

Discipleship Training Course

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- The Old Testament tetragrammation name of God (derived from the four Hebrew letters translated into English as YHWH) has been rendered LORD unless translated Jehovah or Yahweh
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- Speech marks around entire quotes and at the beginning of new paragraphs have been omitted
- Anglicised spellings have been used
- All quotes begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop
- Some weights, measures and times have been replaced with easier to understand terms given in the footnotes using square brackets
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Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

Contents

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Key Scripture
 - 1.2 Background
 - 1.3 Principles
2. Wisdom
3. Knowledge
4. Faith
5. Healing
 - 5.1 Introduction
 - 5.2 Healing from sickness
 - 5.3 Healing from disability
 - 5.4 Healing involving deliverance
 - 5.5 Emotional healing
6. Miracles
7. Prophecy
8. Discernment
9. Tongues
10. Interpretation of tongues

1. Introduction

1.1 Key Scripture

*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the **word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit; to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit, and to another the **effecting of miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another **various kinds of tongues**, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NASB1995)

1.2 Background

As already covered in Chapter 6, some believers contend that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today due to a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, claiming that they ceased when the New Testament was agreed upon (canonised) at the Synod of Hippo Regius in AD 393. However, this was clearly not the experience of many later believers, such as the many healings recorded in the Venerable Saint Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the British People* (1969). It is also poor hermeneutics because the Corinthian believers would not have understood "perfection" coming as referring to the canonisation of the New Testament so it should not be used to have this meaning for us today. What is undisputable, however, is that

there was a general cessation of spiritual gifts for a long period in the Dark Ages but they have clearly been restored to the Church in recent times, at least since the Pentecostal revivals which started with speaking in tongues in Topeka, Kansas on 1st January 1901 (Synan, 1997).

1.3 Principles

Paul introduces spiritual gifts by first stating that **the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good** (1 Corinthians 12:7). This emphasises that the way they are used should always be a blessing to others, although sometimes this might involve confronting wickedness. Spiritual gifts work best when they are used in conjunction with the fruit of the Spirit, especially love. Paul described the way of love as the “more excellent way” compared to operating in gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31b). Gifts of the Spirit therefore enhance the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit are sufficient in themselves to draw people to Christ (John 13:34-35) but the gifts are not. As noted in Chapter 10, gifts without fruit do not ensure salvation. However, gifts demonstrate the creativity and power of the Father and can act as an additional testimony or sign to encourage people to believe in God:

So they were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in Him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?”

John 7:30-31 (ESVUK)

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.

Hebrews 2:3b-4 (NIVUK)

The operation of gifts within the body of Christ is likened to the operation of different organs within a body, emphasising unity in diversity:

For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot would say, “Because I’m not the hand, I’m not part of the body,” it is not therefore not part of the body. If the ear would say, “Because I’m not the eye, I’m not part of the body,” it’s not therefore not part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the smelling be? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now they are many members, but one body. The eye can’t tell the hand, “I have no need for you,” or again the head to the feet, “I have no need for you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. Those parts of the body which we think to be less honourable, on those we bestow more abundant honour; and our unpresentable parts have more abundant propriety; whereas our presentable parts have no such need. But God composed the body together, giving more abundant honour to the inferior part, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. When one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26 (WEBPB)

We should concentrate on the gifts which build up the Church (1 Corinthians 14:12) and earnestly desire the greater gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31), especially the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1). 1 Corinthians 14:1-25 compares speaking in tongues with prophecy and argues the supremacy of prophecy. There is no definitive hierarchy provided in the Bible for

the 9 spiritual gifts mentioned in the key passage, although 1 Corinthians 12:28 gives a partial ordering. We shall therefore explore each gift in the order given in the key passage.

2. Wisdom

We begin by considering wisdom in general. According to James, earthly wisdom is selfish and evil but God's wisdom is pure:

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favouritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 3:13-18 (NLT)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7). We should desire wisdom and understanding above all else (Proverbs chapters 2 and 4). Through His crucifixion Jesus became for us **wisdom from God**, which is our **righteousness, holiness and redemption** (1 Corinthians 1:30), although the world considers this as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). We must therefore fear the Lord, desire wisdom with all of our hearts and walk in the way of the cross before seeking to operate in the gift of wisdom.

Whilst the message of the cross is like foolishness to the world, we have received a message of wisdom through the Spirit:

We speak wisdom, however, among those who are mature, but a wisdom not of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will pass away. But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age has understood. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even 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? So also, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 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. And we speak of these things, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. Now the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual discerns all things, and he himself is judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD, that He should instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16 (NHEB)

Wisdom is particularly important in **trials**. James encourages us to ask God in faith so that we are able to overcome any trial:

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask Him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

James 1:2-8 (NLT)

Whilst wisdom should be a characteristic of all Christian behaviour there are times when a supernatural level of wisdom is required through the Spiritual gift of wisdom. Solomon was wiser than anyone else who had ever lived (1 Kings 3:12, 4:29-34) because he had asked the LORD for a wise and discerning heart rather than riches and honour (1 Kings 3:9). There was one ruling in particular which demonstrated his supernatural wisdom:

Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king, and stood before him. The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house. I delivered a child with her in the house. The third day after I delivered, this woman delivered also. We were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, just us two in the house. This woman's child died in the night, because she lay on it. She arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, it was dead; but when I had looked at it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, whom I bore."

The other woman said, "No; but the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son."

The first one said, "No; but the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." They argued like this before the king.

Then the king said, "One says, 'This is my son who lives, and your son is the dead;' and the other says, 'No; but your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.'"

The king said, "Get me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king.

The king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

Then the woman whose the living child was spoke to the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and in no way kill him!"

But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide him."

Then the king answered, "Give her the living child, and definitely do not kill him. She is his mother."

All Israel heard of the judgement which the king had judged; and they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do justice.

1 Kings 3:16-28 (WEBPB)

However, later on, he disobeyed God's command not to amass too many foreign wives and his heart was led astray by them (1 Kings 11:1-13).

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated supernatural wisdom on several occasions:

Early in the morning He came again to the temple. All the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test Him, that they might have some charge to bring against Him. Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask Him, He stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more He bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. Jesus stood up and said to her,

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

John 8:2-11 (ESVUK)

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to trap Him by what He said. They sent their disciples to Him, with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are truthful and teach truthfully the way of God. You defer to no one, for you don’t show partiality. Tell us, therefore, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

But perceiving their malice, Jesus said, “Why are you testing Me, hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the tax.” So they brought Him a denarius. “Whose image and inscription is this?” He asked them.

“Caesar’s,” they said to Him.

*Then He said to them, “Therefore give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **When they heard this, they were amazed.** So they left Him and went away.*

Matthew 22:15-22 (HCSB)

James, the leader of the apostolic council in Jerusalem, also demonstrated the gift of supernatural wisdom:

And all the people kept quiet, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul reporting what signs and wonders God had done among the nations through them. After they were silent, James answered, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has reported how God first visited the nations, to take out of them a people for His Name. This agrees with the words of the prophets. As it is written, ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David, which has fallen. I will rebuild its ruins. I will set it up, that the rest of mankind may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My Name,’ says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. “Therefore my judgment is that we do not trouble those from among the Gentiles who turn to God, but that we write to them that they abstain from the pollution of idols, from sexual immorality, from what is strangled, and from blood. For Moses from generations of old has in every city those who proclaim him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. “Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brothers.

Acts 15:12-22 (NHEB)

Paul once made a distinction between his personal advice and a direct instruction from the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12) although he also sensed that some of his personal advice carried divine authority (1 Corinthians 7:40).

3. Knowledge

Knowledge is not a virtue on its own: we need to know the right things in the right way:

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge”. This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 (ESVUK)

Hosea describes the consequences of not walking in love, faithfulness and the knowledge of God:

*There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
You shall stumble by day;*

*the prophet also shall stumble with you by night;
and I will destroy your mother.*

***My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest to Me.
And since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children***

Hosea 4:1b, 5-6 (ESVUK)

Proverbs encourages us to get knowledge and understanding as well as wisdom (Proverbs 2:2-9, 4:1, 5, 7). However, we should not lean on our own understanding but rather trust in God with all of our hearts and seek understanding from Him (Proverbs 3:5).

It is through God's word that we gain understanding:

*Oh, how I love Your law!
I meditate on it all day long.
Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies.
**I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on Your statutes.
I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey Your precepts.
I have kept my feet from every evil path
so that I might obey Your word.
I have not departed from Your laws,
for You Yourself have taught me.
How sweet are Your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!***
***I gain understanding from Your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.***

Psalms 119:97-104 (NIVUK)

It is this kind of knowledge and understanding that we should seek. If we study too many books apart from God's wisdom we will wear ourselves out:

The words of the wise are like [prodding] goads, and these collected sayings are [firmly fixed in the mind] like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd. But beyond this my son, [about going further than the words given by one Shepherd], be warned: the writing of many books is endless [so do not believe everything you read], and excessive study and devotion to books is wearying to the body.

Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 (AMP)

The gift of knowledge normally refers to receiving a specific factual insight into another person. There were several occasions when Jesus knew other people's thoughts (although this is not a common use of this gift nowadays):

*And at once some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man blasphemes." **But Jesus, knowing their thoughts**, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"*

Matthew 9:3-4 (NHEB)

But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, "No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan, the prince of demons."

Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart."

Matthew 12:24-25 (NLT)

*It also happened on another Sabbath that He entered into the synagogue and taught. There was a man there, and his right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. **But He knew their thoughts**; and He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Rise up, and stand in the middle." He arose and stood.*

Luke 6:6-8 (WEBPB)

*Then an argument started among them about who would be the greatest of them. **But Jesus, knowing the thoughts of their hearts**, took a little child and had him stand next to Him. He told them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me. And whoever welcomes Me welcomes Him who sent Me. For whoever is least among you – this one is great."*

Luke 9:46-48 (HCSB)

A common contemporary use of the gift of knowledge, or **words of knowledge**, is in **healing**. However, we should be careful not to humiliate another person when their identity is exposed. We need to operate this gift with the fruit of love, as Jesus did:

While He was going, the crowds were nearly crushing Him. A woman suffering from bleeding for 12 years, who had spent all she had on doctors yet could not be healed by any, approached from behind and touched the tassel of His robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped. "Who touched Me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming You in and pressing against You."

***"Someone did touch Me," said Jesus. "I know that power has gone out from Me."** When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before Him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched Him and how she was instantly cured. "Daughter," He said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."*

Luke 8:42b-48 (HCSB)

We can see how this lady was not just healed but went from being unclean to being clean, from being a "no one" to being a "someone" and from being distressed to being at peace all because of pressing in and touching Jesus by faith.

In a similar way to Jesus feeling that power had gone out from Him, some people who receive words of knowledge about sicknesses which are identified with a particular bodily location feel a corresponding infirmity in their own body as a sign that God wants to heal someone of the same condition (although there is no specific scriptural backing for this practice, although Jeremiah 30:5-7 is an example of a prophecy manifested as a bodily experience).

Another use of words of knowledge is to **bring conviction to people that God knows everything about them but still loves them**. This was the conviction that David had:

*O LORD, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.
You know when I sit down or stand up.
You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.
You see me when I travel
and when I rest at home.
You know everything I do.
You know what I am going to say*

even before I say it, LORD.
You go before me and follow me.
You place Your hand of blessing on my head.
**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to understand!**

Psalms 139:1-6 (NLT)

Jesus supernaturally knew Zacchaeus' name, leading to his conviction and repentance:

*He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was about to pass that way. And when **Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to Him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."** So he hurried and came down and **received Him joyfully.** And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

Luke 19:1-10 (ESVUK)

Jesus also knew Nathanael's character and had seen him lying under a fig tree which convinced him that He was the Son of God:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said about him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Nathanael said to Him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are King of Israel!"

John 1:47-49 (WEBPB)

Finally, a word of knowledge can sometimes save a believer from a hidden trap, known as a **conspiracy**. When Haman sought to destroy Mordecai the Lord led King Xerxes to honour him instead:

That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him. In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes. "What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked.

His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

"Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the pole he had prepared. So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered. So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honour a man who truly pleases me?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?" So he replied, "If the king wishes to honour someone, he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden – one with a royal emblem on its head. Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honour is dressed in the

king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honour!'"

"Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!"

Esther 6:1-10 (NLT)

4. Faith

We begin by considering faith more generally. All Christians need to have faith. Faith is a requirement for being born again:

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

John 3:16 (WEBPB)

*But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all those who **believe**.*

Romans 3:21-22a (NHEB)

*Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one **believes** and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

Romans 10:9-10 (ESVUK)

Jesus will be looking for faith on the earth when He returns a second time:

*So don't you think God will surely give justice to His chosen people who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will He find on the earth who have **faith**?"*

Luke 18:7b-8 (NLT)

Paul in his letter to the Galatians makes it clear that we are justified through faith rather than by works:

*We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through **faith in Jesus Christ**, so we also have **believed in Christ Jesus**, in order to be justified by **faith in Christ** and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Galatians 2:15-16 (ESVUK)

However, James stated that faith on its own without actions is "dead":

What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you tells them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled;" and yet you did not give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. Yes, a man will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is One. You do well. The demons also believe, and shudder. But do you want to know, foolish man, that faith apart from works is useless? Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith worked with his works, and by works faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness;" and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In like manner was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works, in

*that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? **For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.***

James 2:14-26 (NHEB)

According to Paul's letter to the Galatians, our faith is active, energised, expressed and working through love, again emphasising the importance of the fruit of the Spirit when operating in the gifts of the Spirit:

*For [if we are] in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but **only faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love.***

Galatians 5:6 (AMPC)

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to demonstrate love when they exercised faith:

*If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and **if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing.***

1 Corinthians 13:2 (WEBPB)

It was through compassion that Jesus often acted in faith towards people in need:

When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 14:14 (ESVUK)

Then Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

Matthew 15:32 (ESVUK)

Jesus only did what He **saw the Father doing** before He acted:

*So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself. **He does only what He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.** For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing. In fact, the Father will show Him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.*

John 5:19-20 (NLT)

However, none of these passages fully explains the spiritual gift of faith as distinct from becoming born again, healing others, performing miracles, or helping those in need. The gift of faith is a supernatural level of faith given to a believer at a particular time.

Hebrews 11 provides a summary of the use of faith in the Old Testament:

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

By faith, we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see.

*By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain. **It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference.** That's what God noticed and approved as righteous. After all these centuries, that belief continues to catch our notice.*

*By an act of faith, Enoch skipped death completely. "They looked all over and couldn't find him because God had taken him." We know on the basis of reliable testimony that before he was taken "he pleased God." **It's impossible to please God apart from faith.** And why? **Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that He exists and that He cares enough to respond to those who seek Him.***

*By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see, and acted on what he was told. The result? His family was saved. His act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world. **As a result, Noah became intimate with God.***

***By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home.** When he left he had no idea where he was going. By an act of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen City with real, eternal foundations – the City designed and built by God.*

By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One who made a promise would do what He said. That's how it happened that from one man's dead and shrivelled loins there are now people numbering into the millions.

Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that – heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

*By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. **Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him** – and this after he had already been told, "Your descendants shall come from Isaac." Abraham figured that if God wanted to, He could raise the dead. In a sense, that's what happened when he received Isaac back, alive from off the altar.*

By an act of faith, Isaac reached into the future as he blessed Jacob and Esau.

By an act of faith, Jacob on his deathbed blessed each of Joseph's sons in turn, blessing them with God's blessing, not his own – as he bowed worshipfully upon his staff.

By an act of faith, Joseph, while dying, prophesied the exodus of Israel, and made arrangements for his own burial.

By an act of faith, Moses' parents hid him away for three months after his birth. They saw the child's beauty, and they braved the king's decree.

*By faith, Moses, when grown, refused the privileges of the Egyptian royal house. He chose a hard life with God's people rather than an opportunistic soft life of sin with the oppressors. He valued suffering in the Messiah's camp far greater than Egyptian wealth because he was looking ahead, anticipating the payoff. By an act of faith, he turned his heel on Egypt, indifferent to the king's blind rage. **He had his eye on the One no eye can see**, and kept right on going. By an act of faith, he kept the Passover Feast and sprinkled Passover blood on each house so that the destroyer of the firstborn wouldn't touch them.*

By an act of faith, Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. The Egyptians tried it and drowned.

By faith, the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell flat.

By an act of faith, Rahab, the Jericho harlot, welcomed the spies and escaped the destruction that came on those who refused to trust God.

I could go on and on, but I've run out of time. There are so many more – Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets... Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. They were protected from lions, fires, and sword thrusts, turned disadvantage to advantage, won battles, routed alien

armies. Women received their loved ones back from the dead. There were those who, under torture, refused to give in and go free, preferring something better: resurrection. Others braved abuse and whips, and, yes, chains and dungeons. We have stories of those who were stoned, sawn in two, murdered in cold blood; stories of vagrants wandering the earth in animal skins, homeless, friendless, powerless – the world didn't deserve them! – making their way as best they could on the cruel edges of the world.

Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

Hebrews 11 (MSG)

Notice in particular Abraham's faith and how it was expressed through obedience. Paul described Abraham as the **man of faith** (Galatians 3:9). Stephen and Barnabas were both described as men full of faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5, 11:24).

Jesus compared great faith with the ability to move mountains:

*When they came to the crowd, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him, saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is epileptic, and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." Jesus answered, "Faithless and perverse generation. How long will I be with you? How long will I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." Jesus rebuked him, the demon went out of him, and the boy was cured from that hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately, and said, "Why weren't we able to cast it out?" So He said to them, **"Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."***

Matthew 17:14-20 (NHEB)

In the morning, as He was returning to the city, He became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, He went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And He said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

*When the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but **even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea', it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.**"*

Matthew 21:18-22 (ESVUK)

The gift of faith is particularly demonstrated when people bear witness in a time of persecution:

*When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are My followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about Me. For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. **But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit.***

Mark 13:9-11 (NLT)

Boldness is often associated with the demonstration of an unusual level of faith. Joshua was encouraged to be strong and courageous:

No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you.

*Be strong and courageous; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Don't turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Haven't I commanded you? **Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.***

Joshua 1:5-9 (WEBPB)

Jonathan once boldly decided to go over to the Philistines' camp:

*Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armour, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, **for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.**" And his armour bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul."*

1 Samuel 14:6-7 (ESVUK)

The believers in Acts were filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking the word of God boldly:

*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.***

Acts 4:31 (NKJV)

Paul requested the Ephesians to pray for him to declare the word of God fearlessly:

Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should.

Ephesians 6:19-20 (HCSB)

Finally, faith causes us to speak out:

*And **since we have the same spirit of faith**, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," **we also believe and therefore speak.***

2 Corinthians 4:13 (NKJV)

5. Healing

5.1 Introduction

Healing is the first gift of the Holy Spirit which can **also be considered as a ministry** (representing maturity and recognition in the use of this gift). According to 1 Corinthians 12:28, it is the fifth ministry in the Church.

There are different kinds of healing mentioned in Scripture:

- Healing from sickness
- Healing from disability (e.g. blindness, paralysis)
- Healing involving deliverance
- Emotional healing

We shall cover each of these types of healing in turn.

The LORD who heals is one of the covenant names of God. It was given to the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea:

*It was there at Marah that the LORD set before them the following decree as a standard to test their faithfulness to Him. He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, obeying His commands and keeping all His decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for **I am the LORD who heals you.**"*

Exodus 15:25b-26 (NLT)

David praised the LORD who heals **all our diseases**:

*Praise the LORD, my soul!
All that is within me, praise His holy name!
Praise the LORD, my soul,
and don't forget all His benefits,
who forgives all your sins,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from destruction,
who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies,
who satisfies your desire with good things,
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Psalms 103:1-5 (WEBPB)

There was **no sickness** in Israel when they left Egypt:

*He brought them out with silver and gold.
There was not one feeble person amongst His tribes.*

Psalms 105:37 (WEBPB)

God's Word heals people when it is sent out by faith:

*Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and He saved them from their distresses.
He sent His word and healed them,
and rescued them from their destruction.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
and for His wonderful acts to the children of men!
And let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and speak of His deeds with shouts of joy!*

Psalms 107:19-22 (AMP)

God's Word is always productive when He sends it out:

*For as the rain comes down and the snow from the sky,
and doesn't return there, but waters the earth,
and makes it grow and bud,
and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
so is My Word that goes out of My mouth:
it will not return to Me void,
but it will accomplish that which I please,
and it will prosper in the thing I sent it to do.*

Isaiah 55:10-11 (WEBPB)

This was the faith of the Roman centurion whose servant was sick:

Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

When He came into Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, asking him, and saying, "Lord, my servant lies in the house paralysed, grievously tormented."

Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

*The centurion answered, "Lord, I'm not worthy for You to come under my roof. **Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.** For I am also a man under authority, having under myself soldiers. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and tell another, 'Come,' and he comes; and tell my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Most certainly I tell you, I haven't found so great a faith, not even in Israel. I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the Kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way. Let it be done for you as you have believed." His servant was healed in that hour.

Matthew 8:5-13 (WEBPB)

Healing is one of the benefits we receive from Christ through His crucifixion. This was first prophesied by Isaiah:

*But [in fact] He has borne our griefs,
and He has carried our sorrows and pains;
yet we [ignorantly] assumed that He was stricken,
struck down by God and degraded and humiliated [by Him].*

*But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing];
the punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him,
and by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.*

*All of us like sheep have gone astray,
we have turned, each one, to his own way;
but the LORD has caused the wickedness of us all [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing]
to fall on Him [instead of us].*

Isaiah 53:4-6 (AMP)

It was later confirmed by Peter:

*He did not retaliate when He was insulted,
nor threaten revenge when He suffered.
He left his case in the hands of God,
who always judges fairly.*

*He personally carried our sins
in His body on the cross
so that we can be dead to sin
and live for what is right.*

***By His wounds
you are healed.***

*Once you were like sheep
who wandered away.
But now you have turned to your Shepherd,
the Guardian of your souls.*

1 Peter 2:23-25 (NLT)

When Jesus replied to the Canaanite woman He likened healing to giving bread to the children of Israel. He healed her daughter because He was moved by her great faith:

*Jesus went out from there, and withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. And just then a Canaanite woman came out from those borders, and started shouting, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is severely demonized." But He did not answer her a word. His disciples came and begged Him, saying, "Send her away; for she cries after us." But He answered, "I was not sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." But He answered, "**It is not appropriate to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.**" But she said, "**Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.**" Then Jesus answered her, "**Woman, great is your faith. Be it done to you even as you desire.**" And her daughter was healed from that hour.*

Matthew 15:21-28 (NHEB)

As children of God under the New Covenant (1 John 3:1) we have inherited this benefit.

5.2 Healing from sickness

Healing the sick is part of preaching the Gospel:

*And He called to himself his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and **to heal every disease and every sickness.***

*Jesus sent these twelve out, and commanded them, saying, "Do not go among the Gentiles, and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans. Rather, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. **And as you go, proclaim, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.'** Heal the **sick**, raise the dead, **cleanse the lepers**, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*

Matthew 10:1, 5-8 (NHEB)

*And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"*

Mark 16:15-18 (ESVUK)

Now after these things, the Lord also appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of Him into every city and place where He was about to come.

*"Into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat the things that are set before you. **Heal the sick who are there**, and tell them, 'God's Kingdom has come near to you.' But into whatever city you enter, and they don't receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust from your city that clings to us, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that God's Kingdom has come near to you.' I tell you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.*

Luke 10:1, 8-12 (WEBPB)

James also gave principles for healing the sick:

*Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. **Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick**, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.*

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

James 5:14-16a (NLT)

There are many examples of sick people being healed in the Bible:

Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

- It can be assumed that the LORD healed Pharaoh and his household from serious diseases after he sent Abram away (Genesis 12:10-20)
- The LORD healed Abimelech and his household from barrenness after Abraham prayed for them (Genesis 20)
- Miriam was healed of leprosy when Moses prayed for her after she had opposed him (Numbers 12)
- It can be assumed that the LORD healed the Philistines from tumours after they returned the ark of God to Israel (1 Samuel 5 and 6)
- Naaman was healed from leprosy after obeying Elisha's instruction to wash seven times in the River Jordan (2 Kings 5)
- Hezekiah was healed of a fatal illness after crying to the LORD (2 Kings 20:1-7)
- It can be assumed that the LORD healed Job from his skin condition (Job 2:7) as part of his complete restoration after he prayed for his friends (Job 42:7-17)
- On several occasions Jesus healed all who were sick that came to Him (Matthew 4:23-25, 8:16-17, 9:35 and 12:15-16)
- Jesus healed a man with leprosy (Matthew 8:2-4)
- Jesus healed the servant of the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5-13)
- Jesus healed a woman with bleeding (Matthew 9:20-22)
- Jesus healed a Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28)
- Jesus healed a man with dropsy (water retention) (Luke 14:1-4)
- Jesus healed ten men with leprosy (Luke 17:11-19)
- Jesus healed the high priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51)
- Jesus healed the official's son at Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
- Jesus healed the sick man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
- The Lord healed the sick in Ephesus through handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul (Acts 19:11-12)
- Paul healed the father of the chief Roman official on Malta and then the rest of the sick on the Island (Acts 28:7-10)

5.3 Healing from disability

Another category of healing in the Bible is of those who had some kind of disability. Examples are:

- Sarah's barren womb was opened (Genesis 17, 21:1-7)
- Rebecca's barren womb was opened (Genesis 25:21)
- Rachel's barren womb was opened (Genesis 30:1-2, 22-24)
- Manoah's wife's barren womb was opened (Judges 13)
- Hannah's barren womb was opened (1 Samuel 1)
- The man of God from Judah interceded for King Jeroboam's withered hand and it was restored (1 Kings 13:6)

Discipleship Training Course

- The Shunammite woman's barren womb was opened (2 Kings 4:8-17)
- Jesus healed a paralyzed man lowered through the roof (Matthew 9:2-8)
- Jesus healed two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31)
- Jesus healed a man with withered hand (Matthew 12:10-13)
- Jesus healed another two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34), one of whom was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)
- Jesus healed the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) – this was the only occasion when Jesus' healing gift was not instantaneous
- Elizabeth's barren womb was opened (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80)
- Jesus healed a crippled woman (Luke 13:11-13)
- Jesus healed a man born blind (John 9)
- Peter healed a lame man at the temple (Acts 3:1-10)
- Philip healed many paralytics and cripples (Acts 8:4-8)
- Ananias prayed for Saul's sight to be restored (Acts 9:17-18)
- Peter healed a paralyzed man called Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35)
- Paul healed a man crippled from birth (Acts 14:8-10)

5.4 Healing involving deliverance

Some sicknesses and disabilities are directly caused by demon possession. Deliverance leads to healing:

- Jesus healed a mute man who was possessed (Matthew 9:32-33)
- Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute (Matthew 12:22-23)
- Jesus healed a boy with a demon who had seizures and often fell into the fire and water (Matthew 17:14-21)
- Jesus rebuked a fever from Peter's mother-in-law and healed her (Luke 4:38-39)
- Jesus delivered a demon possessed man and restored his sanity (Luke 8:26-39) – notice how Jesus forbade him from following Him but rather sent him back to his home to tell everyone how much God had done for him.

5.5 Emotional healing

The concept of emotions and therefore also of emotional healing (also called healing of the memories) is relatively new. However, there are some indications from Scripture that it is a form of healing we can claim. Most importantly, Jesus reinstatement of Peter after his betrayal (John 21:15-19) was a form of emotional healing as He brought Peter back to a remembrance of his betrayal by asking him three times whether he loved Him. Through this approach, Jesus was demonstrating that He is the present Lord of past experiences. It is also often useful to quote Hebrews 13:8 in such circumstances:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (WEBPB)

6. Miracles

A miracle is a supernatural act. Performing miracles is also a ministry – it is the fourth ministry in the Church mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28. It is also one of the signs of being an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12).

One type of miracle is **miraculous healings** – those involving an additional miraculous element, such as the bronze snake healing people who looked up to it (Numbers 21:4-9), sick people being healed by Peter's shadow (Acts 5:12-16) and by handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched Paul (Acts 19:11-12).

Another type of miracle is the **resurrection of the dead**. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-10 and John 20) there are nine other recorded resurrections in the Bible:

- Elijah raised the son of the widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24)
- Elisha raised the son of the Sunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37)
- A dead man was resurrected when his body touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20-21)
- Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-19 and 23-25)
- Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15)
- Jesus raised Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- Many holy people resurrected when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51-53)
- Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43)
- Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12)

Jesus also **ascended to heaven** in a miraculous way (Acts 1:1-11). There were two other people who did not die but were taken to heaven miraculously: Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11-12).

The Bible also describes several **miracles of deliverance**:

- The ten miracles in Egypt (Exodus 7:8 – 12:30)
- The crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)
- The crossing of the River Jordan (Joshua chapters 4 and 5)
- Jesus calming the storm (Matthew 8:23-27)
- The apostles being released from prison (Acts 5:17-20)
- Peter being released from prison (Acts 12:1-19a)

Next, there are **miracles** which occurred **in warfare**:

- The walls of Jericho fell down when the Israelites shouted (Joshua 5:13 – 6:27)
- The LORD sent hailstones and the sun stood still to help Joshua and the Israelites fight their enemies (Joshua 10:1-15)
- The Midianites were thrown into confusion when Gideon and his army blew their trumpets and smashed their jars (Judges 7)
- The LORD sent thunder when Samuel prayed in order to rout Israel's enemies (1 Samuel 7:7-11)
- The Philistines were thrown into confusion when they were attacked by Jonathan and his armour bearer (1 Samuel 14:1-15)

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- An angel struck 185,000 enemies dead after King Hezekiah and the people prayed (2 Kings 18:17 – 19:37)
- Jehoshaphat's enemies were thrown into confusion when they praised the LORD (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)
- Samson's supernatural strength (Judges 14 – 16)

There are also **miracles of provision**:

- The LORD provided the Israelites a pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22, Numbers 10:33-36)
- The bitter water of Marah became sweet (Exodus 15:22-26)
- The LORD provided manna and quail (Exodus 16)
- The LORD provided water from a rock (Exodus 17:1-7)
- The clothes and shoes of the Israelites do not wear out for 40 years in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:4)
- Samson cried out for water and the LORD opened a spring (Judges 15:18-19)
- Elijah was fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:2-6)
- Elijah was provided for by a widow (1 Kings 17:7-16)
- Elijah prayed for the drought to end then ran supernaturally (1 Kings 18:41-46)
- Angel provided Elijah with food (1 Kings 19:1-9)
- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego became healthier on a restricted diet (Daniel 1:8-16)
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked through the fire without being burnt (Daniel 3)
- An angel shut the mouths of lions when Daniel was thrown into a lions' den (Daniel 6)
- Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish and lived (Jonah 1:17)
- Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11)
- Jesus fed 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-38)
- Jesus fed 5,000 (Matthew 14:15-21)
- Jesus provided a coin in the mouth of a fish to pay his tax (Matthew 17:24-27)
- Jesus provided a miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:4-11)
- Jesus provided another miraculous catch of fish (John 21:1-11)
- Philip was translated by the Spirit from the desert road to Gaza to Azotus (Acts 8:38-39)

Some **miracles** were given **as signs**:

- Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel ate and drank a covenant meal with the LORD at the top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:9-11)
- Aaron's staff budded and produced almonds to confirm his election (Numbers 17)
- Balaam's donkey spoke back to him (Numbers 22:21-31)
- The LORD sent thunder and rain at harvest time after Samuel prayed (1 Samuel 12:16-18)

Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

- Fire fell on Mount Carmel to confirm that the LORD is God (1 Kings 18:16-39)
- The LORD sent a wind, earthquake and fire then a still small voice to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13a)
- The sun's shadow went back 10 steps after Isaiah prayed as a sign to Hezekiah that he would be healed (2 Kings 20:8-11)
- The sea grew calm when the sailors threw Jonah into it (Jonah 1:4-16)
- The LORD provided a plant and a worm for Jonah (Jonah 4:5-8)
- Jesus walked on water (Mark 6:48-51)
- Jesus cursed a fig tree and made it wither (Matthew 21:18-22)
- The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51)

Finally, there were some **miracles of judgment**:

- Miriam was struck with leprosy (Number 12:1-12)
- The spies who spread a bad report were stuck by a plague and died (Number 14:36-38)
- In Korah, Dathan and Abiram's rebellion: the ground swallowed them up, fire came out of God's presence and destroyed 250 false priests; and a plague struck the rest of the Israelites (Numbers 16)
- The Israelites quarrelled and were bitten by snakes (Numbers 21:4-6)
- Elijah pronounced a drought in Israel for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1)
- Gehazi was struck with leprosy for taking Naaman's possessions and lying (2 Kings 5:19b-27)
- King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for assuming the office of a priest (2 Chronicles 26:16-20)
- King Nebuchadnezzar became insane and was driven from his people for seven years because he failed to acknowledge and honour God (Daniel 4:25-37)
- A hand wrote on the wall because King Belshazzar defiled the consecrated vessels from the temple (Daniel 5)
- Zechariah was struck dumb for not believing the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:5-25)
- Ananias and Sapphira were struck down dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11)
- Saul was blinded on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9)
- Herod was eaten by worms and died for failing to give honour to God (Acts 12:19b-25)
- Elymas was struck with blindness for opposing Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:4-12)

7. Prophecy

To prophesy is to **speak out God's word faithfully**:

Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has My Word speak My Word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. Is not My Word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

Jeremiah 23:28-29 (ESVUK)

There are four different levels of prophecy:

- **The spirit of prophecy** – when the Spirit of God is upon the congregation and everyone prophesies (1 Corinthians 14:24), however Paul encourages only two or three prophets to speak in turn rather than everyone prophesying at once (verse 29), although this might refer to a slightly different context. The testimony of Jesus is also described as the “spirit of prophecy” in Revelation 19:10.
- **The spiritual gift of prophecy** – delivering a prophecy through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of prophecy can be considered to be the greatest spiritual gift. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to especially desire it (1 Corinthians 14:1).
- **The ministry of a prophet** – someone who regularly prophesies
- **The office of a prophet** – someone with the proven five-fold ministry of a prophet. This office is the first gift-based office mentioned in the hierarchy of ministries in 1 Corinthians 12:28. See also Ephesians 2:19-20 and 4:11. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:4-10). We can therefore infer that prophets operate within different realms of responsibility and authority, such as local, regional, national and international.

The higher the level of prophecy, the greater the proportion of God’s word that is expected rather than man’s word. The highest level is the Bible or a direct communication from God (see 2 Peter 1:20-21).

There are different types of prophecy:

- **Predicting future events**, such as Elisha’s prediction of the end of the siege (2 Kings 7:1-2), Isaiah’s prophecy about the coming Messiah (Isaiah 53), Jesus’ prediction about His crucifixion (Matthew 20:17-19) and John’s revelation about the End Times in the book of Revelation.
- **Encouraging individuals**, such as Azariah’s prophecy to Asa (2 Chronicles 15:1-7)
- **Encouraging groups**, such as some of Jeremiah’s words to Israel (Jeremiah 29:10-14)
- **Confronting individuals**, such as Nathan confronting David (2 Samuel 12:1-14)
- **Pronouncing judgment on groups of people**, such as Ezekiel’s judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 7)
- **Carrying God’s word through prophetic action**, like Abraham (Genesis 13:14-17, 20:7) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:1 - 5:4). This can also be seen as having received a personal prophecy and walking in obedience to it. Many of Moses’ actions in the wilderness can be considered as prophetic signs which pointed towards the coming of the Messiah. For example, throwing a piece of wood into the bitter waters of Marah to make it sweet (Exodus 15:22-25a), striking a rock to produce water for the first time (Exodus 17:1-7) and the raising up of the bronze serpent on a stick (Numbers 21:4-9) all symbolised the death of Jesus on the cross. The LORD was partly angry with Moses when he struck a rock for the second time after God had told him to speak to the rock (Numbers 20:1-17) because this frustrated the prophetic message of his actions as Jesus was only to die on the cross once. Jesus also understood that as a prophet He needed to die in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33).

Prophecy can be received as a gentle impression on the heart or as a revelation through a dream or as a heavy compulsion to speak out, such as that Jeremiah received when he likened it to fire being shut up in his bones (Jeremiah 20:9). However, **the spirit of the prophet is always subject to the prophet** (1 Corinthians 14:32). When giving a prophecy we need to be sensitive and obedient by considering **timing** and **audience**. The impact of a prophet’s ministry might be a single prophecy they give and for which God has prepared them their entire life.

Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

There are several reasons why people mishandle their revelatory gifts:

1. **Ignorance** – this is often the case when wisdom and character lacking or are not in line with a person's gifting (such as Joseph, see Genesis 37:5-11). You can communicate truth in the wrong way. There is a distinction between gifts and fruit: gifts may be given to young believers but fruit takes time to grow. If you receive a revelation, always pray whether you should share it and, if so, with whom. Is your speaking out meeting your own soulish needs for recognition and love or is it really in humble, faithful obedience to the Lord?
2. **Manipulation for personal gain**, e.g. 1 Kings 13:11-32, Acts 16:16. Some people lie when prophesying whilst others prophesy the truth out of a bad motive. This can happen in developing countries where people have many needs and a gift of revelation can easily become a source of income. People can be misled because they lack understanding as to how prophecy should function through accountability within the church.
3. **Currying favour** (telling people what they want to hear), e.g. 1 Kings 22:1-28. A true prophet of God will never be swayed by the response of his audience. This will often happen in a time of apostasy, when many people have left the straight ways of God and false prophets tell people what their **itching ears want to hear** (2 Timothy 4:3).
4. **Indifference or malice**, e.g. Nehemiah 6:10-13. Some people wish to plant a malicious word on others by attributing it to an indirect revelation from God, such as a dream, in order to deceive others by shifting responsibility away from themselves. Others receive genuine prophecies but do not give them out in the right spirit because they lack the fruit of love towards their hearers.
5. **Setting yourself up as a false prophet**, e.g. Jeremiah 14:14-16, 23:25-29, 2 Peter 2:1-3. This is the climax of the other four reasons for mishandling a gift and is often a combination of them. You can misuse your gift to your own advantage to the extent of deceiving yourself. False prophets often start off with genuine ministries from God but they go astray because of a lack of Christ-centeredness (Jude 11). This leads to manipulation of undiscerning believers (2 Timothy 3:6) and eventually into counterfeit revelation.

How to judge a revelation:

1. **Weigh a revelation against Scripture** – any revelation that is not consistent with Scripture cannot be from God.
2. **Ask God for the gift of discernment** – see 1 Corinthians 12:10. This is the most valuable of the spiritual gifts in the End Times as no other gift can function properly unless the counterfeit can be distinguished from the true. We are encouraged to seek after gifts that build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).
3. **Look for the character traits of the Holy Spirit:**
 - a. **Conviction** (John 16:8-11). God convicts but Satan condemns (Romans 8:1)
 - b. **Edification, exhortation and comfort** (1 Corinthians 14:3)

A word from God may be a mystery but it is not confusing (1 Corinthians 14:33). The devil always seeks to sow lies, fear, self-doubt, discouragement, anxiety, etc.

How to weigh a prophet:

1. **Get to know their character** (e.g. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was a charlatan) – see Jude 11

2. **Get to know their doctrines** – do not accept revelations from people with false doctrines (inconsistent with God's Word). False doctrines come from evil spirits (1 Timothy 4:1). Revelatory gifts used in these circumstances can be a medium for transferring evil spirits, like coming under the influence of a fortune-teller.
3. **Try to weigh their motives** – do their motives fall into any of the five categories listed above? What is in it for them? How do they react if you do not immediately accept their revelation but ask for time to weigh it and pray over it (1 John 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)? Watch out for manipulation and control!
4. **Look at the outcome of their predictive revelations** – if what they have predicted does not take place then they have not been sent by God (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)
5. **Look at their lifestyle** – are they serving God by leading people closer to Jesus? Do they evangelise or have a pastoral concern for others? Do they have a concern for poor, weak, broken-hearted or needy people who are unable to repay them for their services (Isaiah 58:10, Matthew 6:1, 25:40)? We should always preach Christ and Him crucified (John 12:32, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Philippians 3:7-11). No gift, however strong, should lead people in any other direction (like being overawed by a sign to a building and not the building itself).

Other advice:

- Always seek confirmation of one or two other pieces of evidence before acting on a revelation (Deuteronomy 19:15). Never act on a single revelation alone, except in rare circumstances when you also feel a strong witness in your own heart (Acts 16:9-10).
- Never let other people take away your will and personal responsibility for your own actions.

8. Discernment

The gift of discernment is the ability to distinguish between a true spiritual gift and a counterfeit one. It is built upon having a discerning character. When answering His disciples' question about the end of the age Jesus first mentioned the importance of not being deceived:

While He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached Him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"

*Then Jesus replied to them: "**Watch out that no one deceives you.**"*

Matthew 24:3-4 (HCSB)

Therefore discernment is particularly important in the last days. It will be particularly important to discern the antichrist (the "man of lawlessness"):

This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (NLT)

Satan has the power to create counterfeit miracles only up to a certain point. For example, counterfeit healings may not be permanent. Pharaoh's magicians were able to perform counterfeit miracles that imitated the miracles of Moses up to a certain point but then had to declare that this was the "finger of God" (Exodus 7:10-12, 22, 8:19).

As already mentioned, it is having a personal relationship with the Lord that will distinguish people on the Day of Judgment:

Chapter 11. Gifts of the Spirit

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Matthew 7:15, 21-23 (ESVUK)

However, this may not be quite the same as discerning the true from the counterfeit as these prophecies and miracles were done in Jesus' name. As stated in the previous section, someone can become a false minister in stages due to having selfish motives and a lack of good character. Judas was one of the Twelve sent out by Jesus and performed miracles along with the others (Luke 9:1-9) but he was a thief (John 12:6) and ended up betraying Him (Luke 22:47-53) then committing suicide (Matthew 27:1-10).

The Bible is particularly concerned with false prophets (e.g. see Jeremiah 23:9-40, Ezekiel 13). John encouraged his readers to test every spirit because of the presence of many false prophets:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1 (ESVUK)

In terms of other ministries, Paul reprimanded the Corinthians for being over tolerant of false apostles:

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus, whom we didn't preach, or if you receive a different spirit, which you didn't receive, or a different 'good news', which you didn't accept, you put up with that well enough.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as Christ's apostles. And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

For you bear with a man if he brings you into bondage, if he devours you, if he takes you captive, if he exalts himself, or if he strikes you on the face.

2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15, 20 (WEBPB)

John exhorted other believers to exercise discernment about travelling teachers before welcoming them into their homes:

For many deceivers [heretics, posing as Christians] have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge and confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (bodily form). This [person, the kind who does this] is the deceiver and the antichrist [that is, the antagonist of Christ]. Watch yourselves, so that you do not lose what we have accomplished together, but that you may receive a full and perfect reward [when He grants rewards to faithful believers]. Anyone who runs on ahead and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ [that is, one who is not content with what He taught], does not have God; but the one who continues to remain in the teaching [of Christ does have God], he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [but diminishes or adds to the doctrine of Christ], do not receive or welcome him into your house, and do not give him a greeting or any encouragement; for the one who gives him a greeting [who encourages him or wishes him success, unwittingly] participates in his evil deeds.

2 John 7-11 (AMP)

Discernment is an aspect of wisdom and is particularly important for rulers:

*When a land is in rebellion, it has many rulers,
but with a discerning and knowledgeable person, it endures.*

Proverbs 28:2 (HCSB)

Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise leader with discernment (Genesis 41:33). King Solomon asked God for a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:9).

According to Paul's letter to the Philippians, discernment comes from a deeper experience of God's love:

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11 (ESVUK)

Discernment also comes from building upon and applying an understanding of the elementary truths of the gospel, which the writer to the Hebrews describes as "teaching about righteousness" and "solid food":

*There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen. You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who **through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.***

Hebrews 5:11-14 (NLT)

Paul exercised the gift of discernment when he rebuked a spirit from a slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16-18). She was speaking the truth but out of a wrong spirit.

9. Tongues

The gift of speaking in tongues is the ability to speak in another unlearned language by the Holy Spirit in order to exalt the Lord and edify the spirit of the believer (1 Corinthians 14:4). The Holy Spirit bypasses the believer's mind and communicates directly back to God in a pure language (1 Corinthians 14:2). This was the first gift of the Holy Spirit to be revealed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). However, normally the language given is not understandable to the hearers (1 Corinthians 14:6-11). The language given may be human or angelic (1 Corinthians 13:1).

After the day of Pentecost the gift of speaking in tongues was often a sign of being baptised with the Holy Spirit:

*While Peter was still saying these things, **the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.** And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. **For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.***

Acts 10:44-46a (ESVUK)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They said to him, "No, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

He said, "Into what then were you baptised?"

They said, "Into John's baptism."

Paul said, "John indeed baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the One who would come after him, that is, in Jesus."

*When they heard this, they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, **the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke with other languages and prophesied**. They were about twelve men in all.*

Acts 19:1-7 (WEBPB)

The close connection between baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues in the experience of believers recorded in Acts has caused some Christians to establish a doctrine that speaking in tongues is a necessary sign of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. However, 1 Corinthians 12:10 states, "to another speaking in different kinds of tongues" and in verse 30 Paul asks, "do all speak in tongues?" clearly disputing this doctrine. However, there appear to be two different forms of speaking in tongues: for personal edification and within public meetings. Paul may therefore have been referring to the public form of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12.

Paul clearly spoke in tongues extensively in his personal devotional life:

I thank God that I speak in other languages more than all of you; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than 10,000 words in another language.

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 (HCSB)

The gift of tongues used within a meeting should always be followed by an interpretation:

If any man speaks in another language, let it be two, or at the most three, and in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself, and to God.

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 (NHEB)

10. Interpretation of tongues

The interpretation of tongues is the ability to interpret a message given in tongues, either by the interpreter or another person. Interpretation of a message given in tongues in a public meeting is required, as shown in the above passage. The reason for this is given earlier in the chapter:

Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say.

1 Corinthians 14:10-13 (NIVUK)

The interpretation of a message in tongues given in a public meeting leads to the edification of the church. Paul continues:

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also.

1 Corinthians 14:14-15a (ESVUK)

Verses 13 to 15 together seem to imply that even when a believer speaks in tongues in their personal devotional life they should pray for an interpretation so that they may pray with their mind as well as their spirit.

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