would find somebody else to tap on. Especially because every time on the way home from El Mira, she would give me this same speech and I could repeat it by heart - it just drove me crazy. She would say, "Now preacher Bud, I want y'all to know that

I'm going to pay you back, because when I stand before St. Peter, I gonna say two things. Number one, I ain't never owed no man nothing I never paid back. And number two, I ain't never let no doctor shoot me full of needle holes." Now, I had never heard of salvation based on those two things, but that was the basis of her salvation. And I'm fearful for that dear lady's eternal destiny, because she never paid me back for one thing. Why did I do it if I did it so grudgingly? I did it out of just sheer obedience to the scriptures. If you see someone in need and close up your heart, what kind of service to Christ is that? That's why I did it. It's not very flattering, I'm sorry.

My mother, on the other hand, was always picking up strays. When I was a boy, I would come home and our house would be crawling with kids. Now, there were several problems with that. One, we had a small house. Two, I had very few toys, and these kids always played with my toys and always broke my toys. Number three, they were crummy kids. They all came from the south side of the tracks. I grew up in a little tiny town that had a south side of the tracks. Every so often my mom would take the old car and go down south of the tracks and every time she saw a kid with long hair (in those days mind you, long hair was a sign of poverty - if you didn't have a haircut, everybody in town knew you were poor) and mom would round up every shaggy little ragamuffin she could find on the south side, cram that car full, bring them home, and start what we'd call her "assembly line". On the back porch, which was screened in, she had two of her big galvanized washtubs full of hot soapy water. That's the first station. They lit in the tub. After the tub, they were brought in and they got their hair washed. After that, they were put in the back porch to play in the sun so that their hair would dry while mom was cutting the hair of the other kid. I'd come home and the house looked knee-deep in hair and water all over the back, and you know those blame kids would go home and I had to clean up that mess. My toys are in pieces and I would think, "What in the...". My mother, all the time, is just having a ball. At the end of the day, we would sit down to a light dinner. Dad knew, because he saw that pile of hair in the corner, what had been going on all afternoon. My mom would say, "Oh, I don't know when I've been so tired, but oh that felt so good!" You see, that's the gift of Mercy. There was no repayment. She always hoped that those kids would wind up in Sunday School, but to my knowledge only one ever did and he only stuck it out for about two years. But I will never discount what God did through my mom in people's lives. She had the gift of Mercy. So she enjoyed it. She just got revitalized by it. I just got burned by it. That's the difference.

Second, the gift is more personal than it is an official ministry. But "organization" doesn't mean that you can't exercise mercy. However, generally the person with the gift of Mercy finds themselves eagerly involved in a one-on-one kind of a ministry. Compassion and kindness is a lifestyle. Neighbors used to say, "Esther Palmberg, what is the matter with you, dragging all those bad kids from the south side up here all the time?"

Mom would say, "Oh, I don't know, it's just something I want..." and she would be embarrassed. It was her lifestyle. Wasn't even a big conscious deal. Compassion becomes a lifestyle rather than a response to emergency.

Third, the gift of Mercy is expressed eminently in practical ways. When disaster strikes, everybody feels pity. But when the headlines fade, we forget about it until the next tragedy comes splashed across our headlines. However, the one with the gift of Mercy is drawn, almost helplessly, to do something about it. They seek opportunity to meet practical needs. They're probably not found in the living room with a Bible and words of exhortation - they are more likely found on their knees in the kitchen scrubbing.

Fourth, the gift of Mercy is generally directed to the unlovely and the unlovable - the lepers, the

Zaccheuses, and the Mary Magdalines of our society - who have everything and yet nothing and are very ascerbic and brutal kind of personalities. Thirteen years ago last July, I helped organize what's called Operation Nightwatch, which is a skid road ministry to people in need. In the last thirteen years, that ministry has grown to the place where there is now a \$40,000 budget, a full-time director, and 35 to 37 men and women priests on the street. It has attracted national attention. It's been written up by AP and UPI, there's been a movie made about it, the network news have sent people out - film crews and all the rest. People say to me when I'm in Chicago or someplace else, "are you still involved in that Nightwatch program?"

I say, "Yes, I am." Now, I know what's in their mind: "What a wonderful man he must be." But I don't know how to get out of it. It's like Brier Rabbit and the tar-baby. You just can't get loose. I need Nightwatch because it keeps reminding me that not all the world smells nice and looks nice and smiles nice. It reminds me that the world is filled with people whose hunger and whose need is just laid out on the streets and in the gutters and in the alleys of our city - as well as wrapped in \$50,000 and \$100,000 and \$200,000 mortgages. I need Nightwatch, but there are nights when I go on the street and I'm tired before I start. There's an emotional exhaustion in me. I don't want to go. I am going to confront people all night long whose needs and whose desires to use me are repulsive to me - whose lifestyles are repellent to me. There's only so many years that you can be vomited upon and propositioned by the prostitutes and find bodies with the needle still hanging out their arm, and still find it "interesting". Only so long and your compassion reaches a point of compassion fatigue.

But about ten years ago, I was speaking at the Northgate Kiwanis club. I recruited out of that club, one of their ministers, a fellow by the name of Norman Riggins. I have never ever in my life met anybody who had the gift of Mercy in such abundance as Norm Riggins does. He, at that time, had been pastor for ten years at the Mapleleaf evangelical church on the north side of Seattle. He resigned that church, took himself off salary, and put himself under the watch-care of some of us - about four or five of us guys who were with Nightwatch at that point who said, "Well, Norm, we can try and guarantee that you'll eat for four months, but that's about as far as we can go."

With that kind of uncertainty, Norm said, "At least it will give me the chance for four months to try and do something about the needs of people." Night after night after night, all night long, all day long, he spends his time with the rejects of our society. And he keeps saying what a ball he's having. That's the gift of Mercy. Praise God!

Many people shrink from the ill and the weak. They consign their problems to an institution. In this area of daily life, mercy's a rare virtue. wherever a person has this gift, he's a great hope for the sick and neglected, and you can be sure that the merciful persons are quickly besieged by those in need. So, for that very reason it's important that everybody that has this gift use it for all they're worth. The gifted person who is gifted with the gift of Mercy generally also seeks opportunity for service and ministry - it comes naturally. They don't wait for somebody to call. They are visiting and volunteering and hauling people and bringing meals and taking care of children and sowing and giving and they're involved. They're just doing it. That's a lifestyle.

Every so often it rolls around that it's my assignment to have a chapel service at Mercer Villa Convalescence Center, and that's not my favorite place. I come into Mercer Villa and I am confronted with such a deep wave of helplessness. The loneliness of those people! There have been some really funny things and some really sad things that have happened during those chapel periods, but I don't really look forward to those meetings. But every time, God does something in my life and one of the things He does is that I see people, many of them from my congregation, who are there exercising their

gift of Mercy. I see what it does to people's lives when they offer that cup of cold water cheerfully in Jesus' name - not from sense of obligation, but from joy of ministry.

Sixth, recognize that the gift of Mercy is not relegated to physical needs only. Mental and spiritual distress is also ministered to. One who is gifted with the gift of Mercy seeks ministry in these areas as well. Let me illustrate this. You know of someone who has got deep problems. Maybe not physical problems, but some very deep problems. You have a chance encounter with them on the street. You gauge your conversation very carefully so that you don't open up that Pandora's box. Because you're afraid they'll start to spill all of their problems and all of this kind of thing, and you'd rather not have anything to do with it. A person with the gift of Mercy, however, having that chance encounter, says, "How are things?" and opens that box, seeking to minister and care and love. Non-avoidance. The gifted people think their gift is natural. They are surprised if you point out that it's a gift. They just think, "Well man, that's just compassionate love" in their eyes. It's the cup of cold water in Jesus' name. They are not satisfied with those ritual words, "If there's anything I can do, just call."

I remember, as a kid in High School, a neighbor's house burned down. It was about a block away. It burned to the ground - there was nothing left. I remember watching my mom and dad in there, poking around, trying to put out the smoldering embers and see if there was anything worth saving. In a small town, a fire's the biggest thing that happens. And a steady stream of people come past and talk to this guy whose standing there with his possessions in ashes around him - no bed, no food, no car, no house. They would say, "If there's anything we can do, let us know."

My mom would get so mad. She could hardly stand it, and she turned to my dad and she'd say, "What's the matter with those dummies? He doesn't have anything! *Anything* they do would be helpful. What are they waiting for? An invitation? The guy doesn't even have a bed!"

The ritual words "If there is anything I can do, just call" just don't come from the lips of one who has the gift of Mercy. They know there's something they can do. And they're already involved in the doing. Blankets and food and materials to rebuild and just somebody to hold their hand in the loneliness of that hour.

One other thing. Have you noticed that, of all the charismata listed in Romans 12 (there are seven), out of those seven charasmata - the gifts of the Spirit - four out of the seven deal with the practical service ministry to people in need. The gifts of the Spirit are not given for titillation or for showing off or as merit badges of achievement. The gifts of the Spirit are for service to the body of Christ and to build it for His glory.

In world war II, the Ethiopian nation was occupied by the Italian army. The Italian army was very very strong in its persecution of evangelical Christians in Ethiopia. They jammed the nation's jails with evangelical Christians. The practice was, under Italian occupation, that no prisoner received food or water, unless friends or relatives brought it. There was no in-house food or water system. So the only way a person survived without starving or dehydrating to death in an Ethiopian prison during the second world war was if they had friends or relatives that brought them food and water. Those who were in jail as evangelical Christians, who were there for religious reasons, were so well cared for by fellow believers that they had more than enough food and water to feed the rest of the prisoners. This so attracted them to the kind of commitment and mercy that caused people - who ran risks of involving themselves by association - to come and give, that there was a real revival that broke out in the prisons of Ethiopia during the second world war. As men and women so attracted to the spontaneous unarticulated witness of the love of Christ that they just had to turn to find the reason.

So the scripture says, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food and one of you says, 'Go in peace, be warm, be filled,' and yet you do not give them what's necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so, faith if it is not demonstrated in action is dead because it's alone." The clearest witness to the watching world has always been the deeds and mercies without strings or conditions - the expressions of the unconditional love of Jesus Christ: "Behold how they love one another" was not only the witness of the early church, but must again be the commentary of a watching world on the church today. Not "look at them fight!", but "behold how they love one another". How we need the ministry of those of you with the gift of Mercy. I praise Him for His equipping of the body with this gift. By the way, since we are encouraged to ask for gifts, why don't we ask for that one?

There's a world out there that's skeptical. They have been told an awful lot of verbal theology. They need to see theology in overalls. So do it, in the power and the giftedness of His blessed Holy Spirit.

Chapter 20. The Gift of Evangelism

Ephesians 4, beginning in verse 11: "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men by their craftiness and deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way unto Him Who is the Head and to Christ, from Whom the whole body joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied. When each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and up-builds itself in love."

That is both a description of some of the gifts of the Spirit and also the motivation for the gifts being given - that every part working properly might build itself up together in love. We have completed the list of gifts in I Corinthians 12 and now we are finishing up some of the last gifts. I will not be spending very much time on a couple of the gifts, simply because they are (I consider) offices rather than specific gifts. I'll say more about that in just a little bit.

In this chapter, we consider the gift of Evangelism. What comes to your mind, I wonder, when you think of evangelism? Big tents, sawdust trails, hyper-emotionalism, ex-addicts, ex-criminals, ex-anything - a sacred show business? Two weeks of long meetings with just one more verse for the fifteenth time, each night? Mourner's benches and inquirer's rooms and scalding tears and another layer of applied guilt? Is that what you think of? That's what I think of, a lot of times, because I was raised where there were evangelistic meetings where the evangelist had to produce some sort of numbers. So he would gradually move the invitation around until somebody would finally respond. It was almost a joke among some of the young fellows in town: "Well, why don't you respond, so we can go home tonight a little early?" That is not what "evangelism" means. It may involve some and all of these. But when we ask the question, "what is the gift of Evangelism", we need to recognize a couple of things.

First of all, the word "evangelism" doesn't appear in the whole Bible. The entire Bible doesn't contain the word "evangelism". What's more, the word "evangelist" is only said three times in all of scripture. But the *work* of evangelism is on every page. So what is the definition of "evangelism"?

The gift of Evangelism is the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit whereby certain members of the body of Christ are given the gift of communicating the gospel in relevant terms to those who are not yet Christians, in such a way that they respond and become converted. That's the gift of evangelism.

Now we need to remember that the gospel (which means "good news") needs to be shared with the entire world. It is to be shared without the restrictions that we so often place on things. We restrict things on the basis of such subgroups as racial distinctions or sexual distinctions or economic distinctions - and those are not to exist in the body of Christ. We are one in the body of Christ - there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, for you are all one in Christ.

Because the message is essential for the entire world to hear, every believer is called to be a bearer of that message. Not only is every believer called to be a bearer of that message, but God - by His Holy Spirit - has gifted some with the special gift of communicating that message. That is the gift of

Evangelism.

Now we need to understand that the word that is translated "evangelist" actually does not mean "soul winner", which is what we often think of. You can even buy a New Testament that has on the title "Soul Winner's New Testament". In fact, I've got one. But the word does not mean "soul winner". It means "one who bears good news". So, when the Bible uses the word "evangelist" (and only three times, remember) it is speaking of one who bears the good news. Therefore, the first thing that I want to say about evangelism, and the gift of Evangelism, is that the evangelist is a bearer of good news. He proclaims. There is content. In other words, the content of the good news is positive and draws people to Christ. We've heard a great deal in the last few years, in the literature that I read professionally, by the liberal wing of the church, concerning what is called "presence evangelism" - that we are to be the presence of Christ in the world, like salt, and like the light. Indeed, we are. But the evangelist - the bearer of good news - must have content. Not just presence.

Part of the front-end motivation of something like Nightwatch is to be a presence. To be in the bars, the dives, the alleys, the go-go joints, the dumps at first avenue, and the environs down there, as kind of a presence available to help in the servant motif of Jesus Christ. But always, there is that underlying motivation in every one of us that are involved in the program, that sooner or later they will ask us the purpose. Then we will have a chance to be more than be a presence - we will have a chance to proclaim. Because an evangelist - a bearer of good news - is one who has content. Last week, just before I went on the street with Nightwatch with my tour of duty down on skid road, I spent a few minutes talking with our director, Norm Riggins. He was just as high as a kite because a girl he's worked with now for some four or five weeks - that he spent a great deal of time with, a great deal of caring for, and all the rest - came into his office that morning and said, "Norm, I want to know why you and some of the rest of the Nightwatch people are always here. Why?" She was asking the reason for the presence.

Norm told me, with tears running down his cheeks and a big grin on his face, about how he had been able to kneel by the desk in that crummy room that we have in that crummy hotel in downtown Seattle, and lead her to the Lord. Presence is pre-evangelism. It is like the preparing of the soil for the planting of the seed. But the seed had better have content. That is what evangelism is. It is the sharing of content - the good news. It's not bad news. The good news is that God has not left man in his hopeless condition. God has done for man what man couldn't do for himself. He has brought about His redemption. He has purchased him at incredible cost.

I Peter says, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless - the blood of Christ."

John 3 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

The good news is that God's grace is greater than our sin; that His love is a seeking love, "for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost". The motif of Jesus Christ is not the judge in his royal robes damning and condemning people. The motif of the New Testament of our Savior Jesus Christ is the Shepherd Who, noticing that among the 100 sheep, one is lost, secures the 99 and seeks until He finds. Then He throws a homecoming party. That's the content of the good news: that God loves you so much, He went to the cross in Christ. I need not thunder against, and condemn sin. Sin

carries the freight of its own condemnation. It is the power of the Holy Spirit alone that can bring men and women under conviction of sin. Jesus says that "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Me." Therefore evangelism is the proclamation of this content: the good news. It is not a manipulation of emotions. It is the statement of intellectual content. Don't let that word "intellectual" scare you - it means it is rational, reasonable, understandable.

Second, the gift of evangelism, as with all the gifts, is always manifested by being effective in its results. If you are working in conjunction with the gift of the Holy Spirit you've been given, you're going to be effective. If you've been given the gift of teaching, your students will learn. If you haven't been given that gift of teaching, your students may just stay quiet, but not learn. If you've been given the gift of evangelism, those with whom you share the good news are converted - they believe.

Look at Acts 2, the day of Pentecost. There's a huge problem - everybody comes running around because of the sound of the mighty rushing wind and the tongues. Peter preaches his sermon and this is what it says, "And when they heard this, they were pierced in their heart". That's a work of the Holy Spirit, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "brethren, what should we do?" The result was the conversion and baptism of 3,000 people. The result indicated that the gift was present. Paul and Barnabas go on a missionary journey to Iconium, and there it says in Acts 14, "They went into the synagogue and so spoke that a great multitude, both of Jews and also of Greeks, believed." It has its effect.

John Wimber is a fellow that has the gift of Evangelism to a degree I've never seen in anyone before. He walks into an airport waiting room, and he's like a hunting dog in a field full of quail. He stands there and just kind of vibrates. You almost see the old radar systems starting to revolve and all of sudden... he heads right for somebody, and within twenty minutes, that person - with great joy - has accepted Christ. Every conversation - I don't care where it starts from - winds up with Jesus Christ. It's not manipulative, and it's not forced, it's not twisted. I had a professor one time tell me a good way to get an opening to witness for Christ is to always buy gas at Shell stations or Sinclair stations, because you could say, "Oh, who put the "hell" in "shell"?", or "who put the "sin" in "Sinclair"?" That was a way to open conversations. That is really warped. That's not of the Holy Spirit - that's a manipulative kind of thing.

But John Wimber doesn't have to do that. He also has the ability to communicate to an amazing level - at the level of understanding that the people have. I mentioned him several chapters back. If you recall, he was a professional musician for many years. When he had just accepted Christ, he was attending a Bible study and he brought a couple of his musician friends who knew nothing from nothing about nothing. And they came in and sat down at a Bible study and the preacher was sitting there with a black three-piece suit and a white shirt and a black narrow tie, and they're sitting there and they had a little bit of small talk and then the pastor said, "Now let's turn to God's word." And he even changed the tone of his voice. And when he said, "God's word" he picked up this ominous black book.

John Wimber's friends from the musician's union turned to him and said, "Hey man, what's he talking about?"

Wimber says, "What he means is, that's a heavy chart." Now a musician understands what that means.

The pastor went on for about 35 minutes about the "grace of God". "The Grace of God".

These musicians - they weren't sure they understood what "God" meant, but they didn't know what

grace was. One of them turned to John Wimber and said, "What is this grace stuff he's talking about all the time?"

This is what John Wimber said to this musician, "What he's saying is, its kind of like you hear there's an opening on Basie's band and he'll pick you without an audition." Now that's grace to a musician! You get to sit in with Basie without an audition. It's undeserved; it's unmerited; it's unearned - there's no way you can deserve it - it's grace. He understood.

The gift of Evangelism is the ability to communicate the good news so it is understood and responded to, and that is a gift. Now in the New Testament, those who had the gift were recognized by being given the office. Ephesians 4 refers to the office of the evangelist. "And he gave some to be pastors and teachers and evangelists." That's an office. But the office was occupied by the person who had been given the gift of Evangelism.

Now, the gift of Evangelism in the new testament was seen as itinerant in nature. The evangelist is one who would exercise his gift, many would believe, and he would then move on to another field - leaving the rooting and grounding and growing of those new believers to those who have been given the other gifts of the body. So it is that you see the same thing today. You read the new testament and you see Paul going like a blaze of fire across Asia Minor - not once, not twice, but three times. Periodically he'd drop in on a church. Sometimes he'd stay there as long as a year or a year and a half. Maybe even as long as three years. But he was always on the move, leaving behind Timothy and Titus and Barnabas and some of the others who would ground these people in the belief they had come to know under the evangelistic proclamation that Paul had given.

So it is that today, those who have the gift to such a degree that it becomes their vocational gift (they are occupying the office of the evangelist, in other words - it's their vocation): the Billy Grahams, and Luis Palaus, and the Leighton Fords are itinerant in their ministries. They're on the move. And they leave the rooting and ground of that which comes to new life under their ministry of evangelism to those who have the other gifts of the body. By the way, don't you ever say that that is an ineffective kind of ministry that Billy Graham and these other evangelists have. There are just too many people in my congregation that came to know Jesus Christ through the ministry of somebody like Billy Graham. In fact, *specifically* Billy Graham when he was at the King Dome for a major crusade. If you don't believe that his work is used of God, and lasts, I can introduce you to a few people, because as he does his work and we do our work, then together the body is built. So the evangelist is always concerned about follow-up, but the follow-up is primarily the responsibility of the rest of the body.

Let's take a brief look at a Biblical model. The word "evangelist" is used only three times in the new testament. One is in that list in Ephesians 4, and the other usage is used as specifically to describe a man by the name of Philip. Now, this Philip was not one of the twelve chosen by Christ. He was one of the seven chosen by the early church. You remember the conflict in Acts 6 - the Greek-speaking believers and the Jewish-speaking believers - the widows were in a conflict because they felt that there was distribution that was being unequal (discrimination was being practiced). So they started to complain and Peter and the rest of the fellows that were disciples were spending so much time solving problems and serving tables and keeping books that they finally said, "Look, this is nonsense. Choose out from yourselves seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit, and let them take this job and we'll devote ourselves to the preaching and to prayer."

So they did. One of them chosen was Stephen, who is the first person to die for his faith. His martyrdom is described in Acts 6 and 7. Another one that was chosen as this servant deacon was a man

by the name of Philip. It says in 8:1, following the death of Stephen, "and they" (that, is, Christians) "were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria except the apostles." This enormous persecution, the first fruit of which was the martyrdom of Stephen, resulted in a widespread attempt to stamp out the church at Jerusalem. That's the only place the church was, by the way, until this persecution came and scattered them all over. The persecution spearheaded by this crazy fanatic, Saul, scattered them throughout the region except the apostles. In other words, it was a lay movement. As soon as these laymen set up residence in a new area, the scripture says they preached. Now that doesn't mean that they built themselves a pulpit and church and stood up there and held forth forever - it means that they shared good news. Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore, those who had been scattered" (that is the laymen) "went about preaching the word." It was a lay movement. It was not limited to men. It was not limited to whites. It was not limited to anyone. All those who knew Christ had the right and responsibility of sharing the gospel, and they did. It says, "and all those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." So Philip, as one of these, simply began to share the word he discovered that people were responding to an unusual degree. It was taking more and more of his time. First thing you know, Philip finds himself - instead of as an avocation sharing the good news - he finds a vocation. He's doing it full-time. It's interesting that he had the desired results no matter whether he's talking to a whole host of people or just one-on-one. If you look at Acts 8, it says, "And the multitudes, with one accord, were giving attention to what was said by Philip." They believed Philip preaching the good news.

But you find also that this revival in Samaria was interrupted by the Holy Spirit who sent Philip to the desert. He's standing there on the side of the road out in the desert, thinking, "man, all that multitude back there waiting to hear me hold forth and I'm out here in the desert. God I don't understand the way You work." The only guy he could see is a black man in a chariot coming this way. He knew from looking at him that he was a foreigner. So he's jogging alongside and he hears this guy reading from Isaiah and Philip says, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

The man says, "No, how can I."

Philip says, "Maybe I can help you out." The guy stops, he gets in the chariot and he leads him to Christ. One man. Now don't tell me that wasn't an important one man and God didn't know what He was doing - interrupting a revival with multitudes and sending Philip to one man, because that one man was the secretary of the treasury for the queen of Ethiopia. Centuries later when the church finally got to Ethiopia with their missionaries, they found a million and half Christians. Don't tell me that one man didn't do his job too. He went home as an evangelist - one who shares the good news.

We discover our gifts by action. I don't care how large the rudder of your ship is. Unless it's moving, it does nothing to establish direction. The Evangelism gift is discovered as we witness. I conducted a survey four years ago of 400 leaders of Covenant churches in the conference. These were not just casual every day run-of-the-mill members - these were the kind of people that the church said are important people. The church is not always that perceptive... Anyway, I asked these 400 people in a written questionnaire, "Do you believe that what Jesus Christ did for you is important enough to witness about?" And 100% said "yes, definitely" Then I asked the same 400 people (404 to be exact), "have you shared your witness with at least one person in the last year, specifically speaking of Jesus Christ?" And only 55% said "yes". 45% said that it's so important that it ought to be shared, but they didn't do it within the last year. One of them wanted to know if I meant 365 days or this calendar year. This person didn't want to be ranked or put down by me. God help me, I'm not going to put anybody down. The thing that disturbs me is that *I'm* as disobedient as I am.

The dictionary defines a witness as "one who beholds, or otherwise has personal knowledge. To give, or be evidence of." You see a traffic accident - it's already happened when you get there. You pull off the side of the road and walk over and gawk, like you're not supposed to do. Then a police officer walks up to you with his pad and he says, "Are you a witness?"

Now, you do not say to that police officer, "Well now, exactly what do you mean by that?" You don't say, "Well I'm trying to be a 'presence'." You say you didn't see it, or you say, "Yes I did". I had the misfortune of meeting a young man rather forcibly here a few weeks ago. My Datsun ran into a Toyota driven by clearly a nice young fellow. He was really upset, but no more than I was. I got out and surveyed my \$2,500 of damage and a man came running up to me and he said, "I'm in a dreadful hurry, but I saw the whole thing happen. Here's my card - if you need me, call me." Now, that doesn't happen very much, and I was delighted to have this man's name, because he had seen what had happened and it was not my fault. But he knew what it meant to be a witness. So do you. So let's not play games when we say "what does it mean to be a witness for Christ." We know what it means. The dictionary even says it is "to behold, or otherwise have personal knowledge to give, or to be evidence." The scripture says that we are to be obedient in our role as witnesses. Don't tell me you don't have the gift of Evangelism, so you're not supposed to say anything. Because the scripture says to all Christians "Be ready at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer to any man who wants a reason for the hope you have within." We are to be eager to relate what happened to us when we encountered Jesus Christ. A simple testimony - not theological erudite. Some of you say, "I need to know more before I share." Let me tell you, some of you are educated beyond your obedience now! Talk about your meeting with Jesus Christ and your walk with Him. I have encountered people who will talk about the Seahawks, about the Mariners (and there's not much to talk about there), about the Sonics, about their boats, or about the weather - they'll talk about anything. But when you mention Jesus Christ, they just fluster in terror. What a shame.

Dr. David Hubbard, who was president of Fuller Theological Seminary says this, "Not all of us have the gift of Evangelism. I admire people who can lead others to Jesus Christ right on the spot - who have the ability to turn every conversation into an occasion for sharing God's plan of salvation. I am not one of those." But Dr. Hubbard goes on to say, "But, I have a story to share, and so do you. I have a relationship with Christ that I can describe, and so do you. Evangelism will best take place when all of God's people have learned to express their winsome ways."

There's another quote, I don't even remember where I got this one, but it says that "witnessing is just being honest as a Christian." If I am even partially honest in conversation with non-Christians, I will find it extremely difficult *not* to witness. I told you about walking up to the motel with a fish pin in my lapel. The girl behind the desk got all excited. "Oh!" she said and reached out and took hold of my pin, "Are you a Pices?" Now, I have two choices: I can lie, or I can witness. There's no alternative. If we are even partially honest in our conversations and relationships with non-Christians, we cannot help but witness. I debated, I'm ashamed to say, but I thought "Oh, I don't want to get into a big conversation. I want to get to the room and crash. That's what I wanted to do. That's not very spiritual, but I'm not. God's working on it and so am I. Finally I just knew I had to say something, so I said,

"No. Actually that's not a sign of the Zodiac, that's a sign that I'm a Christian. I'd like to explain it to you sometime, if you'd like to have me do it."

She said, "Yes. Would you?" I almost pulled out my appointment book, but I could just kind of feel the Holy Spirit nudging me.

I said, "Now?"

She looked around and she said, "Sure! There's nobody waiting. Why not right now?" Well, how do you get out of it? You don't get out of it. The point of the matter is that sharing the good news is simply being honest as a Christian.

Ann Kiemel's books are just delightful. She's remarkable. I could never do some of the stuff she does. She pulls into a gas station and she says, "Just give me a couple of dollars because I'm kind of in a hurry."

The guy said, "Where are you going?"

And she said, "Do you mean right now or do you mean eventually?"

I can't handle that - that doesn't work with me. But I find it's impossible not to be a witness. People say to you, "How come you go to church all the time?" "Jimminy Christmas, how long does church last anyway? You never get home." "You're real religious aren't you?" Or they observe you and your business and your profession and they want to know why it is that you're sexual morality and your business morality is different from theirs. So they ask you. "Oh come on! A little bit of cheating never hurt anybody! Everybody's doing it. How come you don't?" There is no way you can answer that as a Christian, without being honest. And you can't be honest without telling them you're a Christian. They're going to say, "Well so what?" So then you get to define what you mean. That's exciting. You just can't keep it quiet.

Now, I want you to know I do not believe that I have the gift of Evangelism. I believe God uses me in evangelism, but that is simply because of His great grace in using me as I share my witness. I don't have the gift of evangelism, because when I walk into a large room, I don't look around like John Wimber, for somebody I can share Christ with. I find a corner where I can go sit down. You know when that woman asked me if I was a Pisces, John Wimber would have gone right over the desk. I wanted to go to my room. Now, there's a difference. But we are called to be witnesses - every one of us without exception.

Now, there are four motivations. Number 1: we are all to witness because it is demanded by God, and we must be obedient to His word. Number 2: the Bible teaches very clearly that man without Christ is lost. That in itself ought to provide a motivation. Even if it may be a negative motivation, it is still a clear recognition that Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me." If you're as uncomfortable about that statement as I am, you have to recognize that it's neither your statement nor mine, but it is His.

I've said this before, but I'm still going to say it. I'm going to make two statements and then an observation. The first statement is this: many of your best friends are going to hell. The second statement is: many of you don't give a damn. And the observation is: many of you are more upset over the fact that this pastor said "damn" than you are over the truth of the first statement. That makes my blood run cold, because it strikes me as clearly as it does you. We have been called to bear witness to the good news, because God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He depends upon us to bear that good news, and to authenticate it with our lives.

Number 3: the desire to share good news is universal. Have you ever been in a group of three people,

and you heard some really good news? A fourth person comes in, and you three jump all over each other to be the first one to tell the good news. Now this is really good news - the abundant life is incredible good news!

Number 4: it is enormously strengthening to the faith of the one who is doing the sharing. "If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." We may discover, as we simply share in compassion and interest and love and obedience, that we are also the recipients of that marvelous gift of the Holy Spirit called the gift of Evangelism. There are some people that hear someone say that "I've talked to so and so and had a chance to lead them to the Lord," and their response is jealousy, or they feel condemned. The only reason you need to feel condemned is if the Holy Spirit says "how come you're not talking about Me?" Not because you're not effective. Our job is to plant the seed. Prepare the soil, plant the seed. You don't plant the seed and then stand there and say, "grow!" You can if you want to, but it won't do anything. I plant the seed and then its up to God. If He wants to give it growth, then praise the Lord, glory, hallelujah!

There is a young man in my congregation that was what I called a "breached birth", spiritually. That was a tough delivery! That guy has so much intelligence and so much intellectual integrity that he stretched me. I'd finish talking with him, and I'd have such a headache, and my heart would ache so bad, I'd say, "Lord, I don't know. I can't even start to answer some of the questions this young man raises." The only thing I'd get back from the Lord is, "Well, what have you got all those books for? Go to work." Then we'd get together again, and I'd have all the answers, but he wouldn't ask those questions. He had a whole bunch of new ones. Then I'm sitting there for an appointment and he comes walking in and he walks all the way around the subject and then finally I just couldn't stand it any longer and I said, "Wait a minute." I called him by name and said, "I've got to know. How are things with you and Jesus Christ coming along?" He said, "Oh, didn't I tell you? I invited Christ into my life." Well, he knew he hadn't told me - he was just funning me. I almost knocked my desk over, I got so excited. Glory! I think people could hear me all over the island. I got so excited, but not because I have the gift of evangelism. I wasn't even there when he responded to Christ. The initial preparation of his life was the dear precious young woman that, by God's grace, he's going to marry. That to me, is the gift of Evangelism. Not recognized by the body and put into the office or vocation of an evangelist, but simply one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

Leighton Ford in his book, "Good News is for Sharing" said, "As a boy of sixteen, I first met Billy Graham - another gifted evangelist - through the Youth For Christ movement. Observing those men and women in action both personally and in public, I felt something beginning to stir within me. A deep longing to express my faith began to grow. Soon opportunities came to speak at youth groups and then at little evangelistic occasions and one-on-one. And wonder of wonders, people were moved to accept Christ through what I said." He also says, "While I believe God has given me certain other spiritual gifts, the gift of Evangelism is primary. I discovered it as I witnessed."

Ask yourself five questions. 1) Are you right with the Lord? If you have made a commitment to Christ but you just let things kind of lay fallow and go to seed, then you can't answer the following questions. You've got to deal with first things first. Get squared away with Him. You're no earthly good to Him or the body. 2) But if you are right with God, do you find the strong desire to share your faith in Christ? 3) do you find opportunities to do so all around you? 4) do you find that you're able to communicate naturally and understandably about Christ. 5) do you see people responding and committing themselves to Christ? If you answer "yes" to those questions then, brother or sister, you have the gift of Evangelism. Now, you are not to take that gift as a basis for pride, or as a basis for

judging those who don't have the gift of evangelism. You are to take that gift and use it to the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the building up of the body - just like we're all to use the gifts that God has given to us. I praise God that, periodically it seems at least, that God does give me the gift of Evangelism. But I don't seem to have that gift resident within me on a permanent basis. I'd love to have it. The only problem with that gift, as far as I'm concerned in my job, is I might have to hit the road, and I'd just as soon stick around. So God has given me some other gifts that blend in with my needs. The gift of Evangelism is a gift that is not dependent upon massive campaigns and organizations. Elton Trueblood says, "Evangelism occurs when people are so en-kindled by contact with the central fire of Christ that they, in turn, set others on fire."

Chapter 21. The Gift of Giving

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

In this chapter we consider the Holy Spirit's gift of Giving. The subject is primarily concerned with money. Don't try to spiritualize it and say it's the way we "give of ourselves" for other people, etc. That's included, of course. But it's money that's being talked about, because if you look at the other gifts of the Spirit, some of which we've already preached on, such as the gift of Helps, you discover that that's the way we give of ourselves to other people. This is talking about money, and that's a surprise from some people - it's a surprise that the Holy Spirit's interested in money. It's an area where the congregation gets defensive and the preacher gets apologetic. I think that's too bad, because it's really an exciting subject. All of us like to talk about money. If you doubt that, listen to the conversations that you get involved in. How much of it has to do with the economy, the price of this, the price of that, the inflation on this and the inflation on that, what a good deal you got on this, what a good deal you got on that. Our lives are wrapped up in conversations about money and so it's no surprise to me that one of the Holy Spirit's gifts has to do with money.

But a lot of people are touchy about money, and a lot of preachers are touchy. When I first preached this message, I found myself almost feeling apologetic. I don't want to feel that way. Part of the reason that I feel apologetic is that people that haven't been in church for twenty years continue to say to me, "All preachers do is just preach about money. They talk about money all the time." In my 14th year of pastoring my current congregation, I went back in my records. I found that I'd only preached four sermons I've preached on money during those 14 years. So I asked my congregation for their forgiveness, because I had been denying them a real blessing. Not that the sermon's are so hot, but because God's desire to bring blessings is directly related to our desire to share that which we've already received. I might as well lay this on the table up front: if you are touchy about a message concerning money, in all likelihood it is because you are being disobedient in the area of your stewardship.

They tell the story of a man who was drowning, and he was trying to clamber up the bank to get out of the water and the bank was kind of steep and kind of high, and he just wasn't getting any place. He was giving up. A man on the bank finally jumped in and tried to help him, and he pushed him and pushed him, but they guy kept saying, "I just can't do it. I just can't do it." Finally, in desperation, the would-be rescuer reached into the drowning victim's back pocket and grabbed his wallet, and threw it on the bank, and the guy went zoom right out of the water. I think we've got to recognize that that's kind of the way we get sometimes.

A man about to be baptized in the lake, started in and then when he got close to the pastor, he turned around and headed back out. And the pastor said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "I forgot to give my wallet to my wife."

The preacher said, "You come on right back in here, I've got too many unbaptized wallets in my congregation now."

Somebody once said that the most sensitive nerve in the human body is the one connected to the pocketbook. Probably true. By the way, did you know that Jesus said five times as much about money and its use than He did about prayer? Look it up! Five times! Now you tell me what preacher, how much trouble he could be in if he preached five times as much about money as he did about prayer. People say "prayers are spiritual and money is so materialistic." But our faith is a very materialistic faith, if you want to be honest about it. What other faith talks about the importance of the resurrection of the body? Both the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of ourselves.

The Holy Spirit has given to the body of Christ every gift needed for the building of the body, including the wonderful gift of Giving, and that gift is primarily concerned with money. So let's define it. The gift of Giving is the Holy Spirit given ability to earn and give money for the advancement of God's work - and to do so with such wisdom and cheerfulness that the recipients are immeasurably blessed and strengthened.

Let me break it down for you in three distinct parts. Remember, we are talking about a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a special supernatural gift - the ability to earn and to give. Secondly, giving is done in wisdom and joy. Thirdly, the effects of the gift are the building of the body. In all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ is to be edified. It is to be built up. None the less is that true in the gift of giving.

Now, let me say, I have got to spend some time talking about our role, as Christians, in the whole matter of stewardship. I'm not talking here about the gift of giving - I'm talking here about our role in giving. Remember, we have said frequently that just because we do not have a particular gift of the Holy Spirit in an area, it does not excuse our disobedience to the clear commands of God in that same area. I have found that there is *no* spiritual maturity without generosity and obedience to the principles of giving that scripture lays down. There are no exceptions to the command to give. The well-to-do and the poor; the young marrieds with the low income and the high expenses, and those who are financially secure; those who are retired on fixed income; those who are single - in short, any who love Christ are to give, and to give with joy. Let me share three scriptures without comment.

Malachi 3:10: Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me, and are robbing Me. But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. You're cursed with a curse for robbing Me - the whole nation of you. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in My house. And test Me now in this, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no more need.

2 Corinthians 9:7: Let each one of us do as he has purposed in his heart - not grudgingly or under compulsion - for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Corinthians 16:2: On the first day of every week, let each one of you put aside and save that ye may prosper.

Giving is planned, intelligent, proportionate, joyous, and grateful. That's what the scripture teaches.

Now let me share some facts with you from American life. In 1978 Americans giving, all tax-deductible charitable write-offs, all United Ways, and the churches, gave 1.92% of their income.

In 1977, which was the last year for which complete figures are available to me, citizens of the state of Washington averaged \$8,450 per capita income, and in the state of Washington they gave to all charities and all churches an average of 1.7% of their income - or \$140. In 1977 total expenditures in the United States for recreation was \$81.2 billion. For food and tobacco, \$261.8 billion. For alcohol, \$28.2 billion. And for all charities and all churches and all community chests, \$15.4 billion. Yet we have the audacity to ask, like ancient Israel, "how have we robbed God"? When we live in the most blessed nation in the world? When our driveways are filled with vehicles that the garage doesn't have room for? We ask, "how have we robbed God"? I believe that your checkbook record tells, more accurately than your church attendance, the place that God has in your life and the level of your trust and faith in Him. I hope you're not getting angry, but so help me, this is the truth. The Biblical taught role *begins* with the tithe. It doesn't end there – it begins. Yet, if every worshiper in most congregations were on welfare in the state of Washington and tithed of their welfare receipts, giving in their congregation would go up. How have we robbed God?

Lest some of you think I'm pitching for a raise, know that I am adequately compensated for my job. I am not concerned with the coffers of my church - I am concerned with your spiritual condition. God Who said, in Christ, five times as much about stewardship as He did about prayer, said it for the same reason. I rarely speak this bluntly and plainly about money in public. And I had to apologize, as I said before, for not doing so, because a lot of people were being denied the joy and maturity in Christ because they weren't even aware of the fact that this is the role that scripture describes for the Christian. Tithing is a minimum. When it talks about tithes and offerings, it's talking about the tithe and then the offerings beyond that. It's taught by the word of God all the way through, and it's not abrogated by New Testament teaching. The reason it is taught is because it is to keep us from the subtle and powerful temptation to covetousness.

There was a major fund drive in our conference back in the central conference. Grandma Newman, an old lady in my church in Illinois, wasn't too sharp in mathematics and she put the decimal in the wrong place when she was figuring out what she was going to give. She called me one afternoon in tears. She says, "Pastor Bud, can you come over and see me? I'm really in distress." I went tearing over there thinking that the old lady was checking out. She really sounded very, very upset, and she was an elderly lady. And I didn't want her to die, because boy she was my prayer warrior. I would have felt like somebody cut my arms off if grandma Newman had gone to be with the Lord. When I arrived, she had spread out on her table little pieces of paper with numbers all over it. It was her bookkeeping system - it was really kind of funny. She used to cut down on her heating bills by collecting the newspapers from her neighbor. She didn't care - the news was usually bad anyway - so she'd read it a couple of days late and then she would tack it up to her walls. That's how she insulated her room. Her walls were thick with newspapers. I'm sure glad that she didn't smoke. Grandma Newman sat there with the tears running down her cheeks and she says, "Pastor Bud, I have tried every way I possible can to figure out how I can give what I really think, that according to my figures here, I should be giving to this major fund drive. I have figured out that even if I cut down my eating to six meals a week, I can't quite make it."

I said, "Let me see your figures, for crying out loud." I discovered the decimal place in the wrong slot, and I say, "Relax grandma, you can eat and still do it!"

She said, "You know, I'm so relieved about that, but that's not very much that I should be giving then. I think what I'll do is I'll treat myself to ten meals a week and then I can give a little bit more."

I remonstrated her, "Grandma, you're too old a lady. You need nourishment. You need balanced food."

She said, "I've stored up enough to carry me for a while, and the Lord never has shorted me yet." Then she said something that has stayed with me for years: "If I don't give it, Pastor, I get trapped into loving it." You know what that means? You whose income in one month equals grandma Newman's annual income? Do you know what it means to get trapped by the seductive siren call of possessions? The Limpic and Rayburn number which just haunts me when I hear it. The drive and desire to consume, just for the sake of consuming. I have never met a Christian who began to tithe with joy who later returned to the practice of not tithing. I've never met such a one. If you've practiced tithing and then retreated from it, I'd like to meet you.

Luke 6 says, "Give and it will be given to you, good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will pour it into your lap. For whatever measure you deal out to others, it will be dealt to you in return." Isn't it strange that when we got to a restaurant, even when the menu is overpriced and the food is overdone and the service - at best - is mediocre, we wouldn't dare leave without 10% tithe of the bill?

I've been fascinated. As the current political campaign rolls on, seeing the disclosures of financial statements and all of the rest - total earnings for a prominent national candidate. This week we found out that he gave less than 1% of income to all charities. Don't get smug if you know who I'm talking about because I've got figures on both parties and they both are terribly disobedient, and both candidates claim to be Christians. I am not judging them on the basis of their giving - I am simply saying that if we are to be obedient to the scripture, we must then recognize that to give less to God than we give to a waiter is a form of robbery. I know some readers are very disturbed and are already doing some mental calculations of "can I tithe?" and "I can't tithe" and "he doesn't know my cash flow", and I don't care. God knows your cash flow, and perhaps your cash flow problem is because you have been robbing God.

I don't want to entertain you with beautiful stories that have exciting endings. I can tell you people who have started to tithe and they have gotten into so much trouble, like my grandma Newman, when they went down to about six meals a week. There is no kind of a guarantee that when you begin to tithe and give offerings above the tithe that all of the sudden everything you touch turns to gold. It may turn to brass or it may turn to dirt. It is not what you get in return that causes us to exercise stewardship - it is because we have received so much! That's the role. Now I've got to get on to the gift.

There are five characteristics of the gift of giving. First of all, the gift has no relationship to the income of the person with the gift. Don't think, "Well, I don't have a four-figure, five-figure, six-figure, seven-figure income, so I don't have it." That's not the way it works. In fact, God's work has always been primarily been supported by people of modest means. Listen to what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8: "Now brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God that has been given in the churches in Macedonia." This is God's grace he's describing. "That in great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality." How does that hold together? "their deep poverty and joy overflowed in a wealth of liberality." How can they give out of their poverty? But they did. "For I testify that, according to their ability and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord - begging us with much entreaty - for their favor of participating in the support of the saints." Grandma Newman was a member of that church. If we begin to practice this, the ushers in our churches wouldn't get down the aisle, because people would be saying, "Please take some more!" Wouldn't that be a scream?

The gift of Giving has no relationship to the income of the person. In fact, it is more common a gift

among those in modest income than it is among the rich. Jesus tells the story - and Mark records it in Mark 12 - where the rich were bringing their tithes into the temple and they were dumping it out like hail on a tin roof, and everybody's saying, "Ooh! Wow!" Then this little old widow with her two mites (which is less than a penny) snuck in around the corner embarrassed and ashamed about the size of her gift in relationship to the rest, and she slipped it in the box and ducked back behind the post quickly. Jesus used her to illustrate that that woman gave more than all of those with enormous sums. And the economy of God still works the same.

The multitude is fed, not by some catering truck rolling up, but by the freely given loaves and fishes of the selfless one who trust Him. Thank God for the poor who know the joy of giving. Thank God for the rich who know the joy of giving too. But there's just a lot more of the poor that know the joy, because the rich have so often been seduced into blindness. And they are rich in goods, but poor in spirit.

Listen to what Paul writes to Timothy: "Tell those who are rich not to be proud or trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their pride and trust should be in the Living God Who always richly gives all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God's given, because by doing this they'll be storing up real treasures for themselves in heaven." That's the only safe investment for eternity, and they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well. Don't say, "I don't have enough. I must not have the gift of Giving." You can have the gift of Giving no matter what you've got.

Second, the person with the gift gives with crystal-clear motives. Not only is it not related to the income of the person, but the gift of Giving is with clear motives. That person does not give in order to get his name on a brass plate in the front of the church. That person does not give in order to have the bottom pane of the stained-glass window carry the title and so forth. That person does not give in order to use his giving as a power play to bring control into his hands. That person does not give in order to get in return. But that person who has the gift of Giving gives with the motive purely of glorifying God and building the body, and just has a ball.

Third, the person with the gift of Giving gives with delight and with the right attitude. He gives not because it's Christmas and the Salvation Army kettles won't leave him alone. He gives not because of pressure. He gives not because there's a trustee calling on his doorstep with a pledge card in hand and an expectant look in his eye. He gives because he wants the favor of participation in the body of Christ, and giving is his joy. Attitude is as important as the ability to give. If a Christian school has some fat cat come up with a half a million dollars and says, "I will give you a half millions dollars or a million dollars for a new library if you'll name it after my wife." That millionaire is describing himself as a person who does not have the gift of Giving. He has a lot of bucks to pass around, but he doesn't have the gift of Giving. Now, should the school accept? Of course the school should accept the money. Name it after his wife. Who cares as long as it serves the cause of Christ?

I had a predecessor of mine in Illinois who ran for mayor of the city and they tried to discredit the man. This is some years before, during prohibition, and the biggest bootlegger in town gave \$5,000 to his campaign chest, but had washed it through several organizations. This predecessor of mine in the Covenant church in Kiwana Illinois was holding a public debate with the other candidate for mayor and somebody stood up and exposed the fact that that \$5,000 contribution had come from the Boswells, the biggest bootleggers in the county. And he says, "Now, what are you going to do?"

He said, "Well, I spent the money."

Somebody said, "Don't you know that you've taken money from the devil?"

He said, "Good! The devil's had it long enough!"

In Matthew 6, Jesus warns against drawing attention to giving. He says we're not to give letting our right hand know what our left hand is doing. Some people don't want the right hand knowing what the left hand is doing because the left hand would be embarrassed if the right hand knew what the left hand was doing. That's not what that means. It means that our attitude is not one of pride or legalism, but it is of humility and of grace. R. G. LeTourneau, that many of you know about, the designer and inventor and manufacturer of those enormous earth moving machines that build our highways - there's a book written about him called "Mover of Men and Mountains". It's an exciting kind of a book. The assistant to the president at LeTourneau college, Nell Stetson, said, "LeTourneau does not view money as something to be accumulated for the satisfaction of looking at it, counting each day to check its increase nor as a measure of man's worth. He sees it only as a means to produce the machine that his mind has conceived or as a means to bring men to God. Although he has made and spent millions, he is remarkably detached from money as such. His only question is how much it can accomplish. In fact, he often says, 'The question is not how much of my money I give to God, but how much of God's money I can keep for myself.'" I have discovered that in the life of Christians who practice the teaching of scripture with regard to tithing that 9/10 has better stewardship exercised over it than 10% ever did.

Fourth, the person with the gift of Giving gives liberally, regardless of what that means in terms of total dollars. In Romans 12, when it says, "Let him who gives, give with liberality" (or King James translates it "in sincerity"), that word translated "liberality" is the Greek word *haplotēs*. The literal meaning is "joyful eagerness". "Let him who gives, give with joyful eagerness." I think of Barnabas in Acts 4, who sold his whole estate and turned the whole money in. He was that kind of guy. I remember in Alabama, they'd take the offering and the ushers would come down to the front and they would pray and they'd go out and they'd take the offering and then bring the offering plate back to the front and put it on the communion table. I remember the first Sunday I ever saw somebody put a dollar in in the front row and then when the ushers were coming back down the aisle, flagged him down and get change. I had never seen that before. I thought, "Gee that's interesting". This person had one of the best farms in the area. Most of them have five or ten acres of pecan trees and cucumbers. This guy had 45 acres and he had it in soybeans three times a year. He had three crops a year off that and he was a pretty comfortable guy. Yet every Sunday he'd flip out that dollar bill, lay it in the plate, and nail that usher every time they'd come down and get his change. I still think he took a buck and a quarter back in change. It was kind of the man he was. A small man. You'd just see it in him. But I remember one old lady that used to show up at the church, not very often, but every time she would, she would reach in her purse and take out a little coin purse and when the offering plate would come, she'd open the snap and just dump it. I don't know how much was in there, but I know what was in her heart. She just had a look on her face that was just gorgeous when she would do that. It was a bunch of change that fell out, probably 37 or 45 cents or something like that. But God took that little gift and He just blessed it way out of shape. That's the way He works.

2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Don't give grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Do you know that the Greek word translated "cheerful" is the same word we get our word "hilarity" from? Now put that together. "Let them give not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a hilarious giver." The offering ought to be happening not by the stony silence while we wait for special

music to start playing. It should have been filled up with people laughing and cheering! Would that be something!

Fifth, the person with the gift of Giving sees the work of God being advanced and the body built. He gets enormous joy and satisfaction from the results of his giving. He doesn't get credit. There's not something named after him. He doesn't have everybody applaud him for giving \$5,000. He's a person who gives and just gets a buzz out of seeing what God does with his money. You see, God can do so much more with our money than we can with it. He can take dirty, smelly, germ-covered money and turn it into men and women whose lives are changed. He can turn it into people like Wayne Perryman. He did something beautiful in my life. He can turn it into somebody like Bud Palmberg. And you. That's miraculous. If I control my money, I can't do any of that. If He has it, He does that and more.

Now remember the context for the utilization of all the spiritual gifts is first of all the local body of Christ. Some are going to get upset about this. But the reason I have a particular gift is to exercise it within that body. I believe the Bible indicates in a number of places that the tithe belongs to the church. The offerings - that can go any place. "Bring your tithes into My house that there might be meat in My house and to spare." I believe that because it keeps us from giving for the wrong motives - from giving to every appeal at the cost of short-circuiting the cause of Christ in the ministry, locally. It prevents us from giving to emotional or foolish appeals, giving carelessly, or indiscriminantly. You know the Boy's Town in Omaha, Nebraska? That's my hometown. I used to go down there and compete in invitational track meets they used to hold at Boy's Town. I used to come home from Boy's Town and wish I was to goodness that I was an orphan sometimes so I could live at Boy's Town. Every year we'd get mailings with stamps, you know. It has a picture of a little ragged kid holding another on his back. You've heard it: "He ain't heavy father, he's my brother." Oh that tear-stained letter. Little old ladies and little old men on fixed incomes all around the country send in their dollar to Boy's Town. Do you know that seven years ago there was an investigation of Boy's Town and they found they had an endowment fund equivalent to \$257,000 per boy? "He ain't heavy father." He's carrying the money! It is the giving to those kind of emotional appeals, without having access to the facts, that makes it so dangerous to give indiscriminately and unwisely, and to scatter gun to every appeal. My mailbox is cluttered with appeals. Yet I know if I gave \$10,000 to that appeal, it wouldn't even pay for that slick mailing.

Did you know there is a document from the second century called the "Didiki", which says "Let thine alms sweat in thy hand until thou knowest to whom thou givest." The body of Christ must exercise responsibility. And we are to exercise our giving and our gifts for the building up of the body with wisdom and discrimination.

Maybe this is a central area in your life where you have been disobedient to your role as a Christian. Maybe you've really been uncomfortable - in fact you're a little bit steamed. You've been slightly amused, but you are also a little upset. Perhaps you ought to obey. Maybe you have been given the gift of Giving but you've never used it because you keep reading your balance sheets all the time, and Satan has made you fearful. Let me challenge you to give proportionately. If you already tithe, increase the proportion. If you don't, for goodness sake at least get up where you belong to start. Offerings build on that. If you are serious about Christ as Lord of your life, then promise your obedience to Him and demonstrate your trust in Him. Don't tell me about the economy. Don't tell me about the cash flow. I'm in the same economy. I've got the same cash flow. Tell **Him**. The question is: do you trust Him enough to be faithful to Him? Test it out in a practical way. I would like to challenge you to experiment for a minimum of three months. You won't get your finances in order in less than that. Start to tithe now, because you need to give. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, this is what he said

and this is the closing challenge, in 2 Corinthians 8: "You people there are leaders in so many ways. You have so much faith." (gift of Faith) "You have so many good preachers." (gift of prophecy, plus others) "You have so much learning." (gifts of knowledge and of wisdom) "You have so much enthusiasm." (gift of exhortation) "So much love for us." (the gift of helps and mercies, etc.) "Now," he says, "I want you to be leaders also in the spirit of cheerful giving." (the gift of giving)

Go into a world whose sense of well-being and blood-pressure is tied to the Dow Jones averages as men and women who are storing for themselves treasures in heaven and having a delightful time sharing their treasures on earth for the furtherance of His Kingdom and the incredible joy of seeing others born into it.

Chapter 22. The Gift of Hospitality

On the Sabbath day we went outside of the city by a riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one who worshiped God, heard us. The Lord opened her heart to listen to the things which were spoken by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Acts 16:13-15

The end of all things is at hand, therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. Above all, hold unfailing your love for one another since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudging to one another as each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

1 Peter 4:7-10

The storm was absolutely terrific. The snowfall, which was coming down faster and faster every hour, was matched only by the velocity of the wind which took the snow that had already fallen on the ground, and put it back in the air again until you couldn't see anything. It was a textbook blizzard by almost any definition. Since I was in junior high, I thought that was a fantastic gift that I had received, because it meant (obviously) no school. You couldn't even *find* the school. But there was a kind of tense concern in our home because my dad was on the road. He was traveling those days, selling wholesale auto supplies and we knew he was in a big enough truck that it was very unlikely that it would get stuck if it stayed on the road, but we had no guarantee, with the weather the way it was, that he even knew where the road was. He had called several hours earlier saying it was as far as York, Nebraska. That's 22 miles from home. How long does it take to go 22 miles, even in a snowstorm? When six hours had passed and there's still no sign of my father, we began to really be concerned. At last, in the night we saw the big dim glow of the headlights of that truck as it swung into the driveway at the house. I remember that I, in spite of my mother's protests, went charging out into the blizzard to welcome my dad home, without my coat or overshoes.

We found out later why it took him 8 1/2 hours to cover 22 miles. Every time he encountered what looked like it could be a car buried under the snow, he would stop and get out and wade his way over and clear off the window and knock on the window and try to open the door and see if there was anyone in there. We found that out because, when dad got out of the cab, four people got out of the cab with him. Then he walked around to the back of the truck and opened the doors and eleven people and two dogs came out of the back. So we had fifteen guests and two dogs for two and a half days, during a Nebraska blizzard in a house that wasn't really prepared for a blizzard for our family of six. My mother ordered people right and left, she put on her sergeant stripes and she ran a tight ship - people slept on the floors and couches and on tables and under tables and dogs and cats - oh it was a zoo. And my mother had a ball. She enjoyed that so much that she vibrated when she thought about it. That is probably a rather bizarre evidence of the gift of Hospitality. On occasion, even the local hotel, when some natural calamity (like flood, fire, or snowstorm) would fill its rooms, would call my mom or dad and say, "We're full and we've got a family here. Do you suppose you have any room?" In a little town, you can be known that way. I used to think that was great, although I thought it was kind of dumb that they never collected whatever they would have had to pay at the hotel. You see, I was

always out for the bucks.

Hospitality is not listed in Paul's major listing of the gifts either in 1 Corinthians 12 nor Romans 12, nor is it listed in Ephesians 4 in the briefer list, nor does Peter list it in some of his references. However, I need to remind you that my interpretation of the biblical listing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not exhaustive - they are indicative. If they were exhaustive and definitive lists - if these are the gifts of the Spirit and there are no more - then you've got a problem, because you have to say that the church at Rome had a different set of gifts of the Holy Spirit than the church at Corinth, because there are some gifts that are mentioned in one and not mentioned in the other. But I believe that both lists of those major gifts lists are merely indicative of the creative power of the Holy Spirit, and of the fact that His gifts are varied - they just cover the map. Whatever the needs, He is capable of giving gifts. We must guard against the kind of thing that Christ warned Nicodemus against, when in John 3, He says that the Holy Spirit is like the wind. You sense and feel it, and know that it's there, but you cannot control it. Don't let us try to put the Holy Spirit in some little box created out of our narrow theology. Let's know that He is indeed God the Spirit and He can do as He wills.

So I believe that when Peter writes in 1 Peter 4 that we are to practice hospitality without being grudging and then in verse 10, the very next verse, moves right on saying we must exercise whatever gifts we have been given as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. There is a very clear connection and link in Peter's mind between the exercise of gifts and the one that he has just mentioned. That is, hospitality. I believe that I can demonstrate from the clear teaching of scripture that hospitality is a useful gift in the body of Christ, and is desperately needed.

The word "hospitality" is very close to the word "hospital". It comes from the Latin word "hospes" which means "guests". The early hospices were really havens for travelers. These hospices were established by religious groups and by religious persons. The reasons that they established them is number one, there were no Travel Lodges or Hiltons or Roadway Inns in those days, and beside that what inns did exist were little nothing more than brothels. A person was not really safe, physically, morally, or financially in those places. So religious groups and religious individuals established hospices – havens. Usually it was just an extra room in their little village house that they allowed people to come and stay in. Preferably Christians. If they would find a fellow believer, they would gladly open the door of their home and extend hospitality. "Hospice" means "guests". In the 15th century, however, the secular world began to see this as a market and they moved into it for economic reasons. When the secular world broadly moved into it, it cleaned up its act and began to establish these places. Then the word "hospice", while still in use, began to refer primarily to those that the secular business man was not interested in having - that is, the sick, the infirm, and the handicapped. And so the word "hospice" began to adapt itself to the modern term, "hospital", which means the place for people to go whose needs are critical, genuine, physical, and who are not going to be cared for in the average inn.

It is that kind of root meaning in the word that forms the background of the whole word "hospitality". So, hospitality is not to be determined on the basis of the ability of someone to pay. That is not hospitality. When you check into a motel, they want 85 bucks for a night and the guy says, "Your host is glad to welcome you". Well, now I don't need any hosts like that! If he's really my host, he ought to give me the key for nothing. If he is a businessman, renting me the room, fine. But don't play games with the word "host".

Now, it's obvious to any student of the New Testament that God made great use of hospitality to facilitate the church's growth. Paul describes the church at Corinth this way, "Consider your calling

brethren. Not many wise, according to the flesh. Not many mighty. Not many noble." There were exceptions to the rule, but the majority of Christians were common ordinary, low-class, people. The early Christians would hardly be entertained in the civic leaders' homes. They were not the kind of people that got the red carpet treatment when they arrived in town. They were usually ignored. Certainly this is true of some of the poor and the itinerant. Remember also that the early Christians in their travel were frequently fugitives from persecution. They would not be safe in the road houses of the day; they would not be entertained in the civic leader's homes; and they were barely out of jail. So there was an enormous need for hospitality.

We're talking here primarily about the supernatural gift - that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember our definitions always pretty well start the same. The gift of hospitality is that supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit given to some members of the body of Christ to open their hearts and their homes to those in need of their love, food, or shelter. It's a simple definition. In the New Testament church, growth relied on the faithful exercise of this gift. In the modern day church, the body of Christ must also rely upon this gift. For the healthy reproductive maturity of the body of Christ, we must not come to a building in isolation, worship in isolation, and go home in isolation. We are called as members of one body. There must be an inter-relatedness that is far beyond a simple theological assent. We must practice what it means to be a part of the body life because we are called to body life, not isolation.

Look at the Bible for some illustrations concerning this. If you look in Luke 10, you are reminded of the fact that Jesus very often received hospitality from one particular home on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It was the home of those three single young adults: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, where Christ felt some of the greatest continuing warmth of hospitality. It is recorded that almost every time He went to Jerusalem, that's where He stayed - with His disciples. What a household!

It's interesting, if you look at Luke 10, because it tells that account of where Jesus shows up with His disciples (it's at the feast of the Tabernacles) when all of the cooking and so forth traditionally was done in leafy bowers or booths, constructed outside the home as reminders of the wilderness wanderings. That meant that the housework was really magnified and made more difficult. Jesus arrives with His disciples and Mary is sitting at His feet, and Martha is running around like crazy. Her hair's down in her eyes, she's perspiring something terrible, her bread is burning up in that outdoor oven, and the bower is starting to lean to one side, while Mary sits there. Martha finally comes up and says, "Master, can't You say something to my sister so she'll help?"

Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you're distracted about so many things. Mary has zeroed-in on what's really important." Now, let me use those two girls as an illustration of a distinction. Martha wanted to entertain Christ. Mary wanted to be hospitable to Christ. I think that's a distinction I want to say a little bit more about later on.

Peter, as one of the early New Testament itinerant preachers of Good News obviously needed the support system. He had given up his fishing business and he had no visible means of support. He traveled all over Israel, primarily, and he made some trips into the Gentile country as well, and he needed the support group. If you look at Acts 9, there's only one reference among many, it tells about Peter arriving in Joppa (that's the story where Dorcas was raised from the dead - a lot of new converts came as a result of Peter's ministry there) but there's a little statement we almost throw away. We don't really notice it much, in Acts 9:43, "And it came that he stayed there in Joppa many days with a certain Tanner by the name of Simon." Simon's ministry is exercising the gift of Hospitality. He freed the apostle Peter for the kind of ministry that was so staggeringly successful, even the dead were raised. Don't ever say that Simon Peter's gifts and his ministry was not enabled by the gifts and ministries of

Simon the certain Tanner.

Another illustration: Paul, the itinerant preacher par excellence who traveled the whole world of his day, in Acts 16 it records two times when hospitality was exercised on his behalf. One of them, beginning with verse 11, is about Lydia. Lydia, by the way, apparently was a single woman. Lydia also was a professional person. If she had been working in modern-day society in America, she probably would have had a shop - a boutique - handling nothing but Gucci. She was a seller of purple. And if you understand anything of the Biblical culture, you know that she was really in the carriage trade business. She was a very successful, prosperous, business woman. She is also a woman who made a commitment to Christ, who had devoted herself to prayer. She was at the prayer meeting down at the riverside. Then it says in verse 15 (Paul and Silas are talking) "and she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon them." And then you read the account and they're there and they stay with Lydia until the next place that they stay is jail. Because Paul and Silas are then used by God to heal the little girl who was possessed by a spirit, striking the vested interests of those who were exploiting her problem, and the result is they're thrown in jail. That's interesting too, because after the earthquake and the chains fall off and the doors open, and the conversion of the jailer, what is the first Christian act of the jailer? Look at that, verse 34, "and he brought them into his house and he set food before them and he rejoiced greatly at having believed in God with his whole household." Hospitality was the first act of this babe in Christ. It was a natural thing: the opening of his home and larder, for the needs of those who were there.

There are so many examples in scripture, but I want to refer to just one more. In the Old Testament, there's a very interesting story that's told about a man by the name of Elisha who was the successor to Elijah - the one who called down fire from heaven. Elisha was an itinerant prophet just like Elijah, and one of the places he frequently went was to the city of Shunam. And it says in 2 Kings 4:8, "Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunam where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food and so it was that as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat. And she said to her husband, 'Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there and a table and a chair and a lamp-stand. And it shall be that when he comes, he can turn in there.'" That is a wonderful illustration of the exercise of the gift of hospitality. By the way, those of us who live in homes far bigger than our real needs - have you ever considered the fact that God has so gifted you and so privileged you for the purpose that you might have a tool for ministry that you hadn't really considered? I don't mean sitting around waiting for a chance to have Billy Graham stay overnight. I mean using the gifts that God has given to you for those who are in need. Particularly, it says "do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith."

So what are some characteristics to this gift? First of all, those who have the gift of hospitality enjoy it's exercise. In the account that it tells about Lydia, it says that "she urged and prevailed upon us". She wasn't paying some sort of social obligation or a theological debt. She really wanted Paul and Silas to come and stay. Hospitality for the gifted person is a joy. It is not the fulfillment of a social obligation. It is not a nuisance. It is not a grudgingly accepted duty - it is a life enriching enjoyment.

Second, those with the gift practice hospitality as opposed to entertaining. Entertaining is soft glowing candles reflected in the sheen of polished silver. Entertaining means you not only straighten the living room, you scrub the living room and you straighten the attic. Hospitality means "come in". And there's a difference that is noted by the one exercising that gift or entertaining, and the difference noted by the guest as well. I look with kind of sad bemusement at that commercial that comes on television advertising some sort of dish washing product. There's a house full of guests and everybody is all

excited and it's just a great delight. The hostess is in the kitchen and she's very excited and she says, "All I need to do is get out the crystal". Then a well-meaning friend (usually a mother or sister or something) takes out the crystal and *gasp!* it's got water spots on it! The whole thing's going to come unglued because of those awful water spots! Then in comes this product, which saves the day. Well, if you are troubled by water spots then you're not talking about hospitality. Water spots on crystal is a good reason to use the jelly glasses, with the person that is exercising the gift of hospitality. Because it really is not a matter of what it's held in - it's a matter of a cup of cold water given in Jesus' name. That's the difference. When you are being hospitable, you're not being fussy and both the guest and the host are at ease. How many times did my mom get a call from my dad's store, "Esther, you'd better water the gravy and put more bread in the meatloaf because there's a family down here - their car broke down, they don't have any money - we're going to have to have them here overnight, okay?"

"Okay," she'd respond, and they'd hang up. So mom would water the gravy, put bread in the meatloaf, and it really made it taste weird, but it reached. And we would have another family for the evening. Sometimes I kind of resented that whole thing. I always got pushed out of my bed onto the floor. Sometimes, if they didn't have much clothes, then what little clothes we had went to them too. But my mom and dad just enjoyed that. Now, mom did not run around the house, cleaning the house because people were coming home. She was too busy watering the gravy, and she always figured if they looked in the corner and saw that dust, they shouldn't be looking in the corner!

Sunday drop-in visitors used to happen all the time in rural Nebraska. You'd hear a car door slam and mom would peek out the drapes, dad's sleeping on the couch, we kids had the funnies all over the floor, and mom would say, "Oh, so-and-so's here!" She'd wake dad, she'd grab the newspapers and she'd dump them behind the couch. Then she'd open the door, "Oh, we're so glad you came over! We weren't ready - you'll have to excuse the place. In fact I had to throw the papers behind the couch." She'd say that! I always felt, "Why throw them behind the couch if you're going to tell them you threw them behind the couch?"

You see, my mom (among her other gifts) really did have the gift of hospitality. It was a joy to her to have people that she could give of herself to in the house on a regular basis. Sometimes I was a little embarrassed, Emily Post would have been just appalled over the whole house, but it really didn't bother mom.

I am not inferring that hospitality is sloppy or untidy. I am saying that there are things of more primary importance than sparkling windows and glowing silver. Leslie Flynn puts it better than I ever could: "It is not the magnitude of menu nor the excellence of entertainment that matters, but rather the warmth of wantedness."

Third, those with the gift know how to minister to their guests' needs. I spent one summer traveling with a team from North Park. My wife did the same thing a couple of years later. I stayed in over 60 homes in one summer (that's where I met my wife - I stayed in her home - so it's to be recommended. I am just absolutely delighted that North Park sent me on that trip so many years ago). I can recall being entertained in about 58 of those homes. Hospitality was exercised in two of them. I was there for public relations for the school. I was supposed to smile. I was supposed to behave. I was supposed to brush my teeth. Everything had to be a good image for the school. I was so tired of smiling, so tired of being gracious, so tired of answering stupid questions, so tired of relating to false accusations, that I could have bagged the whole thing. Except, every so often, God would give me the joy of being in a home where the people had the gift of hospitality. And boy, I could just feel the difference. It was one of those kinds of places where you just felt so much at ease. Not because they were close to your age.

In fact, one of the homes that stays out in my mind was a home in Bradford Pennsylvania - a little home and it was a little old man and a little old lady in greatly advanced age who could hardly hear, and his false teeth just kept dropping. I couldn't understand him because every time he'd go to say a vowel, his teeth would drop and get in the way. And it just broke me up. This little old lady and me, we had so much fun laughing about his teeth and talking about how he ought to get them fastened up. Silliness! But I felt so much at home - they were just like family and I felt like family. But most of the time I was in some homes that were spectacular in their beauty, and such neat wonderful people, but they were entertaining me, and that was uncomfortable.

A person with the gift of hospitality knows when the guest needs to be engaged in conversation and knows when the guest needs to be able to just sit there alone. I remember one time that Dr. Albrecht Olsen, president of North Park College and Theological Seminary was a guest in our home. On that occasion, my mother was entertaining. She was in the kitchen fussing with a great big ham and pineapple rings and crab apple rings and peas and corn and peas and it looked like something she'd seen in a magazine. Whenever mom would have the magazines out, she was entertaining. Now I was supposed to be entertaining the guests also, but I was in junior high or early high school and this man was a man of age and dignity and bearing, and he was the president of a school and I wasn't really too much interested in it. So I volunteered to help mom in the kitchen since dad wasn't home from work yet. My little brother, however, was around, and he was tearing around the house. I can remember hearing from the kitchen about the same time mom did, my little brother banging on his tin drum (and those things are awful) and shouting "March man, march!" My mother and I ran to the door and looked into the living room. There was my little brother with his tin drum and my sister's band hat on, and there's Dr. Albrecht Olson, president of North Park College and Theological Seminary standing there in his three-piece suit with the chains across his tummy and all his dignity, with my sister's baton in his hand, following my little brother around the table to his hollering "March man, march!" I remember thinking, "Oh mom's going to kill that kid". I said, "Mom, you want me to go in and break that up?"

Mom said, "Leave them alone, I think Dr. Olson needs to march."

Do you understand what I'm trying to say? I believe that the person with the gift of hospitality doesn't *assume* needs, but *understands* the needs - and responds eagerly and joyously to those needs.

The fourth thing: a person with the gift of hospitality exercises their gift as part of their ministry. That is, they do it to the Lord, and they do it with joy and eagerness. But, mind you this: they are not ignorant, and they do not allow their gift to be abused by others. Here is a warning that is given in 2 John 10: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching," (the teaching is clearly described in the first nine verses) "do not receive him into your house and do not give him greeting." There are limits to Christian hospitality. That does not mean that unbelievers are not to be recipients of your hospitality. Indeed, they must be. But it does mean that those who are teaching, and who are adamant in their opposition to the things of God, are not logical and described guests in your home.

Fifth: those with the gift of hospitality are not caught up with concern over reciprocity. Do you have one of those little books some place in your house? "August 24th, were entertained at supper at so-and-so's house." And then you starred the calendar so that before six months have passed, you have reciprocated and had them over? Because if you don't, oh my goodness, it's a social breach! Now you're talking about entertaining, and that may be nice. But those with the gift of hospitality, realize that whether they have socially paid someone back or not, or whether someone over socially repays them, is really irrelevant to the living of the Christian life. If you're keeping score, brother or sister, you've got a problem. Jesus, in Luke 14, even suggests that we should exercise hospitality on people

who have nothing with which to repay us, and that avoids that.

The next major thing I want to say is that you may not have the gift of hospitality, but brother or sister in Christ, you have the role to be hospitable. That is part of what it means to be a Christian. Church, we are commanded to practice hospitality. In Romans 12, we have a great chapter about the gifts of the Spirit, but also a description of the Christian's role as a Christian. Verse 13 instructs us that we are to give generously even if we don't have the gift of giving, and we are to practice hospitality. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, "Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers." Paul instructs Titus, that young pastor, in Titus 1:8 that one of the characteristics that should mark the leadership of that local church Titus was serving, was that they "are given to hospitality." It doesn't say "gifted", it says "given to". Jesus in John 13:20 says "Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, receives me. And he who receives Me receives Him Who sent me."

There are enormous needs in the body of Christ to sustain and practice hospitality on behalf of touring groups, for instance, who couldn't pay the hotel and buffet bills and still carry on their ministry. There's a need for the traveling itinerant preacher and evangelist and other people who are traveling in the service of Christ. But believe me, there's also a need for longer range hospitality.. Not because you've got zeroed-in on some guy's spiritual scalp and to bring him to Christ - God knows that *ought* to be a motivation - but it is primarily obedience operating in conjunction with your gift. Hospitals: people come from out of town to the major hospitals in our area and relatives have to be here and how often my congregation has been enormously blessed because people in the congregation have opened our homes to these strangers from out of town while their loved ones are in need.

But our congregation's greatest need is the lonely believer in our midst, whose heart is hungry for fellowship in spite of their appearances of having it all together. There are men and women in our congregation who are longing for hospitality. They don't want to be entertained. They don't want to be amused. They don't want to be diverted. They don't want to sit with sixteen pieces of silver by their plate. They would be happy with watered gravy and bread in the meatloaf if somebody would care. I say that with a certain degree of firmness and impact because there are people who were once in our congregation but are no longer in our congregation. They have left us, not because they hadn't sensed the warmth of our worship, not because they have not been fed in every way necessary, except they have left because they came lonely, they were here lonely, and they went away lonely. That was disobedience to God on our part.

Now I know that when we make up our guest list for a party or for some kind of fun time, it's really neat to have those people that we have spent enough time with so that we don't have to worry about whether we're going to offend or do anything dumb. But have you ever thought of the possibility of one of the most meaningful ministries you and your home can have to others is the simple cup of cold water the peanut butter and jelly sandwich or the chicken from Albertson's that says "come on over and share our home"? That is a ministry that we need to have. The only qualification for hospitality is need. There are a lot of single young adults that are lonely. There are a lot of widows and widowers that are lonely. There are a lot of families that are lonely.

I don't want to give the impression that to exercise the gift of hospitality means that you can't use your candlelight and silver. Some people exercise their gift of hospitality by means of candlelight and silver. Certainly you understand that. I'm just saying that it is not a prerequisite.

Chapter 23. The Gift of Pastor

And He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man to the measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result we are no longer to be children.

Ephesians 4:11-14a

Leslie Flynn tells the story of a flower girl in a wedding rehearsal who, when she was introduced to the minister, said "Are you a preacher or a pastor?"

The minister said, "Honey, do you know the difference between a preacher and a pastor?"

The little girl's response was, "Well, I think a preacher thinks a lot about himself, but a pastor thinks a lot about his people."

There is some truth to that kind of a distinction. When we are talking about the gift of pastor - or the Pastoral gift - many are surprised because they've got that locked in their minds as a profession. It's a profession that requires a mysterious call, a minimum of eight years of schooling beyond high school, a special super-spirituality, and an eagerness to pray or take an offering at the drop of a hat. And anyone who has that, has the call or the gift of Pastor, but everybody else is left out. I believe that there's a confusion between the office of the clergy (or the office of minister) and the gift of pastor, and I want to point out that distinction. Let me describe three church situations that I'm aware of.

Church A has a pastor who went to that church and found it absolutely in disarray. No one knew who was responsible to do anything and so either everybody tried to do it and got in each others' way and angry with each other, or no one tried to do it and it fell apart. This pastor arrived on the scene in that church. It is now one of the most smoothly-operating organizationally functioning things you've ever seen in your life. Everything in the church runs in grease. The only problem is, all of his people feel like they're little names in the pastor's organizational chart. Everybody feels somehow like a number, or a computer printout. His sermons are really beautifully outlined, but they are kind of lifeless. Broken and confused people rarely go to him for counsel. In fact, now that everything's running so good in the church, they wish he'd leave. And he would, and he will, when he gets a chance.

Church B has a pastor who can preach and communicate the basics of the Christian faith so well, in such a captivating way, and such an understandable way to the non-initiated into the Evangelical lingo, that non-believers come to know Christ. Numbers of them. All week long, this man loves to walk the streets, drive around town, park his car, go in and fill up for gas, fill his tires - do anything just to have a chance to interface with people and share Christ. He does so in such an effective way, exercising his gift of evangelism, that many, many people come to know Christ, and these people come into the body of Christ in the church this man is serving. If you go to his church, you sense a great deal of what you sense when you go into a nursery. When you go into a nursery filled with little kids, there's a very decided aroma in the air - it is made up of a number of different ingredients, none of which I need to describe for you. It is filled with noise and confusion: babies cry when they're hungry or wet or feel like it; babies spit up; all kinds of things. That's kind of like this church. It's full of spiritual babies. There's a lot of life. There's a lot of excitement. And many of the people that are babes in Christ in this

congregation have been babes in Christ for ten years in his congregation. They aren't growing. They were brought into new birth. There's a very active obstetrical ward, but there's no pediatrics. The people aren't growing, and they're hungry for meat, and they wish he'd leave. And he will leave when he finishes some of the plans to become an itinerant evangelist.

Church C has a writer that is a genius. A conversation with him that lasts for more than thirty minutes will strain your brain unless you're a genius too. He has the ability to write in a very articulate and precise manner. He doesn't waste words with his writing. What a joy to pick up a little thin volume that he's written and find it is chock full of more content than several volumes of many of the popular books that are written in the religious field today, because there is so much fluff. Not him. He teaches in major Bible conferences all over and boy can he lay out the meat of the word. College professors love it and seminary students eat it up, but there hasn't been a spiritual birth in his congregation since he's been pastor there. Nothing's happening. Oh people are growing. They're being fed the meat. They are becoming mature, but they're not doing anything with their maturity. His people wish he'd leave too. And he will too, as soon as the chaplain job at a college opens up.

What's wrong with those churches? I want to describe a very real problem that we see in churches. Did you know that the average length of the pastorate in the United Methodist church is two years and six months? The average length of pastorate in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America is five years and three months? Why? And why is it that the first six months or a year or two years that the pastor is in his church, everybody is trying to get acquainted, then they do some work and then as soon as that work is done, they wish he'd leave? Then the last six months or last year of the man's pastorate, things are just unrestful. Why?

Part of it is because of the problem that is involved in transferring responsibility for the work of the ministry to one person. Somewhere along the line, churches A, B, and C, that I referred to, have lost sight of the Biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. They have lost the realization that there is a distinction between the office of the ministry (called the "clergy") and the gift of Pastor. Somehow a pastor is viewed as super-Christian, and he must be looked to as the fountainhead of all knowledge and wisdom and virtue. When he is not, which is most of the time, then the murmuring begins. Sunday's menu reads "Roast Beef and Roast Preacher". That is not honoring to God, nor is it according to His plan and purpose. In that kind of a church, there is little for the layman to do, because there is little the laymen are *allowed* to do, or know they *can* do, except come, support, and listen. In that kind of a church, the pastor is under an unbearable burden. He is totally unable to evangelize and counsel and bring healing and care for the poor and the lonely and the needy and expound the scriptures and teach and be a man of prayer and a student of the word of God, and challenge the forces of evil in his community. The result is that both the church and the clergy are frustrated, angry, and spiritually lethargic. The result can frequently be schism. The discontent of churches A, B, and C with their minister was due to a lack of the pastoring gift in operation in the body, and their erroneous assumption that this gift, in particular, exclusively resides in the office of clergy. It does not.

It is to avoid that kind of misunderstanding that Paul wrote our text. "He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers..." Why? "For the work of the ministry." What? To equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That's you people. The goal is that we, all together, are no longer children, but become mature in unity. It is to avoid this kind of failure that I've been preaching and writing on the gifts and the Holy Spirit, in order that you might know yourself - not only as redeemed - but as gifted. Yet with the gift of pastor, we slip back into confusion again.

What does it mean to be a clergyman - the office of pastor? The Bible uses several terms as synonyms

for our word "pastor": elder, presbyter, overseer, bishop, shepherd. In fact, the Greek word "episcopos" can be translated either "bishop" or "overseer". Obviously, it is the root from which the word "episcopacy" comes from. As such, a person was limited to one particular location. You don't find a person being an elder in this church and an elder in this church at the same time. There is a deep, longstanding relationship between the elder and that church. As such, he was referred to frequently as a "ruling elder", and such people who we refer to as "ruling elders" were (in all likelihood) full-time, supported economically by the body that they ruled over. But the analogy of "rule" is modified by the terminology "shepherd". That analogy is one who cares for the flock: guarding from wolves, feeding, seeking, tending wounded, and calling the stray. Persons like that, who have been called to the office of pastor (or clergy), to bear rule in the church are called to exercise their authority - not on the basis of power trip or waving their ordination papers around, but they are called to bear rule in the church by the authority of an authenticating life on their own part. That's why Paul was able to say to the churches that he wrote to, "you know how you ought to follow my illustration."

I am extremely conscious of the fact that I have no authority except that which is accrued to me by the spiritual stature that God, by His Spirit, allows me to attain. I am not called to tell you what to do alone, but I am called to model for you what it means in our world. That's why I continually seek the opportunity to interface with the world, like you do. Not keeping myself within the confines of the body of Christ - insulated from what you have to face, day after day. That's why I stay with Operation Nightwatch and find interfacing with the world on the most basic and brutal area and way possible, because I want to know how you struggle and I want to have the same struggles and I want to come out, by the Spirit of God, on top, so that I can say "Come join me, it can be done." That's the role of the office of the pastor - not force of personality.

The qualifications are marks of character. "It's a trustworthy statement, Timothy, if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? And not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the Devil and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church", on and on and on. You see the kind of job description that's laid out. It is not the office that gives the right to rule within the church - it is the authenticating life of the man or woman who has those gifts and exercises them. The clergy seeks to develop and grow the spiritual life of the body by applying the word of God to its life as well as his own. For he, indeed, is a part of the body. Implied in that (to my way of thinking) is a loving and a lasting relationship with the flock that gives a pastor a chance to know the people and give them a chance to know him and care deeply about one another. Many of the people who are called "pastor" in the United States today do not have the gift of the pastor. Nor do they even need it, in many cases, because not everyone who has the gift of pastor has to be in the office of it.

Ray Ortman, a pastor for many years at the Lake Avenue Congregational church in Pasadena California (a tremendous church of 3,200 members), did not have the pastoral gift. He was a tremendously effective clergy. One of his outstanding pastors - one of the fellows who was one of the most important men in his congregation - had lunch with him every year. He felt himself to be one of the elite because they're only 365 lunches in a year, and he had 3,200 members.

I don't care what you think of Bob Schueller and his glass cathedral at Garden Grove community church, but the fact of the matter is Bob Schueller has 7,000 members and he does not have the gift of

the pastor. He says so too, and he doesn't need it, because Bob Schueller has 789 people in his congregation who have been identified as possessing the pastoral gift and are exercising it on behalf of many churches within that large body.

That's why I say: don't assume that the man who stands behind the pulpit, Sunday after Sunday, in any church, is the repository for all of the gifts that are called upon and described as a pastor. His may be other gifts, or his gift mix may be in a different direction. You too may have been called. There is not a person that the Bible says will equip the man of God adequately for every good work. It is the word of God that will equip a man adequately for every good work. I hope to goodness that you dear reader know how to feed yourself from the word of God. 2) Some people are in the office of clergy or pastor have the gift of evangelism or administration or exhortation. In church A, B, and C, which I described, those fellows had gifts which are gifts of the Holy Spirit and they were utilizing their gift for the building up of the body of Christ, but everybody else is sitting around waiting for him to do everything, and that's the rub.

What is the pastoral gift then? The gift of the pastor is the supernatural ability given to some members of the body of Christ to take a long term and personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of other believers. That's what it means. I praise God that there are those that have this gift and exercise it. Some have it and don't know its a gift. But I want you to know that it is.

In most churches this gift is not seen as operative in the layman because nobody's looking for it there. But that's where it is, as well as in the clergy. It is not limited to full-time clergy, but anyone doing the work of a shepherd on behalf of others. Notice while Peter writes (not to a seminary, but to a church under persecution) in I Peter 5, he writes to the elders (plural), "therefore I exhort the elders among you" (not "over you", not the guy that's the pastor in the church) "as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and partaker also of the glory that's to be revealed, you guys shepherd the flock of God among you." Clearly this is a shared ministry - not an area of academic specialization - but of Spirit-empowered giftedness. Paul and Barnabas' ministry to the church is described in Acts 14, "And when they had appointed elders for them" (for the churches, in every church). "having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" Again, Paul's counsel to the church elders of Ephesus given in Acts 20, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseer, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." It is the work of the Holy Spirit: He has called, He has gifted, and He has placed. To shepherd is from the Greek word "epoemon" which has been translated into Latin as "pastores" which is the same word we get our English from: pastor. So when we say "pastor", we think in terms of high-tone spiritual specialist. But that's not what it means. Originally it's meaning is "epoemon" which means to "shepherd" - to care for. Same counsel is then to the elders to shepherd or to pastor the church. That's what scripture says.

What are the characteristics of the pastoral gift? 1) The person who is called with the gift of Pastor is to feed. To teach. This teaching is to be taught by counsel and by example. Let me give just two Biblical illustrations. In Titus 2, it tells older women in the congregation that they have a pastoral responsibility to the young women in the church. The older women are to be models and illustrations and teachers of the younger women. We have all been called to a ministry to build up together the unity of the body of Christ. What's your gift? It may be described by Paul in Romans 15, "I myself am satisfied about you, my brethren" (he's writing to lay people). He says that "you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another." Will you stop leaning dependently upon your hired pastor? They can't carry it. If you try, you're going to be frustrated. We are part of a body that the scripture says is thoroughly furnished. There is no way in which I can be

pastor, with all that that means in terms of shepherd to 700 or 800 people, that cannot be. It was never intended to be. That's why God calls us and, by His power of the Holy Spirit, has gifted us all with His gifts. In my congregation there are those who have the gift of the pastor. I know it, and it doesn't make me insecure - it makes me do handstands, because it is a shared ministry.

2) Not only do you feed, but you guard. Paul says to the elders in Act 20, "I know after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert." Part of the role of those with the pastoral gift are to guard. Let me refer, very briefly to a painful incident in the life of my own congregation. Several years ago they generously sent my wife and I to Israel. It was our first trip and it was an absolute delight. While we're over there enjoying the incredible experience of walking where Jesus walked, sitting in the garden tomb, of being able to cruise on the Sea of Galilee and walk the streets of Capernaum, we didn't know it but back home the body was being attacked by wolves. I can recall very much coming home late one Friday night, jet-lagged, and when I went on the drive home, there was a letter on my high-boy in my bedroom and it said, "I hate to lay this on you as soon as you get home, but this is what's happened in the time that you've been gone". It's not necessary to go into details - it's just that the body was really under attack and there was an attempt to attack the sheep and scatter them. But by the time I got back, after two weeks, it was over. Without the pastor being there. Everybody called, "Oh! Where's pastor Bud?" "Pastor Bud's not here, he's in Israel. We can't even call him back." So what happened? Those in the body with the gift of pastor began to function and the body was guarded, fed, and gathered together until the danger passed. They were brought back into the fold - back into the flock. They were fed, they were encouraged, the confused were straightened out. When I got back, I was so thrilled with what God had done while I was gone. And I am so glad I was gone, because I probably would have handled that thing in a very brusque and brutal manner. But the body functioned in love and all that is now healed. Even the wolves have become sheep again. Praise God for His goodness and for the functioning of the body of Christ, as the pastoral gift was manifested among it.

3) They need to direct the straying, wandering sheep. When you know that somebody is wandering away from the Lord, your job is not number one: call the pastor. That's not your number one job. The scripture says, "When any member of the flock is disobedient to the Lord's command, you who are spiritual, restore such a one." (Galatians 6:1) It says in II Thessalonians 3 that, "you are to go to him and admonish him", or her, as a brother or a sister. The pastor is there for the really tough cases.

4) The one with the gift of the pastor has a shepherd's heart. They pour themselves out on behalf of the sheep. They see the wounded and they're moved to bring healing. They see the wandering and they want to admonish. They see the erring and they want to teach by example and by precept. They see the frightened and they want to bring comfort. They see the lost and they want to find creative ways to find them.

5) A person with the gift of pastor is one who is portrayed, not so much by a description of his job, but by the fruits of the Spirit: patience, kindness, long-suffering, gentleness. You see, they're committed for the long haul. They don't give you the one/two and then walk off. They're the kind of people who lash their lives to yours and give themselves like a shepherd for his sheep. Leading, feeding, guarding, loving, weeping, and caring. I Peter 5 describes them "shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God, not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, not yet lording it over those given to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Let me illustrate it by this illustration. Each Sunday, in Sunday School, you will find there are a

number of teachers who are teaching not because they have the gift of teaching, but because they love Jesus Christ and are being obedient to Him, and they have the training and they'll learn. They commit themselves to it. There will also be some that are teaching that have the gift of teaching. There will be some that will be teaching, sometimes among the children, sometimes among the older people, who when they teach they are well prepared, they are well prayed up and when they teach, they teach with a certain degree of finesse and expertise and ability. They will pray for their class and for their own selves during the course of the week, but you won't see them again until next Sunday unless you happen to accidentally bump into each other in Safeway. However, you will find that there will be some that are teaching who will be in contact with you rather regularly. If you happen to be a youngster and you're in their class, they show up at your soccer games, you go out for pizza together as a gang. You just spend time together. You sense that the commitment they have that is not to that time frame on Sunday morning, but that the commitment is to you. Do you know what that is? That's the gift of pastor - the pastoral gift. To lash your lives to those whom God, by his Spirit, has given to your care. Not everybody has it. Not everybody needs it. But, the body needs several. I'm in the office of pastor, but nobody (including myself) thinks I can do it all, or knows I'm doing it all. But together as a body, we can. As you exercise your pastoral gift in your home Bible study or your fellowship group or the caring group, in just the way you lash your lives in a long-haul relationship with other people. We're all a team in ministry.

By the way, do you have a pastoral gift? How would you like to bump it up one degree and become the pastor of a congregation? Maybe for children's church. I can't think of anything more exciting than being pastor of church for little people. Frankly I'd be a lot more excited about it than being pastor of the church of the big people, because the fact of the matter is, there's not too much I can do about the adults - they've already been pretty well shaped. The Holy Spirit can do all kinds of incredible things but they've already wasted a lot of their lives if they haven't found Christ until their maturity. But, those little children! No wonder Jesus said, "that's the kind of people the kingdom of God's made up of." Maybe God has called you or me to be pastor to the church for little people once a month for eight or nine months. What a joy to give yourself in a loving service to those whom God calls blessed of His Kingdom.

Hebrews 13, "Now may the God of peace Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

So go to a world of lost and confused sheep as one who has been found by the Shepherd and called to the task of being under Him.

Chapter 24. The Gift of Apostle

Therefore remember that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “uncircumcision” by that which is called “circumcision” (in the flesh, made by hands), that you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in his flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man of the two, making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility through it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near. For through him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-22

As I finish this book, I am greatly encouraged because God's master plan for the church is terrific. It has also been a relief for me to have been reminded by the Spirit that I am not the one that the weight of the growth of the body of Christ in the spirit of unity, and the bond of peace, doesn't rest on my shoulders. It's a shared ministry and each of us have received, by His Spirit, gifts which enable us to do our part in that ministry and to do it effectively and well and with joy, which is one of the marks of the Spirit. I want to remind you again that the Holy Spirit's gifts are given to the body of Christ as needed in order to equip us for the task that is ours. Not mine, but *ours*. That task is to build up the body of Christ - His church. Not a denomination or a building, but a people who have been called and translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son by the grace of God and through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 4, beginning with verse 11, "And He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ and as a result we are no longer to be children."

The very first gift that is listed there is the gift of the Apostle. In considering this gift, I have to make it very clear that there is a distinction between the *office* of the apostle and the *gift* of apostle. I believe that the office of the apostle has ceased - it no longer exists. It was a new testament office, and I'll give you some documentation on that. But the gift of the apostle is still being exercised on behalf of the body of Christ in the world at large. So, first of all, let's look: what was the criteria for being considered an apostle in the new testament? There are four.

1) those who were called apostles in the new testament were personally chosen by Jesus Christ Himself. If you will look at Mark 3, you will discover that when Jesus chose the twelve, His motivation is given, "And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, that He might send them

out to preach and to have authority." There are three facets. He called the twelve that they might be with Him, that He could send them forth, and that they might have authority. They were personally chosen. In fact, the word "apostomos" in the Greek means "one who is selected or commissioned as commander of a fleet of ships." Anybody that is commander of an armada carries with it authority, as well as responsibility. The word is heavy with that meaning.

2) One who is an apostle had been with Jesus during His entire ministry here on Earth.

3) They had seen the resurrected Christ.

Both the second and third criteria (been with Jesus during the entire ministry and being witnesses to the resurrection) are reflected in Acts 1. Acts 1, the setting is the apostle Peter, who was one of the leaders of the apostles - a natural-born leader that God had set aside and gifted in certain ways to lead - was chairing a meeting of the other apostles, and he said, "Fellows, Judas betrayed Christ, he's dead. He's gone. We have got to replace him." And here is the criteria, "It is therefore necessary", Peter says, "that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us." That's one of the criteria: been with Him through the entire ministry. "One of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection." In other words, somebody who had witnessed the resurrection now unites with them in their united witness to the resurrection of Christ.

4) That they had the power of working miracles. There are a lot more, but I refer only to three passages. In Acts 2, it says that many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. Acts 5, "and by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." Acts 8, "that through the laying on of the apostle's hands the Holy Ghost was given." The purpose of the miracles and powers that were given to the apostles was to authenticate their message, because their message was to become the foundation of the church. Indeed, it was the apostles' writing that makes up our new testament. So we read in the scriptures that it is the household of God, built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles. It is necessary, therefore, for the apostles to have an authenticating witness to the fact that their voice is the Voice of God. There are many people therefore that believe that some of those sign gifts (the miracles and the healings, and others) at least have diminished, if not disappeared entirely, because with the death of the apostles their particular function of those gifts has died out. I don't happen to believe it to that degree, but I do believe that it has diminished, because its need is no longer quite the same. Now, the Holy Spirit can bring that back any time He wants to, and sometimes He does.

Therefore, the new testament seems to have a defined, official meaning to the word "apostle". In fact, in Revelation 21 it says that when the new Jerusalem is constructed, the twelve foundation stones will have the names of the twelve apostles on it. Further, Jesus says in the gospels that the twelve apostles will be the judges of the twelve tribes of Israel. So there was an official sense in which the office of the apostle took place, and that office passed out of existence with the closing of the new testament.

What was the role of the apostle? The answer in general terms is given in Ephesians 2. Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus which is made up primarily of gentiles (non-Jews), and he said, "you non-Jews are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you have become," (with us Jews), "fellow citizens with the saints. And you alien gentiles outside the pale, you now are part of God's household. And that household, remember, is built, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

The primary task, then, of the apostles was having been trained by their experience with Christ, having been witnesses to His resurrection, having been directly called and commissioned and empowered by Christ, they were to take the things of Christ as Jesus had told them they would, "The Holy Spirit will come and take things of Mine and declare them unto you." They would then develop this into the full foundation upon which the church was to be established. So Paul says later on to the Ephesians that, "you now are part with us of the church, which is the household of God which is solidly built upon the foundation which is the teaching of the apostles." That's the primary task, and that task was finished with the new testament. Only those writings which were considered to be from apostolic sources were accepted into the canon in the new testament. In fact, one of the major tests of the canonicity of any writings that was candidate for being in, in the council of Carthage was: was it written by an apostle? And the only three writers in the new testament that were not considered to be apostles are Mark, Luke, and James. Paul, of course, was but he received a call from Christ on the road to Damascus and He was a witness to the resurrection. But Mark was a young fellow - a teenager raised as a personal friend of Peter and most people believe Mark acted as Peter's secretary in writing the gospel of Mark. The gospel of Luke was written by a physician who was a kind of physician to the apostle. Certainly he was with the movement into the gentile world. And James, who wrote the book of James, was the brother of Christ.

Now, a question: does the gift of apostle exist today? The office of apostle has passed, but does the gift exist today? I think it does and I think that the new testament demonstrates that while the office of apostle was limited to the twelve, the gift and ministry of the apostle is not so limited. For instance, Paul was called an apostle. The whole book of Galatians is an argument in backing up his claim to apostleship: he was called by Christ on the road to Damascus and yet when he went down to Jerusalem, Paul never considered himself to be one of the twelve. He considered himself to be an apostle, but not one of those twelve. Others in the new testament that are called apostles: Acts 14 calls Barnabas an apostle. Galatians 1 calls James, the brother of Christ, an apostle. I Thessalonians calls both Silas and Timothy apostles. In Romans 16 Andronicas and Junia are called apostles (and you didn't even know they were there!) It would seem that there is, therefore, a continuing aspect of the gift of the apostle - especially in the light of I Corinthians 15 when Paul is writing about all of the witnesses to the resurrection, he says "He appeared to the twelve and then to the other apostles". There had to be more.

The gift continued although the office was blocked in. In II Corinthians 11 and Revelation 2, the warning is given against false apostles. Well you don't have any problem about false apostles unless there are continuing the gift of apostles. Therefore, here's the definition: The gift of apostle is the supernatural ability given by the Spirit of God to some members of the body of Christ, enabling them to establish and to exercise extraordinary authority in spiritual matters over a number of churches, often in trans-cultural settings.

Don't be too impressed with that definition. It's not all that original with me and it sounds a little complicated. What it really says is that the office of apostle has ended, but the gift of the apostle enables some, in an amazing way hard to understand from a human point of view, to church plant and exercise authority and guidance over a number of congregations and frequently in a trans-cultural setting. A missionary, for instance. Let me try to illustrate it from church history. Boniface was known as the apostle to the Germans, and when you read the story of Boniface, you are impressed with the fact that as he went to Germany, he would preach the gospel in such a holistic way that people would gather the whole meaning of the gospel - the basic teaching - then he'd move on. From that congregation would spring other congregations over which Boniface exercised a type of authority, and they listened to him. Not because he spoke with the power of an office; because he spoke with the power of one who was so gifted. Egede, the apostle to Greenland - the same kind of thing. Adinoram

Judson, to Burma. William Carey, to India. Hudson Taylor to China.

In the Covenant, we have our own Peter Matson, who had the gift of an apostle as he went to China. A farm boy, kneeling down at noontime, having devotions beside a haystack out in the middle of a farm. There he has a vision of Christ calling him to go to China. Peter Matson had a tough time with English, but he went to China, and God uniquely gifted him by the power of the Spirit. He founded a congregation here and there and here and there, over which he exercised an amazing level of authority. Not because anybody said, "that man's your authority", but because they recognized the authority that came with him.

C. T. Studd, not only established churches and exercised the gift of apostle in China, but also in India and then to Africa. On three different continents! There's no explanation for that kind of ability. There's no human that is capable of that. It is a supernatural gifting of the Holy Spirit. They have the apostolic gift of imparting whole faith in churches and even the nations.

What about today? Are there any apostles today? I throw around these big names like Egede, Judson, Carey, and all these people and you say, "what's that got to do with me?" Well, there are a couple that I would say are rather high visibility who have the gift of apostle today. I think of Cho Yonggi who is the pastor in Seoul, Korea, who has some 50,000 members in his congregation, but the congregation meets in some 2,000 "cells". And of these 2,000 cells, making up over 50,000 members, pastor Yonggi exercises an enormous degree of authority. With a sweet, gentle, quiet spirit - he doesn't sound like bombast and wall street. He doesn't speak with power. He doesn't speak to them from a power broker base. He speaks to them from a gifted base.

Here in the United States, I think probably I would have to say somebody like Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California. He seemed to be nobody – no one had ever heard of Chuck Smith. Even in Costa Mesa they'd never heard of him. Until all of a sudden in the early 60s with the Jesus People movement, he became very well known, and he was uniquely gifted to be flexible. The Jesus People flooded a lot of churches and the churches just had a stroke - they didn't know what to do with these people! They didn't use the evangelical language and they didn't even wear three piece suits, and it just blew the minds of the churches. But Chuck Smith was uniquely gifted in his congregation down there, so that now he ministers through Costa Mesa Calvary Chapel to over 25,000 people every week. Additionally there are almost 95 other Calvary Chapels that have sprung up, having been spawned by that ministry, that are stretching all the way to the east coast now. This is not because Chuck Smith said, "I'm going to start a denomination of my own because I'm the only one that's got the truth", like most denominations started. Chuck Smith started that work simply to carry on the ministry where there was no place where the ministry could effectively be carried on by those to whom He'd been sent. I understand Chuck Smith exercises an authority over those churches that is just something to see. He is a very soft spoken gentleman - balding and dumpy and 51. But Chuck Smith has got a voice of authority that people listen to. Not because he speaks with bombast or because he has some big clout. But he speaks and he is expected to be obeyed and heard. And he is.

Now some people refer to this as the "missionary" gift. In fact the Living Bible translates it that way, but that limits it to a cross-cultural ministry and Peter and Paul were both apostles. Peter to the Jews - he couldn't cross cultures at all. He had the biggest struggle you ever saw when he tried to minister to the gentiles. In fact, he kept waffling back and forth. Paul, he had his greatest ministry among the gentiles, and he had a tough time with the Jews.

Notice one other thing: the gift of the apostle does not stand alone. Anyone who has been given the

gift of apostle also has other gifts, which the gift of apostle enables them to use. For instance, I believe that some of the people that I've referred to have given ample evidence of the fact that they have the word of wisdom. They exercise the word of wisdom in an enormously effective, broad-based way, because of the enabling gift of the apostle. I don't want to spend too much time on this, but let me suggest that it is altogether possible that God has called and gifted you with the gift of apostle. One way in which you can test this out is in a cross-cultural exchange. We have enormous opportunities in today's society for short-term missions work. Let me tell you that one way in which you can test it out is this way: if you go to another culture to see if maybe, cross-culturally, you've been given this gift, and in that other culture you find that the food makes you sick, the natives make you irritated (they just don't do it the right way!), you want to spend all of your time with the Americans, and you dream about hamburgers and french fries, you don't have that gift. But, if instead, you find yourself kind of drawn into their culture, you almost become acclimated to them, you almost start to think like that other culture, you love them, and you're patient, then you discover you may have that gift.

I have a very dear friend that went onto the mission field and he went with his wife and he felt he had the call, mistakenly, because his wife didn't. God never calls one without calling the two, because in God's sight, you are one. So don't say, "Well, I wish God would get ahold of my wife, because He's called me to go here and she doesn't want to go." Forget it mister! If God called you, He calls her too – He lets her in on it. Same way the other way, ladies. Well, this guy went, and he went thousands of miles away. When they got down there, he loved it and she hated it. She tried to turn her home into a little part of America. They came home after four years, she spoke less of that language than I do, which is nothing! And she'd lived there for four years! She fought it all the way. Well that obviously was a demonstration that she did not, and I don't think he did either.

Now, some people discover that they really do have this gift. By the way, you don't have to go across the waters. We are becoming a different culture. When the scripture says that we are pilgrims and sojourners and strangers, believe me we are! If you have any intelligent interface with our society today, you know you're a weird one as far as the world's concerned. You are thinking different thoughts, you have the Kingdom mentality, and the Kingdom mentality is different than this world is. You know it. Some of you that are trying to work out a smooth interface between the world and the Kingdom are having problems. Let me tell you, you're going to keep having problems, because it can't be done. We are sent to be in the world, but not of it. So be in it, like salt and like light in darkness. But don't try to be of it. There's no way you can be integrated. It just doesn't fit. More and more, I discover that my ministry here on Mercer Island is a cross-cultural ministry. We're dealing with heathens. We have heathens in my congregation. I don't mean "not religious people". I mean "non-Christian people". I'm delighted and thrilled that they're here. I'm flattered that they're here, because we've got some good news to share with them. Wonderful news to share! But listen, brothers and sisters, when you get out in this world, you better know you need at least a little touch of the gift of apostle if you're going to have any intelligent interface with our world. The platforms and patterns are different.

Chapter 25. The Gift of Singleness

When Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee and came into the borders of Judea beyond the Jordan. Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there.

Pharisees came to him, testing him and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?"

He answered, "Haven't you read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?' So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, don't let man tear apart."

They asked him, "Why then did Moses command us to give her a certificate of divorce and divorce her?"

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery."

His disciples said to him, "If this is the case of the man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry."

But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this saying, but those to whom it is given.

Matthew 19:1-10

The last gift I'm going to cover is not listed in any of the major lists, but I want to refer to it because it is illustrative of the open-ended view that I have of the Holy Spirit's gifts. The Holy Spirit has not limited His gifts to any particular list. If He had then we would wrestle with the problem of why did the Roman church receive a different set of gifts from the Holy Spirit than the Corinthian church did, or than the Ephesian church. I think these are indicative, and I want to point out one that finds itself elsewhere than those major gift lists.

I've talked sometimes about how sometimes the gifts of the Spirit are hyphenated: you've got this and this, and this and this and this. The combinations are mathematically staggering. In the last chapter I mentioned my friend that went to this foreign country with a wife who wanted to stay in America even though she lived in the foreign country. Could you imagine what would have happened if that man was really called of God to be an apostle and at the same time had had that call coupled with the gift of singleness? Yes, that's a gift. Some of you single people, take note. Some of you married people, shape up and pay attention.

I am referring to what I consider to be a gift of the Holy Spirit called the gift of celibacy, or the gift of singleness. In I Corinthians 7, Paul is busy giving counsel to the church at Corinth. And he's giving them all kinds of guidance with regard to marriage and divorce and remarriage, with regard to the sexual relationship between husband and wife, and you might find that, husbands and wives, very instructive to go home and to read that especially the first twelve verses very carefully and obediently and you might find some changes are taking place in your own lives, and in your own relationship. Now in the middle of all of that, Paul gets kind of impatient and he comes as close to gift projection as I want to accuse Paul. Because he says, "I wish that all men were even as I myself am", by which he means "single". "However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, one in another, and I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it's good for them if they remain like I am. But if they

don't have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn." And when it "than to burn", it's not talking about eternal damnation and hell - it's talking about being aflame with sexual passion. The Bible doesn't play games euphemizing, like we sometimes do. It just states the way it is. Paul says, "I wish you people were like I am. The task is enormous, the time is short. We don't have time to be messing around building our nests, we need to be moving out. And I wish there were more people like me that are willing to be in the gorilla outfit, who are willing to penetrate our society with all of the risks that it took." Have you ever read that list of things that happened to Paul? All the times he was beaten and stoned and shipwrecked and clobbered? Can you imagine the problem it would have been if he had a wife and kids to worry about? Or to worry about him? That's why he said, "I wish you people were like me, man, and we could really move!" But then he stops. He interrupts himself and he says, "Not everybody has that charisma." That gift. The very same word that is used all the way through the new testament relative to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not everybody has that gift. "A variety of gifts" the scripture says, "but the same Spirit."

So let me define it. The gift of singleness is that supernatural ability given to some members of the body of Christ to remain unmarried and enjoy it without undue sexual temptation. Now, that's a gift. You notice I have been using the term singleness and celibacy synonymously. Not because I am unaware of the sexual realities of our society, but because I am insistent upon the Biblical realities of Kingdom living. Kingdom living says if you are single, you are celibate. If you are married, you are married and are sexually faithful to your spouse. No exceptions. No rationalizations. No contemporary arguments for the new morality, which is just current dress for the old immorality. It doesn't change a thing. Don't give me this hogwash and baloney about "meaningful relationships" and all the rest. The scripture makes it very plain: sex outside of marriage is dishonoring to God, destructive to the sex, destructive to the marriage, and destructive to the person. Sex outside of marriage is sin. It's that plain.

Now, with that in mind, if you are single and you know in your heart of hearts that you would eagerly marry if given any reasonable opportunity, you don't have that gift. And, if you are single and suffer from the frustration that comes from unmet sexual desires, you don't have that gift. But, if you are single and are really pretty picky about who you are going to marry and not too anxious, eager, or shopping, and if you are single and your sexual needs, while they're real and you recognize them, do not cause you undue frustration, you may have the gift. If you have the gift, like the gift of apostleship, it doesn't dwell alone. That has freed you for the exercise of some of the other gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to you.

Some married people seem to think that ever since Noah brought them two by two into the ark, the only way into the Kingdom salvation is two by two. They are running around like a bunch of amateur Yentas trying to match up all these beautiful girls with all these handsome guys, and they need to butt out. It's none of their business. I'm serious about that. I feel within my own heart sometimes, when I see some of the beautiful single people God's given to us as a congregation, "Oh what a neat wife she would make for somebody" Usually the guys think that. The ladies look at the men and think "Oh, what a wonderful husband he'd make for somebody". But that's not in your hands. If it really bothers you and you think the Lord has told you to match two people, go to one of them and say, "Hey, you mind if I set you up with a blind date? I think you'd really like that person." Then if the person says "yes", go ahead and do it. But if the person says "butt out", then butt out and don't be bad about it. Because the cause of Christ throughout history has been carried enormously on the broad shoulders and the free-to-move aspect of those with the gift of singleness.

Some of them have discovered the gift of singleness later in life, after the death of a mate, and God has

honored this tremendously. Paul goes on to say, "I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he can please the Lord. But one who is married is concerned about things of the world, how he can please his wife. And his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried and a virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But one who is married and is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is seemly and to seek your undistracted devotion to the Lord."

I am not a supporter of celibacy as a part of a job description. I saw a classified ad which said, "would you like to be a Catholic priest" Underneath it there was a little line item in that said "celibacy optional". I don't believe in that. I believe that in such churches as the Roman Catholic Church, with celibate clergy, part of the problem is that some of them have not been called to that kind of a life. To try to live that kind of life means that, according to Paul himself, it is possible to be aflame with passion it is possible to get caught in all kinds of problems. But when the gift of celibacy is truly given as a gift, it allows a singleness of purpose that is beautiful.

I have a pastor friend that's a bachelor. He has resisted all of the best efforts of all of the maternal instincts in the whole denomination. He's still single and he loves being single. We're off at a conference someplace and I'll say, "I got to get back to the motel because I promised my wife I'd call tonight." He doesn't have to call home. I don't either, but I want to. I want to let her know I still love her. I'm clear across the country, but "hey you're still special to me and how are the kids and the house hasn't burned has it?" He doesn't have that kind of concern. His resources are not being squirreled away to try and help with the education of kids when they want to go to college. He doesn't worry about that kind of thing. He doesn't pay high insurance rates for teenage drivers, or any of that kind of stuff. So when he senses God leading him in a direction, he throws his toothbrush in his bag and splits. While I'm spending time I love and enjoy with my family, he's writing another book, preparing another sermon, carrying on another ministry, and neither one of us would trade places with the other one, because we are operating in conjunction with our gifts.

John R. Stott, that great expository preacher, that marvelous writer and scholar of England is a single person who has been called and gifted to the single life. The productivity of his life is enormous and the whole body of Christ benefits because of it. In Zaire, during the wars of independence, the covenant experienced great threats against their mission stations there. When the Simbas were crowding down around them, we had to evacuate our mission stations. But much of the mission work in that part of Zaire is medically related. Some of our medical personnel said, "we can't stay away, we've got to go back. There are people that are going to die without our care." So some of them went back, leaving families on the other side of the river in safety. Some of them that went back had to be evacuated a second and a third time. Enormously costly. Enormously emotionally wrenching for the families involved. Indeed, Dr. Paul Carlson paid for it with his life. While his family is safe on the other side of the river, he himself was shot down by the Simbas.

How much more effective and efficient it is to have a kind of special cadre of men and women whom God has called and gifted to the single life, who are able to give themselves. So singles, when somebody says "how come a nice girl like you isn't married?" You straighten your shoulders and say, "God wants it that way." If He does. If you would be happy to marry at almost any reasonable opportunity, leave your name with your pastor and maybe he can point you toward a potential husband. But understand God has called us to be part of a body and we are really in need of each other.

We have now come to the end of the gift listing that I'm going to spend the time with, but I want to

remind you: the task that we've been called as a church to fulfill is an absolutely supernatural task. There is no way we can do it. None of us are smart enough or good enough or clever enough. So God, knowing that, has gifted us with gifts from His Holy Spirit, enabling us to be intertwined because we are interdependent, since no one has them all. So He enables us then to build the body of Christ to the unity and peace of His Spirit. I praise God for it! Let me remind you now from the scripture, from I Corinthians 12, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and a variety of service, but the same Lord, and a variety of workings, but it is the same God Who inspires them all in every one. Each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." There isn't a Baptist Holy Spirit, and a Covenant Holy Spirit, and a Lutheran Holy Spirit, and a Full Gospel Businessman's Holy Spirit, and a Women's Aglow Holy Spirit, and a Chuck Smith, or Swindol, or Wesley, or Stedmen, or even a Bud Palmberg Holy Spirit. There is only one and we are bound together, brought into His Kingdom by being birthed by His Spirit into that Kingdom, gifted by His Spirit - not to celebrate our separateness, but in order to effectively minister our oneness. How I praise God for each person who is using/exercising their spiritual gift! May God, by His Spirit make us all sensitive to what ours are, that we might use them for the benefit of the whole.

So, in the name of Christ, you are sent to your ministry, knowing full well you're outnumbered, outsmarted, and over-matched except by the power of the Spirit who dwells within you.