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Description of the Spiritual Gifts

Don Fanning

Liberty University, dfanning@liberty.edu

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Section 2

Definitions of the Gifts of the Spirit

Introduction

The Bible does not define the different gifts. It uses various phrases to convey their meanings, in different contexts it shows how they are to be used and finally, it illustrates them in the lives of gifted people. In most cases all believers are expected to perform the activities (or working out) of the gifts as they learn how to do so by observing those people specifically gifted in each area. Some of the gifts are not even mentioned outside the lists given in the Scriptures. Obviously then, a definition of the gifts will require considerable interpretation and certain amplitude allowing for a variety of opinions.

Some of the gifts are declared by Paul to be of a temporary nature (prophecy, knowledge, and tongues, 1 Cor 13:8), so the natural question is, when? If we can establish that those gifts had a temporary purpose in the foundation period of the Church, it is possible that there were other gifts that were not going to be permanent for the whole Church Age: apostleship, healing, interpretation of tongues and miracles. Some included in this list of temporary gifts the Word of Wisdom, Discernment of Spirits and the gift of Faith (if it is to do miracles).

In the strictest sense, it is obvious that there do not exist Apostles such as Paul and Peter in the contemporary Church. Their authority, privileges of special revelation and powers to confirm the validity of their message of salvation (Heb 2:3-4) made them a very unique group with a defined and limited duration and purpose. Those who insist in the continued existence of the gift of apostle are divided into two camps: (1) those who believe that there are no differences between the “apostles” of today and those of the Early Church. (They insist that the contemporary “missionaries” manifest the “signs of an apostle (2 Cor 12:12) and thus, have the same authority.) (2) Others distinguish between the *office* and the *gift* of apostle. They believe that the *office* belonged exclusively to the thirteen apostles in the NT, but contend that today the gift of apostle is manifested in the capacity to be effective as a missionary in another culture extending the Church to new nations.

There are two gifts that tend to be interpreted in this contemporary fashion: apostleship and prophecy. The problem with this position is that the Bible nowhere indicates a distinction between the gift and the office. Apostolically gifted men (1 Cor 12) were given to the church as apostles (Eph 4) and prophetically gifted persons (1 Cor 12) were given to the church as prophets (Eph 4), but there is no distinction between the original gift and the original function in the Early Church. Every apostle and every prophet in the NT acts consistently with the original sense of the meaning of their gifts.

The word *apostoloi* included more than the original 13 in four or five contexts. However, no one suggests that the others had authority equal to the original 13. A careful examination of these texts will show a variety of possible interpretations, which must result in harmony with other Scriptural evidence. There were others who claimed the apostolic gift and the same authority as Paul, if not more so. However, they were the cause of division and conflicts in the Early Church (2 Co 11:13; Rev 2:2) and they were rejected. If they had not been **personally elected by Jesus to be an apostle** they were rejected in the Early Church.

If there still existed in the Church some form of the gifts of apostle and of prophet, they would be as “missionary” and “preacher”, but these two manifestations can be explained by the gifts of evangelist, exhorter, teacher or pastor-teacher.

Definitions of the Gifts

The approach that will be followed in the analysis of the gifts will be the following:

1. A linguistic definition for the use of the gift's title in different ages:
 - a. a. The definitions will include the uses of the word in the period of Classical Greek (Homer, Socrates, Demosthenes, etc.) or approximately 800-400 BC
 - b. b. Definitions will be given from the age of the Old Testament as seen in the Septuagint (LXX) around 250 BC
 - c. c. Definitions from the age of the New Testament (50-100 AD) will be given.
 - d. d. I will provide some additional occasional uses of the word in the NT text and the Early Church Age literature.
2. There will be an explanation of the use of the word in different contexts as it is used today.
3. Included will be a list of possible symptoms deduced from the meaning of the words and practical observations of the gifts that are common in the ministry today. This phase of the definition is obviously very subjective, not universal and included only to help in discerning what God perhaps is writing on the pages of our hearts and minds to help us desire to do His will (Phil 2:13).

As you study each gift there should be an affinity or attraction to certain gifts. You will think, "This is what I really want to do" or "This is describing my feelings". You should take note of those gifts for further focus and practice in different ministries.

1. Apostle

A. Definition:

1. The study of the word meaning:

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <i>apostolos</i> | <i>apo-</i> outside <i>stello-</i> put in order | Apostle (131times) Messenger (could be an angel) | Someone sent to act on behalf of another with his authority. It is someone commissioned. Emissary, agent | Heb 3:1 Luke 6:13 Acts 14:4, 14 Rom 16:7 2 Cor 8:23 |

2. In the Classics the word signified someone sent with all the power and authority of the one who sent him. That person was a representative with an intimate connection, which was enviable. It is used in the context of mariners *with* cargo ships. It is used of a command of sailors sent to other countries. Thus the term has two concepts: (1) a special commission, (2) a sending overseas.
3. It is used 700 times as a verb in the LXX, to translate the Hebrew *salah*, “send with a purpose, with authority.” Another Greek verb for “send” is *pempo* (5 times in the LXX) is used to indicate only “being sent”. However, the Hebrew word *saliah* could indicate someone who took the place of a bridegroom in a wedding. The term is limited normally to being sent for one purpose (i.e. to bring the offering of the synagogue to Jerusalem), not to a permanent office.
4. In the NT it is used as a verb 131 times (119 in the gospels and Acts). As a noun it appears 76 times, principally in the writings of Luke (62 times). With two exceptions it is used by Luke to refer to the twelve.

B. Explanation

1. What we learn from the writings of Paul can be summarized as following: (1) It is a life-long commission received **directly from the Lord Jesus** in person (1 Cor 15:7, 8; Gal 1:16-17); (2) It is the responsibility to go to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8), originally in twos (Gal 2:1, 9; Mark 6:7; Acts 15:36-40; 2 Cor 4:7-12), to preach but not to baptize (1 Cor 1:17); (3) It was inevitable that they were going to suffer severely (1 Cor 4:9-13; 15:30; 2 Cor 4:7-12); (4) It was not to be considered a specially elevated position (1 Cor 4:16; Phil 3:17), any more so than other members of the church (1 Cor 12:25-28; Eph 4:11), rather it was to complete a special function in the foundation of the Early Church (Eph 2:20); (5) Paul made it clear that he was the last of the apostles that saw the Lord (1 Cor 15:8), thus it would be impossible that there would be more apostles called by the Lord as the twelve and Paul.
2. The Latin word for *apostolos* is “misio”, from which is transliterated the English word “missionary”. Some have wanted to insist in the difference between the GIFT and the OFFICE. Without a doubt the *office* of apostle terminated with the Twelve and Paul. They had the responsibility and ministry of testifying about the resurrection, establishing the correct foundational doctrine of the Church (Eph 2:20; Acts 2:42) and were confirmed in that unique authority through miracles and signs (Mark 16:9-20; Heb 2:3-4).
3. The question remains, is the apostolic gift continuing in the church as the “gift of missionary”. The argument for this interpretation is based on the number of persons included below the title “apostle” that appears to extend beyond the Twelve plus Paul.
 - a. When someone accompanied an apostle, the group customarily was called “apostles”, such as “Paul and Barnabas” (Acts 14:4, 14). However, nowhere is Barnabas ever considered an apostle independently of Paul.
 - b. Silas and Timothy are grouped together with Paul (1 Thess 1:1) and considered “apostles” (2:6), but only in association with Paul. He had called both of them to

join his “apostolic group” and had delegated to them his apostolic authority for special commissions, but nowhere are they considered authoritarian apart from Paul, nor permanently given that position in the Church. They apparently could not delegate their delegated authority to another.

- c. The expression in Gal 1:19 would appear to include James in the apostolic grouping, but the verse can be taken both ways. It is not a clear expression. Nowhere else is James considered an apostle.
 - d. The statement of Paul referring to two men who were famous “among the apostles”, in Rom 16:7, “Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”¹ The expression again is ambiguous; it can be taken several ways. It could mean that they were included among the twelve apostles (doubtful) or that they were highly respected by all the Twelve (more likely).
 - e. The term “apostles of the churches” as distinct from the phrase “apostles of Jesus” is a term, which referred to Titus (2 Cor 8:23) and to Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). It is possible that the term referred to a person sent by a church with a specific purpose (to take an offering to the Jerusalem church) or to a ministry that the church wanted to fulfill (to serve Paul). In the case of Titus and others, they were already sent by Paul with apostolic authority, but this did not indicate that they were independently considered apostles, rather that they were acting with the authority of an apostle. In both cases, the term referred to a temporary and specific mission.
4. Someone with the gift of apostle possessed many, if not the majority of the spiritual gifts: sign gifts (Acts 5:12-16), miracles (Acts 13:8-11), prophecy (Acts 27:25) and tongues (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor 14:18). All were given to prove their apostleship (2 Cor 12:12), which would make no sense if everyone or many were to have the sign gifts. Since they were to be the instruments that God would utilize for the revelation of the New Testament, probably as well had the gifts of the word of wisdom and word of knowledge (1 Cor 2:7, 10, 13; 2 Pet 3:15-16) and as orators of the new revelation given them, they manifested the gift of prophecy (Rev 1:1-3).

With all this, even the apostles were never considered infallible in their oratory or actions. Only when they would write the revelation of God under the inspiration of God could they produce something infallible and without error: the inspired Word. It should be noted, that the apostolic and prophetic authors were not inspired, only their writings were inspired.

5. How should the work of “missionary” be fulfilled today? The gifts of evangelism, exhortation, pastor-teacher and teacher are more than adequate to realize the work of the expansion of the church throughout the world. The expansion of the church works, not under apostolic authority, but rather under the authority of the Word fulfilling the desires of Christ.

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

2. Prophet

A. Definition

1. A study of the word

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|--|-----------------|--|---|
| <i>propheteuo</i> | <i>pro-</i> before <i>phemi-</i> to say or declare | Prophet (times) | Predict the future openly and publicly, pronounce the received Word of God given by the Spirit for the church. Always results in exhortation and edification comfort to the believers | Acts 21:9-11; 11:27-30 Titus 1:12 1 Cor 14:3-4 Acts 15:32 |

- In the Classics it did not have the sense of foreknowledge until later. The use of the word does not express the basic idea of the etymology of the word. The idea was one who proclaimed publicly the will or words of another.
- In the OT, the prophet, *nabi*, (meaning “to proclaim or call”) was a preacher. The noun appears 309 times (92 times in Jeremiah). Various persons were called *prophets* (Abraham: Gen 20:7; Moses: Dt 34:10; Aaron: Ex 7:1; David: Neh 12:24, 36). The use suggests an intimate relationship with God such that God could speak directly to him or through him. Thus the prophet proclaimed the Word of God received by revelation for the purposes of warning, exhorting, consoling, teaching and counseling. The “false prophet” was evident when he “prophesied” an event that did not occur (Dt. 18:18). When God spoke through a prophet He never made a mistake.
- In the NT the word appears 114 times; it is used as a verb 28 times. The basic sense is the proclamation of divine revelation (Mat 7:22) bringing comfort or providing exhortation and teaching (1 Cor 14:3, 31). The term “false prophet” in the NT does not indicate that their predictions did not come to pass, but rather that their teachings were not in agreement with those of the apostles (1 Cor 14:29; Acts 2:42).

The believers that were *prophets* in the Early Church participated in the meetings (1 Cor 14:24), were obligated to make their proclamations in understandable words (1 Cor 12:1; 14:15, 23) and had to speak by turns (1 Cor 14:30-31). A genuine prophet never lost control of himself (1 Cor 14:32), rather was submissive to order and peace in the congregation (14:33).

The prophet formed an integral part in the “foundation” of the Church (Eph 2:20), which would suggest a temporary nature to the gift, fulfilling its purpose when all the revelation necessary for confirming the Church had been revealed through its unique function.

The gift of prophecy in the NT has less emphasis on the predictive element as compared to the use of prophecy in the OT, but it was still evident (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11; Rev 1:3). The culmination of the final prophetic utterance in the Book of Revelation strongly suggests that prophecy was terminating with the conclusion of the Revelation (22:18).

5. After the first century, the emphasis on the continuance of the gift of prophecy led to the sect called Montanism. Montanus said that he was the prophet of God and his followers were called “spiritual”. In spite of some good ideas they were excommunicated from the church for their excesses.

B. Explanation

1. Once again some want to make a distinction between the gift and the office of prophecy. It is an appealing concept, but nowhere is it suggested in Scripture. The idea that the office was realized in the NT and ended, but the proclamation aspect of the gift continues in the Church sounds interesting. Paul, however, declared that the prophecy in the Early Church was piecemeal, that is, it could only declare “in part” or a portion of the whole revelation which God would eventually complete (1 Cor 13:9-10). The prophet did not determine what he wanted to say, but rather was dependent upon revelation from God. There was no study, no preparation or planning involved because the message was revealed supernaturally (1 Cor 14:30). Though some would claim that their spontaneous preaching is the same thing, interpreting Spirit-given *impressions* to be revelations from God’s Word can be deceiving.
2. The function of prophecy in the Early Church was reemphasized through the gift of evangelism, teaching and exhorting in the congregations. The priority of the gift of prophecy in 1 Cor 14 was not that of the gift itself, but the ministry fulfilled by the manifestation of the gift in the church: “edification, exhortation and comfort” (1 Cor 14:3) and evangelism (14:24-25). Now these very functions are continued in the church through the exercise of other gifts that are to be given priority in the church.

3. Evangelism

A. Definition:

1. Study of the word:

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Euangelistzo</i> | <i>eu-</i> good <i>angelo-</i> announce | Evangelize Proclaim Preach | Announce “good news”; bring news that causes rejoicing | Heb 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25 8:35, 40 Acts 15:7 |
| <i>euangelion</i> | <i>eu</i> – good <i>angelos</i> -- messenger | Evangelist | A proclaimer of good news | Gal 3:8 |

- In the Classics, the term was used for a messenger who carried the report of a victory or other political or personal news that would cause rejoicing. The person that received the report would go out immediately and offer sacrifices of gratitude to the gods as a result of his joy.
- In the OT (LXX), it translated *bissar*, “announce, publicize” the fulfillment of the prophecy of the universal victory of the kingdom of God (Isa 52:7). The proclamation of the kingdom was announced with great joy (Isa 40:9; Psalms 96:2).
- In the NT, as a noun, the word appears 60 times in the writing of Paul. As a verb it signified the proclamation of salvation by grace for persons who could never merit such an acceptance by God, with the end result being that many would accept to message. The term “evangelist” is very rare in non-Christian literature, but is common in early Christian literature. The NT refers to Philip (Acts 21:8) as an “evangelist” and to the “evangelists” that God gives to the local churches (Eph 4:11). In 2 Tim 4:5 we are all exhorted to do the work of an evangelist.

B. Explanation

- The content of the message of an evangelist, the “gospel”, has power in itself to bring salvation (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 15:2), but also judgment (Rom 2:16). It is to reveal God in His righteousness (Rom 1:17) and produce hope (Col 1:5, 23) and peace (Eph 2:17;

6:15) in the believer. The message should produce new life (1 Pet 1:23-25) with the result that the power of His life resides in the spirit of man through the Word of God (1 Pet 1:12). It is deposited in the life of the believer with great confidence (2 Ti 1:10-11). The model of proclaiming the message is given (Rom 10:15) in order to be directed to every social class, culture, race or nation (Eph 3:1-9) with the end result being their salvation (Eph 1:13). Who would not want to share a message that produces such results?

2. If the belief is correct that the position of apostle was fulfilled in the first century, then the continuance of the expansion of the church is to be carried out by evangelists throughout the Church Age (2 Tim 4:5).
3. It is the capacity and passion to present the gospel with such clarity and conviction that the unconverted tend to respond by opening their hearts to the Lord. The effectiveness of the gift is seen in the Parable of the Sower, showing the unbeliever “understanding” the message (Mt 13:19, 23) in which he is asked to trust with all his heart. An example is seen in Acts 8:26-39.
4. It is the capacity to motivate by personal example and exhortation, and to train others in evangelism in the local church (Eph 4:11-12).
5. Some church analysts have estimated that approximately 10% of a congregation should have the gift of evangelist, in order to motivate the continual emphasis in the activities of the church.

C. Symptoms

1. The first symptom of the gift is the passion or burden to see others coming to know Christ as their personal Savior. It is a recurring thought that does not go away. The evangelist sees everyone in the light of whether they are saved or lost.
2. The liberty and boldness to speak with ease before either groups or individuals concerning the message of salvation. It seems natural to turn the conversation to spiritual themes that end up being a presentation of the gospel.
3. The result is the capacity to persuade or influence others for Christ. It is not forced, rather is easy and natural to persuade others to accept Christ.
4. It is a capacity to meet new people, form new friendships with unbelievers, gain their confidence and provoke their interest in the things of God.
5. It is natural to pray for unbelievers by name, or lift up specific groups of people or nations to the Lord in prayer, asking for the open door for someone to preach the gospel with power to everyone.

4. Pastor-teacher

A. Definition

1. Study of the words related to the subject

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <i>presbutero</i> | <i>presb-</i> old | “elder” | Mature, respectable, wise | Acts 20:17-28 |
| <i>episkopo</i> | <i>epi</i> – over <i>skopos</i> —look with great care | “bishop, watcher, overseer” | Responsibility for the care of the flock | 1 Tim 3:1-8 |
| <i>poimaino</i> | <i>poimne</i> – flock | “pastor” | Care for, protect, govern, lead, nurture, feed, mature | 1 Pet 5:1-11 |
| <i>Prosistemi</i> | <i>pro</i> – before <i>istemi</i> – stand leader | “to go before, to preside, lead, direct” | To be in front, direct, preside, manage, conduct, lead, initiative taker | Rom 12:8 1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17 |
| <i>Hegemon</i> | | “ruler, governor, leader” | The one that provides, thinks, orders, plans, maintains discipline, direction and purpose | Heb 13:7, 17, 24; Acts 23:24, 26:30 |
| <i>didaskalos</i> | teacher, tutor | “teacher” | Teacher | Eph 4:11 |

- The word for pastor, *poimne*, is used metaphorically in the Classics in reference to a leader, a governor or commander. It carries the idea of someone who takes care a flock under his protection. His devotion to meet the needs and protect his followers at all costs is the heart of his leadership.
- God is called the Shepherd of Israel who goes before the flock (Ps. 68:7), guides it (Ps. 23:3), leads it to food and water (Ps. 23:2), protects it (Ps. 23:4), and carries its young (Is. 40:11). Embedded in the living piety of believers, the metaphor brings out the fact that people are sheltered in God. In the LXX, Jehovah is the only pastor of the flock of Israel (Psalms 23; 28:9; 68:8; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; Jer 23:2; 31:10), but later became the official title that was given to the king, as an expression of honor (2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chron 11:2; 2 Sam 24:17).

4. The prophets denounced the “pastors” (leaders) of the nation (Jer 2:8; 3:15; Isa 56:11). When Cyrus, King of Persia, authorized the restoration of Jerusalem from captivity, God gave him the title “My pastor” (Isa 44:28). In Jeremiah the term is applied to political and military rulers, but not as a title. The shepherds have proved unfaithful; hence God himself will take up the office and appoint better shepherds (Jer. 3:15; 23:4). He will set up one shepherd who will reunite the people, the Messiah (Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:22, 24).²
5. In the NT the devotion of a pastor is praised (Jn 10:3; Lk 15:4). Pastors are exhorted not to be selfish, but to be servants of the flock meeting their needs (1 Pet 5:2-4; Acts 20:28). The example to follow is that of the Pastor of pastors, the Lord Jesus (1 Pet 5:4). “As a pastor, he cares for the flock. He guides, guards, protects, and provides for those under his oversight.” An example is found in Acts 20:28 where Paul exhorts the elders from Ephesus “to shepherd the church of God.” It is to be done voluntarily, not for material gain or by lording it over believers but rather by being examples of humility (1 Pet. 5:2–5).³

B. Explanation

1. The gift of pastor in the context of Ephesians 4:11 speaks of one of four or five classes of men who have been uniquely gifted by the Spirit to fulfill special functions of leadership in the Body of Christ and specifically in the local church. It is the only “gift” that is described in details including requirements, attitudes and desires of the recipient. It is possible to have the desire to be a pastor, but not have matured sufficiently to fulfill the ministry of a pastor.
2. The term “pastor” is a synonym of two other terms for describing the church leadership: bishop (*episkopo*) and elder (*presbutero*). In Acts 20:17, 28, the “elders” (*presbuteros*) should take great care of themselves and the flock which “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopos*). Be shepherds (*poimaino*) of the church of God”. Each term is a description of different aspects of the function of a gifted pastor in a local church. In Titus 1:5, 7 the “elders” and “bishops” are likewise interchanged.

3. Symptoms

1. It is the capacity to exercise influence over a group leading them to a specific goal or purpose, or to make decisions. People tend to look to a pastor for leadership (He has a track record of being the president of organizations, clubs, etc)
2. The gift produces the capacity to provoke a “follow-ship”; others want to follow his leadership because of the confidence that his relationship with them has generated.

²Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

³Enns, Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press) 1996.

They are convinced that he will not use or abuse them, but rather, their spiritual and emotional needs will be met as they follow his leadership.

3. He has the capacity to maintain order and discipline in whatever group he may belong to.
4. He tends to see the problems in a group as a realist and yet is willing to take responsibility for helping them through their problems even at personal risk.
5. His passion that Christians grow in their knowledge of Christ and His word, in unity and in their obedience to what they know of the Word is evident. He is genuinely concerned for the well being of his followers.
6. His influence and example tends to produce a loyalty toward his person, his manner of thinking and his values in life.

5. Teacher

A. Definition:

Study of the word and associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|---------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <i>didasko</i> | <i>dek-</i> accept -- extend a hand | “teacher” | Someone leads another to accept a new concept: INSTRUCTION | Mt 5-7; Jn 6:59; Ac 18:11; 1 Ti 2:2 |
| <i>mathano</i> | <i>math</i> – adapt | “learner, disciple” | Adapt the thinking to the will of another: AQUIRER | Mt 11:29; 28:19; Ac 14:21 |
| <i>diermeneuo</i> | <i>dia</i> – emphasis <i>hermeneuo</i> -- interpret | “Interpreter, translation” | Make clear or explain the truth: EXPLANATION | Mt 24:27; 1 Cor 12:3 |
| <i>eksegeomai</i> | <i>ek</i> – outside | “Explain, expose” | Clarify difficulties; interpret the will of God, EXPOSITION | Jn 1:18; Ac 10:8; Lk 24:35 |
| <i>dialogizomai</i> | <i>dia</i> – through <i>logizomai</i> — converse | “Think, reason, give an opinion, discuss, consider” | Something discovered through logical reasoning: PERSUASION | Ac 19:9, 10 Heb 12:5 |

- The gift of teaching is the ability to instruct, explain and present Biblical truths in such a manner that believers understand the Scriptures and incorporate the truth into their personal lives. Instruction in the truths of the faith is a priority for the church (1 Cor 14:19). All the apostles and prophets were continually involved in teaching (Ac 18:11; 19:9-10; Col 1:28; 1 Ti 1:11; 2:2 7). In the categories of the gifts (1 Cor 12:28), teaching is third in the list behind apostle and prophet.
- In Classical Greek the word is common from Homer, denoting the act of teaching and learning in the wide sense of imparting theoretical and practical knowledge with the highest development of the pupil being the goal. There is little religious use and the term has a strong intellectual and authoritative bearing. Thus it can also mean, “to

demonstrate.” When used in connection with choral training, it comes almost to have the sense, “to perform.”⁴

4. The term occurs some 100 times in the LXX (mostly for the root $\square\square\square$). While various kinds of instruction can be meant (cf. 2 Sam. 22:35; Dt. 31:19), understanding God’s will is the special object, with a volitional as well as an intellectual reference. This is distinct from secular usage, where the aim is to develop talents; the OT relates teaching to the totality of the person.⁵
5. In the NT the word *didasko* appears 95 times and signifies a communication skill of imparting knowledge to another. Jesus “taught” the Pharisees (Mr 10:1; 12:14). He had a balance between the interpretation of the truth and the application in lives (Mr 6:2, 34). In addition He practiced the concept of teaching evangelism (Mr 1:15; Ac 4:2, 18; 5:28, 42). Practically there was little difference between preaching and teaching the gospel (Ac 18:11, 25, 28; 28:31). The message of the gospel was proved trustworthy through teaching the OT (Ac 1:1; 4:18; 5:12, 25, 28, 42; 11:26; 15:1, 35; 20:20).
6. Timothy was commanded to teach (1 Ti 4:11; 6:2) and transmit the apostolic teaching to other “faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2), a special group of restricted men. This was probably part of the process in developing elders or pastors, who had to be *didaktikos*, “capable of teaching” (1 Ti 3:2, 2 Tim 2:24). This would imply a preparation to be able to teach and defend the faith.
7. It should be noted that the only restriction from teaching is that women are prohibited from teaching men or assuming authority (through teaching) over men (1 Tim 2:12) in the congregation. There is no restriction for women teaching other women and children, in fact they are commanded to do so in Titus 2:3-5.
8. It appears that there were various levels of leadership in the Early Church: apostles and prophets, when they existed, had priority. Later came the Teacher (1 Cor 12:28) and forth, the Evangelist. In the *Didache* (13:2), the leaders of the churches were prophets and teachers.
9. Teaching did not involve any special revelation, oral or written, rather the ability deals with communication skills and motivation to make self-evident or understandable the truth already revealed. Prophecy is a priority because of the authoritarian revelation from God, though all prophets must be compared to and subject to the apostles.

B. Explanation

1. There are four concepts in the definition of the gift of teaching:

⁴Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

⁵Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

1. Supernatural ability
 2. Clear communication
 3. Effective application
 4. Understanding of the truth of the Word already revealed
2. It is one of the most important gifts since it appears in 3 of the 4 lists of the gifts (as also prophecy). Exhortations and preaching are based on the teachings.
 3. The spiritual results are the spreading of the Word in the world (Ac 19:9, 10) and also evangelism (20:20; 21:28).
 4. Teaching appears to be a general goal for everyone as a part of the expected maturity (Heb 5:12). Every believer should prepare himself to be a teacher.
 5. The responsibility of being a teacher has its own risk (James 3:1) because of the constant speaking, it becomes easy to exaggerate, communicate mistruths and make errors in the use of the Scriptures.
 6. The purpose of teaching is the maturity of others (Col 1:28).
 7. The principle danger for teachers is PRIDE of their knowledge or exaggerated desire to be respected by their students and the tendency to DISCREDIT or CRITICIZE others of lesser ability.
 8. The ministry of teaching is normally oriented toward the congregation, though small groups are insinuated in 2 Tim 2:2. In the leadership roles the capability to teach is required, though some probably will not have the motivation (gift) to excel in the ministry of preparing and teaching (1 Ti 5:17). A major part of the responsibility of Timothy was teaching (1 Tim 4:11; 6:2).

C. Symptoms

1. The true teacher is blessed with an ease of understanding the Bible and great motivation to study. Personal satisfaction from having applied the principles of the Bible to his personal life generates a desire to impart the benefits and blessings to other lives.
2. The teacher constantly accumulates knowledge and has special discipline for studying the Word in depth. He is not satisfied with uncertain explanations, rather wants to confirm the veracity of ideas and concepts. Normally he is suspicious of new ideas and concepts until they are proven from Scriptures.
3. A teacher loves to systematically organize details and illustrate them graphically.
4. He believes that individuals will become more like Christ in character and maturity as they understand more about the character and will of God, Christ and the Spirit,

committing themselves to obey and imitate His qualities. Teaching is the link in the process giving believers the understanding necessary and orientation towards how to apply the understanding gained for their personal lives.

6. Exhortation

A. Definition

A study of the word and associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|------------------|---|---|--|--|
| <i>parakaleo</i> | <i>para</i> - a long side <i>kaleo</i> -- call | “exhort, console, encourage” | To speak directly to someone, to encourage, urge, beg, or strengthen | 1 Th 4:1; 5:14; 2 Th 3:12; 1 Ti 2:1; 6:2; He 3:13 |
| <i>noutheteo</i> | <i>nous</i> – mind <i>tithemi</i> —to put | “to impart understanding, to lay on the heart” ¹ | To warn, instruct, remind, correct | Rom 15:14; 1 Th 5:12; 2 Th 3:15; Col 3:16; Ac 20:31 |
| <i>paideuo</i> | <i>pais</i> – child | “instruct, train, chasten” | Training of children, who need direction, teaching, & discipline | Ac 7:22; 1 Cor 11:32; 1 Ti 1:20; 2 Ti 2:25; He 12:6-10 |
| <i>elegchos</i> | expose | “reprove, rebuke, convict” | Prove or test a thing, bring to contempt or shame, expose guilt to motivate repentance | Eph 5:11, 13; 2 Ti 4:2; Titus 1:9 |
| <i>gnwme</i> | <i>ginosko</i> —to know | “Think, reason, give an opinion, discuss, consider” | Direction of one’s thinking, disposition, will; resolve, counsel to apply | Ac 19:9, 10 Heb 12:5 |

- Exhortation is the capacity to encourage others to act according to the correct application of the Biblical truths, or to console others from the promises of Scripture.
- In the OT (LXX), the word *parakaleo*, was used to translate the Hebrew *naham*, “be moved to pity, to comfort or console” (Psa 119:50; Gen 37:35). Part of the responsibility of the prophet was to produce comfort (Isa 40:1). It also has the sense of encouragement and strengthening (Dt 3:28; Job 4:3) or to guide in the way (Ex 15:13). It is a very positive term as in the phrase “consolation of Israel” (Lc 2:25), a promise of the Messiah.
- In the NT the word appears 109 times with sense of to “invite” (Ac 28:20), “to ask” (Lc 7:4; Mt 8:5; Mr 5:12), “to beg” (Mt 25:53), “to exhort” (1 Co 14:3), “consol or encourage.” Likewise in the NT, it is the principle function of the prophet (Ac 15:32;

16:40) and should be the ministry of every believer to each other (Phil 2:1). Timothy was sent to exhort the churches (1 Th 3:2). The instruction of how to exhort is “by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30) and “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ...” (2 Cor 10:1). It has always been necessary to warn people to continue faithful to the Lord (Acts 11:23), to continue in the faith (Ac 14:22) and to live with dignity (Eph 4:1). In the midst of heartache, loss and persecution the emphasis is the aspect of consolation (2 Co 1:3-4; 7:4; 1 Th 3:7; Rom 15:4; 2 Th 2:16).

B. Explanation

1. The gift can be manifested in various forms. Some will have the faith (confidence) to exhort, admonish and warn the whole congregation, motivating them to act Biblically. This could be in the form of preaching. Others will feel more comfortable exercising the gift in the ministry of counseling or leading a small group in applying the Bible to their lives.
2. It is the ability to come close to people causing them to feel uplifted, guided, helped, or corrected yet loved and accepted. It causes strengthening of the weak, consoling of the hurt and wounded, correcting those who have made mistakes and encouragement for those who are negative or disheartened.
3. The person with the gift has gained the respect of his peers because of his own application of the Scripture to his life. Those in the middle of problems and afflictions tend to listen with open hearts and minds to this person.
4. Shouting, showing anger, pointing a finger, or criticizing are not characteristic of this gift. Rather it shows compassion towards the unchurched, a sincere interest in others and the ability to correct behavior or communicate comfort and peace in the midst of their affliction.
5. Others seek those who have the gift of exhortation and ask for help or advice in solving their problems.
6. The gift can be exercised either in public or in private. There should be many in each church with this gift. They should not be afraid to use it.
7. The principle danger is pride, which can show itself as:
 1. Taking the credit for the results
 2. Enjoying too much the sensation of popularity and importance
 3. Using other people to accomplish personal goals.
 4. Abusing authority and demanding too much submission to solutions rendered, not giving room for others to decide between alternatives concerning their future.

C. Symptoms

1. Generally there is a strong reaction (in pro- or contra-) to the position or declarations presented by the exhorter. This gift expresses itself with much conviction.
2. Frequently this gifted person gives advice to others about how they should do things.
3. The exhorter delights in sharing the Word with others who are in need and loves knowing that they have been consoled. His motivation is to help others live biblically.
4. Others frequently confide in him their profound problems because they feel that he understands them.
5. Others could seek out his companionship because they feel secure, spiritual, stable and encouraged after being with him.
6. He is not satisfied with a superficial knowledge of the Truth, rather he looks for how the truths of Scriptures can be applied.
7. He likes to share aspects of his testimony with others because he knows that God will use it in their lives.

7. Word of wisdom

1. Study of the word and associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| <i>sophia</i> | | Wisdom, intelligence | Intelligent application of truth | Ac 6:3,10; 7:22; 1 Co 1:19-20; Eph 1:8, 17 |
| <i>sunesis</i> | “union, send together” | Understanding, knowledge | Quickness of comprehension Consider to comprehend | 1 Cor 1:19; Eph 3:4; 2 Tim 2:7 |
| <i>noeo</i> | <i>nous</i> -- mind | Understanding | | Eph 3:4; He 11:3 |

reason”). The term indicates a capacity and skillful knowledge (i.e. the *sophia* of a carpenter) especially applied to practical areas more than to theory. “Mastery of a skill is the primary meaning in Homer and for some time later. $\square\square\square\square\square\square$ is not just the skill itself, but mastery of it, and hence $\square\square\square\square\square\square$ is an attribute of the gods and their gift to humanity...The first sages are wise in conduct as well as learning, and their learning embraces practical wisdom, e.g., in political judgment.”⁶

Socrates’ wisdom consists of the critical knowledge that autonomous wisdom is not wisdom at all. True wisdom knows being, but humans are not granted this knowledge. For Plato wisdom is acceptance of being. Ignorance brings us under the power of $\square\square\square\square\square\square$. As the idea is divine, wisdom is proper only to God, but philosophy is possible in the power of $\square\square\square\square\square\square$ and through it one may attain to the four virtues, wisdom being the greatest of virtues. Aristotle equates wisdom and philosophy. Wisdom is attainable as the first and most complete form of knowledge, i.e., the knowledge of first causes. Wisdom is a theoretical virtue, not a practical one as in Plato. It contemplates the truth of first causes, not just what results from them.⁷ The sages or wise men were counselors to kings and governors.

- In the OT (LXX) the term is used to translate the word, *hokmah*, “wise or wisdom” (Ex 28:3; 1 Kings 2:6; Psa 36:30; 89:12). “The translation “wise” or “wisdom” is inexact; it catches neither the range nor the precise meaning of the original languages, which suggest experienced and competent mastery of life and its various problems. The most common parallels have to do with perception, understanding, or skill, although parallels with uprightness and honesty are also common. The parallels show that action rather than thought is the point. In contrast, folly is a disorder that also finds expression in

⁶Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

⁷Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

behavior.”⁸ The concept is the major theme of Proverbs, a manual for attaining the attributes of God’s wisdom for one’s life.

The term indicates a specialist’s knowledge in a specific field like art (Ex 36:1), economics (Pr 8:18, 21), government (Pr 8:15), or education (1 Kings 5:9-14). It is the ability to dominate life (Pr 8:32-36). It is inseparable from the “fear of God” as a prime motivator for making correct decisions (Pr 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Psa 111:10). God’s ability to grant special wisdom when He desires is evident in the life of Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-14). His wisdom was manifested in just decisions (3:16-28).

4. In the NT the term is concentrated in 1 Cor 1-3 (25 times), where the special wisdom necessary to understand salvation comes only as a result of an intervention by the Spirit. All who know the truth of God’s Word have the initial foundation of this wisdom (Eph 1:8) and are challenged to grow in its expansive richness (Col 1:10; 3:16; 4:5; Eph 5:15). It is linked with *sunesis* in Col 1:9 to combine the ideas of special knowledge for practical life (*sophia*) and the broader understanding of a world view (*sunesis*) that brings all of life into a comprehensive whole around the reality of God in Christ. James undertook the wisdom of God in suffering (Jas 1:5) and the values of maturity that result. This trait becomes evident with the practical qualities of meekness, mildness, and a disciplined spirit (Jas 3:13, 17). Now the wisdom of God has been fully revealed in the Word so that we have all sufficiency for “everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). It is chiefly a question of applying our hearts (desire) and minds (understanding through discipline) to learn and apply the wisdom that has been revealed.
5. There are some who want to understand the “word of wisdom” as a continual direct communication between God and the gifted person, in which divine truths, previously hidden are now revealed. Such revelations of the will of God were necessary in the years before the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost because all of the necessary wisdom of God had not been revealed. At those times the acts of special communication from God were called *sophia*, “wisdom” in Rom 11:25-33; 1 Cor 2:6-7; Eph 3:1-10.
6. A distinction should be made between *illumination* and the *revelation* of wisdom. Practical wisdom is promised to every believer according to the measure of his understanding of the application of the Word already revealed (Eph 1:8; Col 1:9; James 1:5; 3:13, 17), while the Word of Wisdom is limited to a few in the church (1 Cor 12:14, 29-30). These gifted ones are to facilitate the understanding of the practical application of the wisdom of God in the lives of others. The gift is very similar to the gift of exhortation whose emphasis is more on the application, than the understanding of the wisdom.

⁸Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

B. Explanation

1. The connection between the “mystery” that was “hidden” (1 Cor 2:7) indicates that this wisdom was revealed by God directly, not indirectly through the Word already revealed. Peter made reference to the “wisdom” of Paul which was the basis of the revelation that he had received and later wrote by inspiration (2 Pet 3:15). This wisdom included the final destiny of Israel (Rom 11:25) and the participation by the Jews and Gentiles in one new Body (Eph 3:1-7).
2. It is the special ability to know how to apply the Word of God to the practical life in a given situation.
3. There are three aspects:
 - a. Wisdom to respond to antagonistic courts (Mt 10:19-20): how to respond to accusations
 - b. Wisdom to respond to arguments of unbelievers (1 Pet 3:15): how to defend yourself against skepticism, existentialism and irrationality.
 - c. Wisdom to respond to difficult situations (James 1:5; 3:17): how to live in harmony with God’s design for life.
4. The wisdom of God is available for all believers, but it must be sought and studied diligently, searching the Scriptures (Prov 2) with the conviction that it is worth the effort. Those who have made the effort find such practical wisdom for their lives that they become an invaluable resource for others. Those with the gift of Word of Wisdom will be able to explain and convince others to apply that wisdom to their lives.

C. Symptoms

1. There is an attraction for the study of the Bible, especially with the purpose of finding practical applications to the lives of individuals.
2. He senses frustration when sermons or Bible studies do not convey concrete applications to life’s situations.
3. In any given life situation, specific principles or Biblical concepts of wisdom come to mind easily. He seems to be instrumental in finding solutions to personal and interpersonal conflicts (1 Cor 6:5). He is sought out for life’s answers.
4. His vocational preference is to be a counselor (to impact individuals) or pastor-teacher (if his gift is to impact larger groups). God will create a desire in his heart to use the gift as He desires (Phil 3:12).

8. Word of knowledge

A. Definition

1. Study of the words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <i>gnoseos</i> | <i>ginosko</i> – to know | “knowledge, understanding” | To perceive, recognize, comprehend. | 1 Cor 12:8 Rom 15:14 |
| <i>gnosis</i> | | | Means of knowing, thinking, judgment, opinion | Col 2:3 Ac 16:24 Luc 24:18 |

- The original sense of the word found in the Classics was to know something personally, understand what others could not, and discern evidence that was not obvious. It implies a revelation so intimate that the concept of “knowing another” is used to refer to a sexual union. In fact, it is the root of the Latin word *gignere*, “to give birth.” In the Hellenistic world, the Gnostics were those who supposedly had the *knowledge* of God and His will.
- In the OT (LXX), *ginosko* was used to translate various concepts that the Jews saw as only one idea: *ra’ah*, “to see” (Jud 2:7), *hazah*, “see” (Isa 26:11) and *shama’*, “to hear” (Neh 4:15). Various words formed the root *yada*, “to know”, which are translated by *gnoseos*. The word *yada* signifies (1) to experiment, to observe (Gen 3:7; 44441:31; Isa 47:8); (2) to know by learning (Prov 30:3); (3) an intimate relationship with other person or thing (Prov 2:6; Ecc 8:17); (4) to know the other person “face to face” (Deut 34:10; (5) the knowledge of God that is derived from the acts of self-revelation (“Know ye that I am God!” is mentioned 54 times in Ezequiel).
- In the NT, *gnosis* appears 29 times (*ginosko*, 221 times). The concept of the OT is understood in the use of this word in the NT, especially because the LXX was practically the Bible in the times of Jesus. There is a sense that all the believers have received the “knowledge” of God, as is declared in 2 Cor 4:6. The knowledge of God is our experience, because God reveals Himself to the believer. Thus the gift of knowledge is the result of an illumination, on God’s part through His Word. It appears that the knowledge of the will of God is similar to the gift of prophecy.

5. The gift is the capacity to understand, organize and clearly illuminate the thoughts of God, which are impossible to describe or know by mere human reasoning.
6. In 1 Cor 13:2, the gifts of prophecy and “Word of knowledge” are related. They are related to revealing “mysteries”, the previously unknowable information that God chose to reveal through these gifted people. It is closely associated in this function with the gift of apostleship, or at best, indicates a very high level of authority in the revelation of God’s will.
7. In a general sense, every believer is obligated to grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures already revealed (2 Pet 3:18). This growth will result from a diligent study, whereas before, a special revelation was necessary. When one commits himself to study with the intention of obeying what is understood, the Spirit is responsible to illuminate our mind with the riches of His Word (Jn 7:17).

B. Explanation

1. Knowledge, as a gift, is useful when it is communicated. It seems to be a gift very related to the gift of teaching, but has more authority, that is, the teacher will cite the understanding of the gift of knowledge.
2. In the beginning of the church age it was probably a means of communicating the new revelation of the Word until its completion. If it is applicable today, it is the gift of the understanding of what has previously been revealed. This understanding is also supernatural (1 Cor 2:7-16), but it is not revelation.
3. Today, those who possess this gift are men that dedicate their lives to the study of the Scriptures, the original languages, the apparent problems and the defense of the faith.
4. In 1 Cor 13:8, there is a categorical statement that “knowledge will cease.” God said that He would not continue to reveal new knowledge once all the necessary knowledge had been revealed. In Hebrews 1:1 the author stated that “in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways”, but that age came to a close with Jesus and His apostles, who became the only source of the revelation of God’s knowledge. The gift of knowledge by revelation ended, but God continued to illuminate His Word to men dedicated to investigate it.
5. It could be that the “revelation” of 1 Cor 14:26 came by the gift of knowledge (?).
6. The gift of knowledge is associated with the gifts of tongues and prophecy in 1 Cor 13:8, where all three are declared temporary by the apostle Paul. During the period of the revelation of the Word of God, which came “in parts” (13:9), prophecy and knowledge had key roles in putting into our hands all that God wanted the Church to know for all the Church Age. The gifts of exhorting and teaching would continue the applications of all that prophecies and the revelations of knowledge gave to the vast reservoir of wisdom and understanding for the church.

9. Helps, service

A. Definition:

1. Study of the word and associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Antilepsis</i> | <i>anti</i> —in exchange <i>lambano</i> —take, support | help | Intelligent application of truth | 1 Cor 12:28; Rom 8:26; Ac 10:35 |
| <i>Diakonia</i> | “service” | ministry, service, deacon | Basic nuance of personal service ¹ . Willingness to sacrifice yourself in practical service for others | Rom 12:7; 15:31; 1 Cor 16:15 |
| <i>sunergos</i> | <i>sun</i> —with <i>ergos</i> —labor | collaborator | A helper in the labor | 1 Cor 16:16; 2 Tim 4:17; Rom 16:2 |

2. This gifted person is willing to involve himself in the needs of others to help them, or to assist others in the ministry. It is used especially to help the weak and needy (1 Th 5:14).
3. The gift of helps is manifested by the ability to satisfy the needs of others, not from any egotism, rather from the desire to offer practical helps. The type of work necessary is of little importance.
4. The gift is called “helps” in 1 Cor 12:28; “service” in Rom 12:7. All the gifts are “services” or “ministries” (*diakonia*), but this gift functions in a practical or facilitator role making possible the normalcy of life or the functioning of another ministry. The example is given in Acts 6:1-3 where the “service” to the apostles alleviated the burdensome responsibilities of the apostles so they could fulfill their priority ministry.
5. Examples of this gift are Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30), Onesiphrous (2 Ti 1:16-18); Onesimus (Philemon 10-13).

B. Explanation

1. The gift of helps functions to provide practical services in the church ministry and to help the needy members of the church (Ac 20:35; 1 Cor 16:15-16).

2. A person with this gift does not need or seek fame, nor does he want to be recognized publicly, but is absolutely indispensable to the ministry of the church.
3. It is one who occupies himself arranging, cleaning, repairing, preparing meals or in whatever activity necessary for the on-going of the ministry. He makes sure that the spoken ministry is successful.
4. The “service” may be in a spiritual form (in 2 Cor 1:11, “as you help us by your prayers...”) or a practical form (Rom 16:9; Phil 4:3), so long as the overall ministry prospers and is unhindered by distracting problems that someone can resolve.
5. Probably hospitality (1 Ti 3:2; Tit 1:8; 1 Pet 4:9) is an aspect of the gift of helps (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:1).
6. The manifestation of “helps” is related directly to expressions of love (1 Cor 12:31-13:13). The nature of the gift does not naturally receive much or any public recognition as other gifts might. Thus it is only when love is abounding as the continual motivation with the gift of helps that it proves to be beneficial to the church body.
7. As with many of the gifts, the responsibility to “help one another” is the responsibility of everyone. Those that have the gift of service/helps should not be the only ones involved in helping others, but their example and collaboration should teach everyone how to serve.
8. Studies of thousands of churches have revealed that approximately 70% of the church body will manifest the gift of helps/service. Its importance cannot be overestimated.

C. Symptoms

1. A desire to help others in any form or any need.
2. The ability to see many ways to help others, spiritual, temporal or physical. It provides practical service to another as opposed to theoretical or psychological help.
3. An unselfish nature that finds great satisfaction in doing what others can not do or do not have time to do in order to reach the desired goal.
4. Normally God has given previous training or skills that bring personal satisfaction in exercising them. The object is to bring about the success of a project or program. The satisfaction of a job well done is sufficient motivation to keep this person serving.
5. The recognition that leadership or speaking gifts are not his area of expertise, yet a strong desire to be a team player to facilitate the different ministries in the church. There is a

willingness to do whatever it takes to bring about the success of the overall ministry.
This is an indispensable gift for the church.

10. Giving

A. Definition:

1. Study of the word and words associated

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------|---|--|
| <i>metadidomi</i> | <i>meta</i> —with <i>didomi</i> —give | “give, share equally” | Giving to meet the needs of others or ministries | Rom 1:11; 12:8; Eph 4:28 |
| <i>doreomai</i> | <i>doron</i> —gift | gift | Gift that has been given, sometimes in legal sense | Rom 3:24; Eph 4:8 |
| <i>apodidomi</i> | <i>apo</i> —back <i>didomi</i> —give | “restore, return” | To give with the idea of a return | Mt 5:26; 1 Tim 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 13:17 |

- In the Classics the word *metadidomi* has the idea of sharing to meet the needs of others; to personally feel the needs of the poor. The word *doreomai* emphasized the grace of receiving something that is not deserved.
- In the OT (LXX) *didomi* is used to translate the Hebrew word *natan*, “to give”: (1) to other men (Prov 4:2); (2) of men giving to God (Lev 7:15); (3) of God giving to men (Gen 30:20).
- In the NT, the word *didomi* is used 416 times. The chief example in the NT is of God Himself (Jn 4:10; Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 2:6). The response of the believer should be to give to God following the example that God has already set (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 8:5). Once that man has willingly given all that he is or has to God, he begins to act as a steward of God’s possessions (not his own) entrusted to his care. He distributes as God would indicate by providence (providentially being in the presence of need) or by participation, seeking to facilitate the advancement of the kingdom (Phil 4:17-19).
- The key descriptive word that should control the act of giving is “simplicity” (Rom 12:8). It is the word *aplotes*, meaning singleness of purpose, mentally honest. It is one free from pretense and hypocrisy, not self seeking or wanting anything in return, rather only wanting to be generous, which is the true symptom of the gift of giving.

B. Explanation

1. The one who possesses the gift of giving has the ability to give of his personal possessions for needy people (especially in the church) and for the advancement of the kingdom through the local church ministry. This giving is consistent, self-motivated, with a sense of joyous sacrifice and such delight in giving that the attitude becomes contagious throughout the church.
2. According to 2 Cor 8:2, the gift of giving is not limited to the rich.
3. As in the OT, the giving included much more than the tithe, because they actually had three tithes in the law (though one was given every 3 years so amounted to 3.3% per year) thus amounting to 23% per year had to be set aside for the Lord.
4. The tithe is an OT concept, but not a law concept since it was practiced long before the law (Gen 14:20). The references in the NT are scarce, probably because it was an assumed principle carried over from the Jewish heritage. In Mt 23:23 Jesus criticized the Pharisees for tithing, but not fulfilling the rest of the law regarding “justice, mercy and faithfulness”. Jesus declares that true believers will practice both tithing and justice.
5. A somewhat more remote connection to the OT tithe in the NT is in 1 Cor 9:13, where Paul is laying the foundations for NT giving in the church, especially in regard to the supporting of full-time pastors. The comparison is made just as in the OT the giving of a tithe to the Temple was to support the priestly leadership, so in the NT the giving (of a tithe?) would support the pastoral staff.
6. The gift is particularly evident in the ability to be generous with delight beyond the normal level of giving. Numerous people have been able to give 30-50% of their income, while some wealthier have attained the giving level of 80-90% of their income to the Lord’s work (2 Cor 9:7).
7. This is one of the gifts that is necessary to cultivate and bring one to maturity. It is not natural or necessarily easy, but the grace of the gift permits a generous spirit that becomes an example to the whole church. The two-fold motivation in this giving is (1) to transfer as much “treasure” (Mt 6:19-21) to a heavenly account (Phil 4:17), revealing that his heart is really set on the kingdom, and (2) to trust God for a supernatural and providential reimbursement so as to repeat the cycle of even being able to give more (Phil 4:19). In that verse (4:19) the need that God has promised to supply is the need that resulted from having been so generous to the ministry of Paul.
8. Anything given in the name of the Lord and for His purpose in the world will not lack its recompense (Mt 10:41-42), thus its uses are three-fold:
 1. Meet the need of other members of the church (Eph 4:28; Gal 6:10)
 2. Meet the needs of other churches (2 Cor 8-9; Rom 15:25-26)
 3. Meet the needs of their full time spiritual leadership (Phil 4:10; Gal 6:9; 1 Cor 9:1-11; 1 Tim 6:16)

C. Symptoms

1. A sensitivity to recognize the physical and material needs of others.
2. A quickness to assume the burden to help others.
3. A profound conviction that all our possessions belong to God and that Christians are stewards given the responsibility to distribute the wealth that God has put in our trust.
4. The ability to make finances grow in order to use them for God, with the purpose of increasing the distribution of God's funds.
5. The ability to carefully manage finances with the tendency to retain only what is necessary, in order to maximize the giving potential.
6. His delight and joy in life is sharing with others and seeing that his provision was just what a brother or ministry needed, or was instrumental in advancing the gospel.

11. Govern, lead, administrate

A. Definitions

1. Study of the words associated with this gift:

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <i>kubernngsis</i> | <i>kubernao</i> —act of steering a ship | “steer, guide or govern” | The skill with which a pilot guides a ship, administrative ability | 1 Cor 12:28 |
| <i>kubernetes</i> | | “helmsman, pilot, statesman” | The one who has authority and direction of a ship or an organization | Ac 27:11; Rev 18:17 |
| <i>proistemi</i> | <i>pro</i> —before <i>istemi</i> --stand | “preside, lead, be in charge” | The leader that others want to follow towards a goal; a visionary | Rom 12:8; 1 Th 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4,5; 5:17 |
| <i>hegeomai</i> | | “govern, lead, be the boss, judge or pastor” | The one who has authority and makes decisions for others | Mt 2:6; Ac 7:10; 15:22; Heb 13:7, 17, 24 |

- In the OT (LXX), *kubernesis* is used in relation with wisdom. In Proverbs 12:5 it is translated “counsels”. In Ezekiel 27:8 it is used for the word “pilots”.
- The Greek word, *kubernetes*, is the origin of the word “cybernetics” or the science of the relationship between the brain and the control of the body. It is necessary that this gift be recognized in the leadership of a church (*proistemi* for “govern” in 1 Tim 5:17). It is the ability to make decisions, be responsible for the actions of others and to take initiatives.
- It is the pilot of the ship that makes the decisions for the direction and has the responsibility for the route to be taken for arriving at the goal or port. (Ac 27:11); thus it

refers to someone who must maintain the biblical direction of the church. Obviously it implies that he has the authority to determine the direction.

5. It is the ability to organize and administrate with such efficiency and selflessness that the project is completed satisfactorily while maintaining harmony and motivation within the group.
6. The gifts of “ruling” (Rom 12:8) and “administration” (1 Cor 12:28) are similar enough to be treated together, though they may be as different as “leader” and “manager”.

B. Explanation

1. What it is not: the natural tendency to dominate a situation or persons in order to attain the leader’s goals. The gift of the Spirit never is a demagoguery, or a dictatorship (1 Pet 5:3). This type of leadership is prohibited in Mark 10:42-44. The testimony of Diotrephes (3 John) is the result of having permitted a dogmatic leader to dominate a church.
2. Christian leadership is expressed in wisdom, spiritual example, and humility, meeting the needs of those under authority. This is the reason to esteem and respect pastors in 1 Th 5:12-13. It is not just for the office of pastor, but for his character and ministry to others. Leadership is the ability to recognize the gifts and ministries of others, organize them efficiently to eliminate the doubling of efforts and the confusion that results when people are not prepared for their responsibilities. A leader takes maximum advantage of the strengths of each member with the objective of reaching the purposes that God desires of the ministry.
3. The gift could lead to a full-time ministry opportunity in a local church. The requirements of leadership (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) would be necessary to assume such a position. As a man “governs” his family, he will also “govern” the church (1 Tim 3:4-5). The first place to make evident the gift of administration is within the family unit. If this person is not able to resolve problems within the family, he will not be able to do so in the church. The requirement seems to imply that the authority given to this gifted person will compare to the father in a family.
4. Paul insisted that all the activities and functions of the church be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:33, 40). The gift that best assures this goal is the use of the gift of administration. It is a great benefit that someone in the leadership of the church have the gift of administration or know how to govern well (1 Tim 5:17). This will allow other pastor(s) to be able to dedicate themselves to the study, prayer and teaching of the Word.
5. Some suggestions derived from 1 Cor 12:28.
 1. The gift has less authority than an apostle, prophet or teacher.
 2. Although it may receive recognition, it is not equal to the speaking or sign gifts.

3. Since a lot of the labor is not before the public it is a labor of love, as a gift of help.
4. Continue organizing programs even though there may not be an expressed appreciation for the contribution, will require a high level of devotion to the Lord and to the members of the body.
5. Through the power of the spiritual gift the administrator will continue on even with hurt feelings from other leaders or misunderstandings.

C. Symptoms

1. Has a tendency to organize things with ease.
2. Feels uncomfortable when an organization or program doesn't function perfectly, when a leader does not delegate authority or doesn't explain all the aspects of a project not completing a major part.
3. This person likes to invent methods or structures of organization in all that is attempted.
4. Thinks in terms of how to help others reach their goals.
5. Likes to do things to help others to be more efficient.
6. It is not a difficulty for this person to assume responsibilities and take charge of details even when the plans need to be changed.

12. Mercy

A. Definition:

1. Study of the words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| <i>eleos</i> | compassion, pity | “mercy, pity, compassion” | A motive of pity upon seeing someone afflicted | Rom 12:8 Mt 23:23 |
| <i>eleemosune</i> | <i>ele--</i> mercy | “sympathy, donations, charity” | An act of goodness motivated by compassion | Mt 6:1-4 Ac 9:36 |

- The gift refers to the ability to feel compassion for those that are in need, especially for those who don't merit help or those who nobody is interested in helping, showing this compassion in practical forms with an attitude of joy that encourages those in need (Ac 9:36).
- In the Classics, *eleos* is an emotion produced upon making contact with an afflicted person who does not deserve affection. It is the opposite of the feeling of envy for the good fortune of another. It is a feeling of pity for the less fortunate.
- In the OT (LXX) the word is used 400 times, mainly to translate *hased*, “loyal love”. The concept changes from the relation in the Classics. Now it is more a judicial or legal sense. *Hased* is a behavior based on a commitment or covenant. It is the responsibility or loyalty from one person to another to demonstrate kindness, pity or grace.
- In the NT *eleos* is used 78 times. In the gospels the needy cried for “mercy”, asking healing from Jesus (Mr 10:47, 48). The mercy of man towards man (Mt 5:7; 18:33) comes from the mercy of God towards man. The mercy of salvation by grace is a motive to act similarly (Eph 2:4-10; 2 Cor 4:1; Rom 12:1; Jas 3:17).

B. Explanation

- The gift of mercy is manifested in compassion, understanding, patience and feeling towards the needy.

2. The gift of mercy motivates a joyous and voluntary giving of one's self, of your time, your privacy, your resources, etc. in order to benefit the needy. The recompense is a satisfaction that is hard to explain.
3. There are three descriptive aspects of the gift of mercy:
 1. Feeling of compassion
 2. Motivation to an act of help or assistance
 3. Sense of joy and satisfaction.
4. Mercy should be an expression of kindness or goodness in all believers (fruit of the Spirit), but the gift of mercy is the area of lifetime dedication. The fruit of the Spirit shows mercy when the opportunity presents itself, but the gift of mercy looks for the opportunity to show the mercy of Christ to the needy.
5. The gift has special evangelistic applications for the preparation of the hearts of the unconverted creating a willingness to listen to the gospel message even in hostile environments.
6. It is the response of the church to the problems of society. It can be the testimony most recognized in the world to demonstrate the faith in Christ in a concrete form.
7. This gift is directed towards those experiencing hurt, rejection, depression, loss, poverty, lack of love, physical affliction, starvation, addiction (drugs or alcohol) or similar desperate needs.

C. Symptoms

1. This person reacts emotionally on hearing or seeing sad circumstances. He is easily involved emotionally in circumstances of others.
2. Other people remark that this person has a personality that feels the emotions of others.
3. He/she expresses a desire to reach and help those who are living in misery.
4. He feels empathy for the wounds of others.
5. He desires to express love (or the love of Christ) to the desperate and destitute.
6. The needy like to have him in their presence because he makes them glad and gives them hope.
7. He never feels rejection or repulsion toward the poor, sick or hurting, rather thinks, "How can I help?"

13. Faith

A. Definition:

1. Study of the word and associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-------------------|--|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| <i>pistis</i> | <i>pist</i> —trust | “faith” | Trust in someone or thing | 1 Cor 12:9; 13:2 |
| <i>apistis</i> | <i>apist</i> —without trust | “unbeliever” | Doesn’t trust in anything | Mt 17:17; Rev 20:8 |
| <i>peitho</i> | <i>peit</i> —trust (same root as <i>pistos</i>) | “convince, persuade” | Trust in something | Mt 27:20, 43; Mr 10:24; Heb 13:17 |
| <i>peitharcho</i> | <i>peit</i> —trust <i>archo</i> —rule | “obey” | Trust controls your actions in obedience | Ac 5:29; Tit 3:1 |
| <i>apeithes</i> | <i>a</i> —no, without <i>peit</i> --trust | “disobey” | Lack of trust results in a refusal to obey | Rom 11:32; Heb 4:6 |

- In the Classics, *pisteuo* signified confidence or trust in someone or something. As a noun, *pistos*, it meant the faithfulness of people tied by a covenant. *Pistis* implies a certainty, trust and assurance for the completion of a promise. The word is tightly associated with obedience, i.e. a trustworthy person is going to fulfill whatever is his assignment.
- In the OT (LXX) the concept of “faith” translates the word ‘*aman*, “be faithful, truthful, and trustworthy”. It is confidence in an unalterable and undoubted act such that all the coming generations will have to accept (Isa 7:9). In Hebrew there is no word for “persuade or convince.” Another root word to *pistos* is *peitho*, “obedient”, but it is not used in the LXX, however, the negation *apeitheo*, “disobedient” is used frequently (Dt 1:26; Isa 3:8). Thus the concept of a person of faith meaning an obedient person. Faith and fear are closely related in the OT; although contradictory, they shade into one another, and together they express the living tension and polar dynamic of the OT relationship to God. They occur more or less equally.⁹
- In the NT, *pistis* demands a full absolute trust in what Christ promised, but some were also going to receive the gift of faith (1 Cor 12:9) in addition to the saving faith. An

⁹Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

exaggeration of this gift is referred to in the phrase “have all faith” (1 Cor 13:2), which is part of a series of exaggerations or hyperboles of certain gifts. However, this would imply a variety of possible levels of faith.

This gift should be distinguished from the Word of knowledge and Word of wisdom, which may have been instruments for delivering the inspired Word, while the gift of faith declares what God is going to do in a particular circumstance. It implies much conviction about what God is going to do and a sure confidence that He will do it.

B. Explanation

1. It is necessary to distinguish among four types of faith in the NT:
 1. Saving faith: placing one’s trust, once and for all, in the redeeming work of Christ for our salvation and acceptance before God (Eph 2:8). This faith is not limited, rather is universal among all believers.
 2. Faith as a composite of doctrines (Ac 14:22; 16:5; Rom 1:5)
 3. Faith as one of the nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). This faith is not limited, rather should be universal to all believers, especially those filled with the Spirit.
 4. Faith as a gift of the Spirit for some believers in the body, but not for all (1 Cor 12:11, 18), given primarily to minister to others, building up their faith.
2. The gift of faith is a manifestation of an intense trust in God with which God gives the ability to some to trust in the power of God to conquer enormous obstacles or impossibilities. Paul made a reference to the gift in 1 Cor 13:2, “if I had all faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” This is a reference to the teaching of Jesus in Mt 17:20 where He promised special powers to his disciples immediately after casting out a demon from a child.
3. The experience of the apostles seemed to join the gift of faith to the gift of prophecy. In Ac 27:25 Paul was told by prophecy that certain events would take place, then he announced it by faith with the results that it happened “as he had said” (Ac 27:44).
4. Three aspects of the gift of faith:
 1. An extraordinary understanding of the will of God (1 Jn 5:14-15; Mt 17:20-21).
 2. The gift tends to specialize in the impossible, humanly speaking (2 Cor 16:9)
 3. The announcement of what will happen in the future for the glory of God.
5. Abraham is an example (Rom 4:20). God told him a promise of what He was going to do. For years Abraham remained faithful to the promise that God had given and finally received the announced promise. The gift of faith is basically obedience to the promises that God has given applying them to specific situations where God will fulfill His purpose.

6. Paul had a vision of what God was going to do and he followed that vision all of his life (Ac 9:15; 26:16-20). God gives a leader a vision through faith, if he is willing to pay the price of pursuing it over the years, He will bring it to pass. Great leaders have manifested incredible faith launching out to accomplish the impossible.
7. God uses the gift of faith by:
 1. To bring glory to Himself, that is, to reveal Himself in real life's situations such that it is unmistakably God who did it..
 2. To exhort the church to pray and believe in a God who responds to our prayers.
 3. To meet the needs of the church and individuals through answered prayer.

C. Symptoms

1. This person desires to accept the Biblical promises in the literal sense and apply them to specific situations until God meets the need. As an evangelist manifests his gift to facilitate the winning of souls, the one who has the gift of faith manifests his ability to see answers to his prayers.
2. A special ability to understand what God is going to do in a situation through a clear understanding of the application of His promises and a disposition to wait in confidence until God responds.
3. In some circumstances he has the sense that God is working, even when others have lost hope.
4. With the repetition of successful experiences of answered prayer, the confidence that God is going to respond again mounts higher, not only in the life of the gifted one, but also in those who know him.
5. He has a strong desire to know God in His fullness and depend in Him completely for the solutions of difficult circumstances. Eventually the boldness of attempting the impossible becomes almost natural. These experiences show that God is alive and powerful today. He responds to our prayers without any manipulation of man.
6. This special confidence in Him, not only believes that God "can" do it, but that He "will" do it or "already has" done what was asked.

14. Discernment of spirits

A. Definitions

1. Study of the word

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| <i>diakrisis</i> | <i>Dia</i> —for emphasis <i>Krino</i> —distinguish, judge *as above | “Separate, judge, distinguish, discern” | Ability to mark a difference between the true and the false | Rom 14:1 Heb 5:14 |
| <i>diakrino</i> (verb form) | | “decide, judge, distinguish” | Examine, search, assess, evaluate | 1 Cor 11:29; 14:29; 6:5 |

- In the Classics, the word signified the ability to arrange things by categories, to make decisions or judge between alternatives for judgments or justice.
- In the OT (LXX) the term translates the Hebrew word *sapat* (Ex 18:16; 1 Kings 3:9; Prov 31:9) that means “examine or search something to decide.”
- In the NT the word is used 16 times to refer to judging signs (Mt 16:3), one’s self (1 Cor 11:31), and the words of prophets in the church (1 Cor 14:29). This word has such varied meanings as “separation,” “distinction,” “strife,” “appraisal,” and “exposition.” In the NT it usually means “discernment” or “differentiation” (between spirits in 1 Cor. 12:10, between good and evil in Heb. 5:14).¹⁰ Instead of appealing to the courts of law, the believers are exhorted to depend upon men of discernment (1 Cor 6:5) to decide what is right when there are disputes. There are similar uses in Ac 11:2 and Judas 9.
- It is the ability to determine if a teacher, preacher, exhorter or pastor is speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit, his own spirit or evil spirits (2 Cor 11:14-15).
- It is the capacity to distinguish between truth and error, comparing the evidence with the Truth revealed or principles of the truth. It is the ability to distinguish between truth and error.

¹⁰Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

7. The discernment is of “spirits”. It is the same original word mentioned in 1 Cor 14:12, where it is translated “spiritual gifts” or “manifestations of the Spirit”. Thus it is a discernment between which spirit is motivating the words or actions.

B. Explanation

1. In the Early Church there were prophets, itinerate teachers, those claiming to be apostles, evangelists, and preachers going from church to church. Without a written NT there was a dependency upon the gift of discernment. They practiced discernment or judgment frequently (2 Cor 11:13; 2 Pet 2:1; Rev 2:2, 14, 20).
2. The church, with the written Bible, still needs discernment to protect itself from the errors of the natural tendency towards myths, error, exaggerations, legends, traditions, fables, heresies and bad practices (1 Jn 4:1-3) that so easily slip into the church belief structure. The gift of discernment has the exceptional ability to sense error in the making.
3. There are three areas of evaluation where the gift of discernment operates today:
 - a) Discern the quality, sincerity and genuineness of a teacher or preacher.
 - b) Discern the words of a preacher in order to evaluate his teaching in light of the written Word (Acts 17:11).
 - c) Discern the best decision or judgment in conflicts and disputes between brethren.
4. Paul warned that in the last days there would be an increase in false teachers (1 Tim 4:1).
5. Special warnings concerning those who speak of doctrines recently revealed by angels or prophets. Note that in 1 Thes 5:21 it is the responsibility of everyone not to be deceived.
6. There should always be a discerning spirit in the church (1 Cor 14:29).
7. An example of discernment is in Ac 16:17. “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” However, Paul had the discernment to recognize this declaration as a demonic origin and rebuked it (16:16, 18).

C. Symptoms

1. He has the ability to recognize the inconsistencies in persons and teachings, without being unnecessarily critical.
2. He always wants to examine what is taught or preached for what might be an error or could be improved.
3. He possesses the ability to categorize teachings and recognize the source of different teachings.
4. This person thinks in logical steps, recognizing tendencies in teachings and emphasis.
5. He has a good understanding of the Scriptures. (The best way to recognize a counterfeit bill is to have memorized the characteristics of a genuine bill).
6. He easily recognizes bad interpretations or applications in lessons and sermons.

7. He senses an uneasiness that will not let him accept a situation on hearing only half of the truth or when the truth is wrongly applied or even when false teaching is accepted by everyone else.

15. Miracles

A. Definitions

1. Study of the associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Dunameon</i> | <i>duna</i> —power, force | “miracle, power, force, authority” | Power, natural ability, generally inherent | 1 Cor 12:10; 12:29; Ac 9:40; 8:13; 19:11 |
| <i>semeion</i> | <i>sema</i> —mark, indicator | “sign, miracle, marvel” | An indicator of what God wants to communicate; authentication | Heb 2:4; 2 Cor 12:12; 2 Thes 3:17; Mt 16:3 |
| <i>Energeia</i> | action, operation | “power, energy” | Working, power in exercise, operative power | Eph 1:19; 3:7; 4:16; Col 1:29; 2:12; Phil 3:21 |
| <i>Exousia</i> | power, authority to do a thing | “authority” | Liberty of action, right, authority, delegated power | Jn 5:27; 2 Cor 10:8; 1 Tim 2:12; Tit 2:15 |
| <i>Ischus</i> | be strong, healthy | “able, strength” | Be sound, able to do something, wield power | Jas 5:16; Mt 5:13; Gal 5:6,13; Phil 4:13 |
| <i>kratos</i> | sovereign power | “Power devoted to control, supremacy” | Might, relative and manifested power, chiefly of God | Eph 1:19; 6:12; 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11 |

- The gift of miracles is includes much more than the gift of healings. It could be related to the gift of faith, that is, the gift of faith could be manifested by a miracle or other signs. An example of a miracle is the resurrection of someone that recently died (Ac 9:40) or when Elymus the sorcerer, was left blind by Paul (Ac 13:8-11). The consequence of the events in Acts 13 was that everyone was intent on what Paul wanted to say.
- In the Classics, the word *dunamis* was used to refer to the power or authority of a governor or a king. It would be a military or political power. The *dunamis* of nature (storms, winds, etc) were considered a manifestation of the power of the gods. Through magic invented by man, one could share or obtain such powers. “The fundamental concept in the Greek sphere, then, is that of a natural force which, imparted in different ways, controls, moves, and governs the cosmos.”¹¹

¹¹Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

4. In the OT (LXX) *dunamis* is used to translate *hayil* (military force). The word *dunamis* should be distinguished from *ischys*, which signifies a physical force or power. *Dunamis* tended to emphasize more the authority over something in stead of a physical force. Thus it is the right to have something supernatural. “The decisive difference in the OT is that the power of a personal God replaces the neutral force of nature that is equated with deity.”¹²
5. In the NT *dunamis* is used 118 times. It is a demonstration of the power of God over nature, life, death and, especially, over other spirit beings. There are other “powers” between heaven and earth that can manifest themselves in people (Mr 13:25; Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 1 Pet 3:22). The power of these supernatural beings was broken and soon will be destroyed completely (Mt 12:29; Lc 11:22; 10:19; 1 Cor 15:24; 2 Thes 2:9; Rev 13:2; 17:13). The majority of the manifestations of *dunamis* are in direct confrontation with these satanic powers (Mt 12:22-30; Mr 6:2, 5; Lk 19:37).

B. Explanation

1. There are three words primarily associated with “miracles” in the NT:
 - a) “Power”: an event of a supernatural power (9 times translated “miracle”).
 - b) “Marvel”: an event that astounds people (16 times is translated “miracle”).
 - c) “Sign”: an event that indicates something significant or divine (60-70 times that it occurs is translated “miracle”).
2. There are three aspects of the gift of miracles:
 - a) A supernatural event, something that goes against the laws of nature, something that is impossible to explain by coincidence. They were manifested in the Bible as:
 - (1) Power over sicknesses (related to the gift of healing)
 - (2) Power over nature (related to calming the storm, walking on water)
 - (3) Power over matter (related to changing water to wine, multiplying the fish and bread)
 - a) An event that can be perceived by the senses: to “marvel” means “to look at the details”
 - b) An event that accompanies a servant of God to authenticate his position and authority: a sign.
 - 1) Occurs every time there is new revelation from God. He sends the power and authority to do miracles in order to confirm his messengers (John 6:14; 2 Cor 12:12; Rom 15:18-19; Mr 16:20; Heb 2:3-4)
 - 2) Once His new revelation and His messenger were accepted or authenticated, the power to continue to do miracles ceased.
3. Why were miracles abundant in the apostolic age and almost immediately thereafter ceased?
 - a) Was it for the unbelief of the early believers?

¹²Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

- 1) This position would condemn to unbelief hundreds of thousands of men of faith and power of the Spirit throughout Church History who never saw or could do a miracle.
 - 2) Could it be possible for someone to manifest the fruit of the Spirit and the power to edify the church, yet still have an unbelieving heart? (Heb 3:12)
 - b) Was it the will of God?
4. Do you know someone who has the power to suspend the laws of nature by his own will like Moses? Elijah? Or Paul?
 5. It appears that in the NT only Jesus, the apostles and a few people who had received the imposition of hands of an apostle, had the power to perform miracles (Compare Mark 16:16-20 with Heb 2:3-4).
 6. Today many are seeking a sign or a miracle to verify their belief. In Jn 4:48 (Luke 11:29) we see that this attitude does not please God. Look at Luke 1:18-20. Why did Zacarias remain mute until the birth of John?
 7. The miracles, in a broad sense, do occur occasionally today. They occur as miraculous answers to prayer: precise financial support at the exact time needed or a special protection in an accident, etc. Some would make a distinction of this type of miracle as a “providential” intervention of God using natural means to meet special needs. These “miracles” usually don’t result in a ceasing of the natural law, as an iron axe floating on command (2 Kings 6:5-6).
 8. There was no developing or maturing of this gift: either you had it and could change the laws of nature or you couldn’t.
 9. It is better seen as a confirming gift that was temporary to the Early Church (as history makes evident) as part of God’s plan as were other sign gifts.

16. Healing

A. Definitions

1. Study of the associated words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
| <i>iaomai</i> | <i>iama</i> —cure | “heal” | Ability to cause people to be well (1 Co 12:9) | 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30; Jn 12:40; Ac 28:27 (10:38) |
| <i>therapeia</i> | “serve, care for, attend, treat” | “serve, heal, worship” | Treatment in service to restore physically | Mt 4:23; 8:7; 9:35; Jn 5:10; Ac 28:9 |
| <i>iatros</i> | “healer, doctor” | “medical doctor” | One who effects healing | Mt 9:12; Mr 5:26; Lu 4:23; Col 4:14 |
| <i>sozo</i> | Fr. <i>saoz</i> , “safe”, “make whole” | “heal, save, make complete” | To save from disease or oppression, keep safe and sound. | Mr 5:23; Ac 14:9 |

- The word “healing” in the Classics signified “to cure, restore” in the medical sense and metaphorically. Un *iatros*, “healer” (derived from *iama*) was a doctor. The historical development of “doctor” occurred in Greece (ej. The Hippocratic Oath in 400 BC, which continues valid until today). The kings were considered High Priests with the authority to heal. Until the time of Shakespeare this concept dominated: “The King touches you, God heals you” (*Macbeth* IV, 3).
- In the OT (LXX), *iaomai* translates the Hebrew verb *rapa'*, “to heal, or cure”. For the Jews only God could heal (Ex 15:26; 2 Ki 5:7). To trust in a doctor was to deny God (2 Ki 1; 2 Chron 16:12). Since the sicknesses come from God, He is the only one that can heal (Job 5:18). This concept caused a lot of internal conflicts when a just man becomes sick (Job, Psalms 38; 51; 88), but obligated a dependence upon God as the Only one that could heal (Psalm 30:3; 103:3). In the OT the priest was not considered a healer, but one who confirms if someone had been healed (Lev 13). There was a relationship between the sin and the sickness as an expression of the wrath of God (Psalm 31:1; 38:3; 39). The healing is used as an illustration of the forgiveness of God (Isa 6:10; Psalms 30:3; 41:5; 103:3).

4. In the NT, the word is used 26 times (20 times in the Synoptic Gospels). It is interchanged with *therapeuo*. They were considered signs of the coming of the Messiah (Lu 9:2, 11, 42; Ac 10:38), in the fulfillment of the OT prophecies (Isa 35:3-6; 61:1). The text of the NT is very simple: “a man was healed; he arose and went to his house carrying his bed”. There is not apparently any intent to magnify the healer, as is done in the world. In a healing power flowed from Jesus (Mr 5:30; Lu 6:19). In order to heal, Jesus had to give to the one that possessed the gift the authorization as an instrument of His power.
5. In the extra-biblical literature there are reports of healings, but they are always associated with exaggerations and romanticisms.
6. It is important to understand the purpose of this gift in order to understand the circumstances in which it pleased the Lord to manifest it. In Acts 3:6-8 Peter healed a paralytic, instantly restoring him to normal health, and thus captured the attention of the crowd. Peter took advantage of the opportunity to preach (Ac 3:12-26). Without the healing Peter would not have had the audience. Also the healing was so obvious that everyone recognized Peter as a man with the approval of God on his life.
7. The gift of healing is related to an aspect of the gift of miracles in Acts 4:22 with the phrase, “miracle of healing”.
8. The imposition of hands, through prayer or a command directed at someone to be healed, or a combination of these exercised the power.

B. Explanation

1. The uses of the gift of healing in the Early Church were two:
 - a. To give authority to the message and messenger that exercise the gift of healing (Ac 3; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4).
 - b. Humanitarian reasons (Ac 28:8).
2. Since the majority of the reported events today as healings do not compare to the Scriptural evidences of miraculous healings (the gifted healers in the NT could heal instantly, completely and permanently – Mr 1:42; Mt 14:36), it is necessary to explain the apparent “healings” in the following forms:
 - a. Demonic power (The world was full of magicians who could heal in the time of Jesus (Ac 8:9-11). This was the thinking of the accusers of Jesus (Mt 12:24) and Simon (Ac 5).
 - b. The psychosomatic power that can effect a physiological reaction which can appear as a disorder or can be relieved with a suggestion.
 - 1) Today medics attribute 75% of the reported sicknesses to psychosomatic origin
 - 2) If someone is convinced, with sufficient mental force, of a guaranteed remedy, suddenly the symptoms disappear.
 - 3) If the healer says “Have faith and more faith in order to be healed”, then he is insisting in being convinced psychologically.
 - 4) If a healing results from such practices, it is not of God, and no doubt will be announced as a miracle.

3. The characteristics of healing in the Bible.
 - a. The gift implies a given authority, not a power of prayer (Ac 3:2, 5-6, 8). “I’ll give you what I have.” Peter gave the order for the paralytic to be healed, without prayer. He had the authority to heal delegated to him by Jesus.
 - b. It is a creative power! The persons healed immediately had new physical parts, recently created. When Peter healed “...instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong” (Acts 3:7). In 2 Kings 5:14 the physical flesh of a leper having been healed instantaneously is described in detail: “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child”.
 - c. It is occasionally a power over demons. In Luke 13:10-16 a person is deformed physically by demonic power. Upon releasing the demon from the person the sickness immediately disappears.

4. There are four observations concerning healings:
 - a. The sickness can be an instrument of God (2 Cor 12:7-9) with a beneficial spiritual purpose. There is no obligation on God’s part to heal every physical sickness.
 - b. There is no command to heal. It should be noted that none of the sign gifts are imperatives, but all of the other gifts are commanded to be manifested and practiced among believers to each other.
 - c. There is very little emphasis on healing in the Epistles. Except for 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30, no other Epistle mentions healing except James and this is not a reference to the gift of healing, rather the instructions on the ministry of praying for healing in the church.
 - d. There is a description of the responsibility given to the elders (pastors) to pray for the sick (James 5:14-16). The following instructions are given for this ministry:
 - 1) The sick person, asking for a visit to his house initiates the petition
 - 2) The elders (pastors) are told to visit the sick in his home.
 - 3) The oil is poured over the sick person (either ceremonially or medicinally). The act is a symbol of acceptance in Luke 7:46. If the sickness indicates a “worldliness” or a feeling of rejection from God, the oil would communicate acceptance from the church leaders. It could also be used medicinally (Luke 10:34; Isa 1:6).
 - 4) The confession of sins is urged to secure a clean conscience. The implication is that there is a possibility that the sickness could be the result of chastisement of God (1 Cor 11:29-31). The confession is designed to restore the person to full communion with God and the church.
 - 5) The prayer for healing. The words “availeth much” (KJV), or “has great power and wonderful results” (NLT) (5:16), translates the word *energoumene*, means that it “actively or really works.”

C. Symptoms

1. Since the sign gifts are not able to be developed or are partially present, there are no unusual symptoms. One has the gift totally, or not at all. The gift of healing cannot be improved upon.

2. Although there are no exegetical bases for the ceasing of healings, the principal reason for their existence, that is the authentication of the message and messenger of the new revelation of the NT, now does not exist. Everything has been confirmed beyond any historical doubt and the new revelation has been universally accepted among believers as the Word of God (1 Thes 2:13).
3. With or without the existence of the gift of healing, there is no impediment, rather encouragement, for the leadership of the church to pray for the sick that they would be healed. When the healing is for the good of the person God will effect the healing (Rom 8:28; 1 Jn 5:14-15).

17. Tongues

A. Definitions

1. Study of the word and associated words:

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------------|--|---|
| <i>glossas</i> | Tongue | “languages” | Tongue, the organ; a communicated language | James 3:5; Phil 2:11; 1 Cor 12:10,28,30; 13:1; 14:5,6,18, 22,23,39; |
| <i>glosa</i> | Tongue | “language” | Term used to describe ecstatic utterances of pagan religions | 1 Cor 14:2, 4, 9,13;14:19,27; 1 Jn 3:18 |
| <i>fone</i> | Sound | “voices, language” | An actual earthly language | 1 Cor 14:10; 2 Pet 2:16; Rev 5:2 |
| <i>dialekto</i> | language | “language, dialect” | An actual earthly language | Ac 2:6, 8-11; 21:40; 22:2 |

2. It is the capacity given by the Spirit to speak to people in a foreign language that was previously unknown to the speaker and was used as a sign.
3. The key phrase to understand the term is found in 1 Cor 12:10, where they spoke “in different kinds of tongues”, *hetero gene glosson* (pl), that is, “different families or racial languages”. The first word, “different” (*hetero*) means that the gift grants many different types of languages, not just one special language. In 1 Cor 14 Paul distinguished between a “tongue” (singular) and “tongues” (plural). The gift of the Spirit is plural and the imitation is the singular.
4. The word *glossas* is used interchangeably with *dialekto*, “dialects”, in Acts 2, in order to refer to actual national languages spoken by people groups on earth. This is the genuine gift. In two passages in Acts when the genuine gift of “tongues” was exercised the hearers understood the message in their hometown language (Acts 2:7-12; 10:45-46) without the need of special interpretation.
5. In the OT (LXX), *glossas* is used to translate the Hebrew word *lisan*, a “tongue” or spoken “language” in 100 of the 160 appearances.

6. In the NT, *glossas* appears 52 times referring to the organ of speaking or to a language of communication. It is used 7 times in Revelation in the phrase “every nation, tribe, people and language” (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15; 16:10). When it is a referent to a language it is always a spoken contemporary language. The consistent sense of the word in the NT is an actual language unless the context indicates the organ.

B. Explanation

1. The purpose of the gift:

1. As with other sign gifts, tongues were used to authenticated the messenger, especially before Jewish unbelievers (1 Cor 14:21-22), who have a promised sign that they will be addressed in “foreign languages” (Isa 28:11-12). The word in 1 Cor 14:21 is *en heteroglossois*, “by people of foreign languages”. Paul specifically called the gift a “sign” (14:22) for unbelievers, especially Jews. As a sign it was useful in three instances in Acts (2; 10; 19). Never is there any insinuation of a mystical or ecstatic language.
 2. The sign is not effective for evangelizing Gentile unbelievers, because they are not going to understand the significance of the promised sign (1 Cor 14:23). It is useful only to the Jews that are aware of the prophecy of Isaiah 28.
 3. When the apostles had their positions accredited before the Early Church and before all the distinct Jewish national groups integrated into the church, specially the Jews in the beginning (Acts 15:8-9) the gift of tongues ceased gradually (1 Cor 13:8).
 4. When the canon of all the revelation of God in the NT was complete (1 Cor 13:9-10) and when the church matured through its independence from Judaism (1 Cor 13:11), the gift of tongues ceased along with prophecy and the word of knowledge (1 Cor 13:8).
2. The gift of tongues is not a sign of maturity or of spirituality. The most carnal and immature church in the NT was the only church with an emphasis on tongues. It was the most problematic church for Paul.
3. The gift of tongues is not a sign of the baptism of the Spirit. There is no command to be baptized by the Spirit, because it is simultaneous with and part of our salvation (1 Cor 12:13).
4. Observations:
1. No one should every be discontented with their own spiritual gift, or in the manner in which God is working through him to help build up His churches. The majority of believers in the NT and in the history of the Church NEVER spoke in tongues.
 2. Neither the church, nor individuals should emphasize a gift that is categorized as the most inferior (1 Cor 12:31). Paul ignored any reference to the gift of tongues in 12 of the 13 epistles that he wrote and never associated it with the Christian life, nor the filling of the Spirit.
5. All the spiritual gifts, even tongues, are to be for the benefit of the whole church, not for the edification or benefit of the individual (1 Cor 12:7; 10:33).

6. We should follow the example of Paul who said that he would not speak in tongues in his prayers, nor singing (devotional?) (1 Cor 14:14-15), nor in the church (14:19).
7. Any tongue must be accompanied by an interpretation, either by the hearers understanding their own language, or another person with the miraculous sign gift of interpretation of tongues, who would then relate the message to the church or listeners. Only then could there be any benefit to a tongue. It is the message, not the experience, which has value. Without such an interpretation, tongues cannot be permitted (1 Cor 14:28). This implies that prior to permitting speaking in tongues, someone with the gift of interpretation must be recognized.
8. The Scriptures obligate the limit of tongues speakers to two or three in any given meeting (1 Cor 14:27).
9. The speakers are obligated to speak one at a time without any interruptions either from other interpreters or other speakers of tongues (1 Cor 14:27).
10. Tongues are to be spoken only by men (1 Cor 14:34).

C. Symptoms

1. The genuine gift of tongues, since it is spontaneous, cannot be developed. Like all the sign gifts, either it is genuine and miraculous, or it is an imitation and false. Any notion of “baby talk” as one begins to practice a tongue, are all symptoms of the false tongue.
2. The ability to speak multiple languages after exposure to and specific study of those languages, should be seen more as a talent than a spiritual gift.

18. Interpretation of tongues

A. Definition

1. The study of the words

| Greek | Etymology | Translation | Basic idea | Passages |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------|---|--|
| <i>hermeneuo</i> | To explain or translate | “interpret” | Translation of a foreign to a familiar language | Heb 7:2; Jn 1:42; 9:7 |
| <i>hermeneia</i> | Explanation or translation | “interpret” | Explain a language not known | 1 Cor 12:10; 14:26 1 Cor 14:27, 28, 30; Lk 24:27 |
| <i>dihermeneia</i> | translation | “Translator” | Someone who can translate | |

- The gift of interpretation is the supernatural ability to understand and miraculously interpret for the church a message originally delivered in a language unknown to anyone in the church, even to the interpreter. The importance of this gift is seen in Paul’s description of the gift of tongues. He communicates that the only value of the “tongue” is the interpretation that either a translator who knows the language spoken in the tongue, or one with the gift of interpretation should interpret it to others. (1 Cor 14:5-13).
- The presence of someone with the gift of interpretation is imperative BEFORE it is permitted to speak in a tongue that no one understands. For this reason this person must be previously identified.
- There is no example of the use of this gift in the NT, however, Paul established its function in the Early Church (14:5, 13-19, 27-28). The ONLY edification possible through the gift of tongues comes when the message is interpreted and understood by the speaker of the original tongue and other listeners.

B. Explanation

- Interpretation in the OT is a special gift for understanding visions and dreams. The only ones mentioned are Joseph and Daniel. There are no other references to interpreters.
- It seems that this gift of interpretation is associated with that of prophecy, that is, through this gift the revelation of God and the mysteries were communicated to the hearers (1 Cor 13:2; 14:2, 6, 30). The difference was that the gift of interpretation depended upon the gift of tongues for the receipt of the revelation.

C. Symptoms

1. This sign gift cannot be developed since it is a miraculous understanding of another sign gift of tongues which was completely unknown to the interpreter.
2. As with other miraculous gifts, it probably disappeared along with the gift of tongues in the first century as history affirms.

Analysis of the use tongues as a mystical prayer language

The most common use of tongues in the contemporary charismatic church is the private or “devotional” practice of communicating to God in a special language. The user is totally ignorant of what is communicated. It is said that through the gift of tongues one can better communicate with God in prayer by using a personal and intimate language that only God understands. The speaker is “edified” by praying in this “tongue” which he does not understand.

The practice of a devotional or secret tongue is creeping into many non-Pentecostal churches. There is little or no teaching on the subject of the gifts or tongues in our churches while members are constantly exposed to charismatic teaching through the media and visiting other churches. These members can be persuaded to begin practicing concepts or habits that might not be in accord with the Scriptures.

The purpose of this review is to clarify the NT teachings on the practice and meaning of tongues for the believers and churches.

A. The idea of “devotional tongues” is based on insinuation, not on clear teachings.

In the entire NT there is no clear declaration that the gift of tongues would have any private use for the user. The only examples of tongues are public (Acts 2, 10, 19). Paul corrected the church at Corinth for its misuse of the gift of tongues and the statements of their abuses are taken as acceptable practices. These verses will be explained later.

B. Devotional tongues are contrary to the purpose of the spiritual gifts.

All the spiritual gifts are given to benefit others. They are not for the recipient of the gifts. The NIV puts it this way; “to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7, NIV). Another translation states the purpose of the gifts, “as a means of helping the entire church.”

The use of the gifts is consistent. Can you imagine the gift of giving to benefit one’s self? Or show mercy to one’s self? Or to help or serve one’s self? Always in every case, the benefactor of the exercise of a gift is another person. The teaching that the private use of a devotional tongue for personal edification is completely egoistic: it is used to feel better, to feel closer to God, to have better communication with God, or to have a new experience with God.

If these purposes were Biblical, then the gift of tongues or devotional tongues should be given to every believer, but the Bible teaches that none of the gifts are for everyone. “Does everyone have the gift of healing? Does God give all of us the ability to speak in unknown languages? Can everyone interpret unknown languages? No!” (1 Cor 12:30, NLT). God never intended that all believers should speak in tongues for any reason, nor should any other gift be distributed to all believers.

The principle given in the context of the spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 13:1-4 obligates that the gifts be exercised in love (*agape*). This is not an emotional experience, but rather a commitment to benefit and minister to others (13:4-7). In this text Paul specifically declared that love “is not self-seeking” (NIV), that is the gifts of the Spirit when motivated by love

will not be for personal benefit, but rather for others. All of the gifts empower ministries for others, never for one's self.

C. Devotional tongues are contrary to the purpose of genuine gift of tongues

In Mark 16:15-17 Jesus said that certain signs would follow the ministries of His disciples. One of those signs was “tongues”. The primary purpose is that “speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers” (1 Cor 14:22, NIV). In Acts 2:4-11 appears a clear example of the use of tongues as a sign to unbelieving Jews. The multilingual Jews from all over the world who were present in Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost many heard the message preached in their own particular dialect. Such a linguistic demonstration would be an impossibility for anyone living in Galilee all his life.

The sign in Acts 10:46 was the identical sign which equated for the first time that the Gentile converts could equally received the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples of Acts 2. It was evident that the Gentile converts should be considered on an equal basis with the Jewish disciples. There was no difference in the sign, so there should be no difference in their relationship to God. Once the same miraculous sign proved this equality, then there was no need for the sign to be repeated again and again. Once the sign fulfilled its purpose there was no need for a repetition.

In Acts 19:6, a group of followers of John the Baptist, a separate repentant group of Jewish believers awaiting the kingdom and Messiah, heard the gospel and accepted the gospel message. As a sign that they were receiving the same Holy Spirit and thus would be part of the same Church as the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ, they too were momentarily able to speak in a language that they did not understand. Once it was clear that even the disciples of John had to be saved through believing in Christ, it was never again necessary to be proven by a special sign. Now everyone and every group knew that salvation was only through Christ and for everybody, Jews, kingdom expectant disciples of John and all gentiles.

The private devotional use of tongues is never described in the NT, nor is it possible to be a sign to unbelievers, which is the stated purpose of the gift. Also the existence of the gift of Interpretation of tongues, supposedly a necessary compliment of the gift of tongues, implies that God would not have needed this gift if the primary use were a “devotional tongue”.

D. Tongues was never to be a sign to the speaker

The “devotional tongues” are not to minister to others, by definition, but should be a sign to someone (14:22), but to whom? It would have to be a sign to the speaker himself. If it is a sign, then what is it a sign of? The only thing that it could signal would be the certainty that the speaker has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. However, any of the spiritual gifts would indicate that the Spirit is indwelling.

The genuine confidence that the Holy Spirit is indwelling should be understood and derived from the promise of the Spirit by faith in the promises of the Scriptures, not an experience however impressive. Thus as a sign to the speaker himself, it does not make sense nor does it have a Biblical purpose.

E. Tongues are not for self-edification

The idea of “self-edification” comes from 1 Cor 14:3-4, “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself.” This is not a praise for self-edification, rather it is given as a reason why tongues are less important than the edification purpose of prophecy. He did not affirm the legitimacy of that believer’s experience as from the Holy Spirit. One might even say that irony is to be found in Paul’s statement.

“It should be carefully noted that if Paul is not using irony here, then he is crediting very carnal believers with an intimacy with the Holy Spirit and with God, with deep spiritual experiences. All of his other writings, and all the rest of Scripture, teach most emphatically that a carnal believer can never enter into this kind of relationship.... He most definitely is using irony as a weapon to lay bare the emptiness of the claims of carnal believers.”¹³

Paul’s whole argument presumes an abuse or error in usage of the gift of tongues in the Corinthian church. Whenever Paul contrasts tongues with prophecy, he is consistently pointing out the weaknesses and wrong application of the Corinthians.

The word “edify” can be used both negatively and positively. An illustration of the negative use is in 1 Cor 8:10, “For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be *emboldened* to eat what has been sacrificed to idols?” The conscience of the “weak” brother can be “emboldened” or “stimulated” to eat something offered to idols. This is the same word, *oikodomeo*. This is negative edification. It could be argued that their use of tongues was *motivating or emboldening* them, not for spiritual, but carnal values. The context would support this concept over the idea that their use of tongues was making them more spiritual.

“The very characteristic of the Corinthians’ heathen past, [Paul] argues, was the sense of being overpowered and carried away by spiritual forces.... “There is no doubt at all,” Schrenk comments, “that Paul intends to say here that the truly spiritual person is not marked by a being swept away...that was precisely the characteristic of previous fanatical religions.” It is important to notice that Paul places this evaluation of the spiritual “sweeping away” at the very outset of his treatment of “spiritual things” in Corinth. As the superscription to his essay in chapters twelve to fourteen Paul has written: Seizure is not necessarily Christian or spiritual.”¹⁴

1. There are several reasons why the “edification” in 1 Cor 14:4 should be understood negatively. There were divisions in the church as a result of pride and self-glorification (1:26-29; 3:3-7, 18, 21). They were proud of their giftedness, especially the gift of tongues.
2. In the context of chapter 14 Paul made it clear that it is impossible to positively edify yourself by the use of a tongue, because no one could understand the tongue. In 14:5 Paul declared that no one could be edified (positively) without understanding what was said. In 14:6 Paul concluded that neither could the speaker be edified until his tongue was interpreted. In 14:9 speaking in a tongue was “speaking into the air”, that is, without any benefit to anybody. When the hearer does not understand the tongue, even in a prayer (14:16), no edification takes place! (14:17). The conclusion is clear that

¹³Hay, *What Is Wrong in the Church?* p. 43.

¹⁴Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 286-87.

there is no biblical edification through the use of a tongue unless and until it is interpreted.

3. The speaker himself “is unfruitful” (14:14) until it is interpreted. Thus to pray without understanding what is being said (as in a tongue) is “unfruitful” or a negative action, without any personal benefit. The paradox of the Corinthian church is that they were priding themselves and deceiving themselves in what was really useless before the Lord.
4. A lack of understanding (14:6) is equal to the lack of edification (14:17). Two times in the context (14:5, 17) Paul clarified that edification is impossible without understanding of the Word of God. If the mind is not functioning in order to understand the new knowledge revealed, a new truth, exhortation, consolation or practical application, Biblical edification has not occurred.
5. God designed the gifts so that we could be edified through the ministry of others, not that we could edify ourselves (Eph 4:16). The concept of independent edification does not appear in the Scriptures. We constantly need the church body to keep growing in our walk with God.
6. The only supposed *value* of speaking in a tongue is (a) to recognize a God given gift and (2) some emotional satisfaction. These “experiences” are considered “edification”. However, the possessor of the gift of prophecy could recognize that God had given him a gift and he could even feel an emotion because God was speaking through him, but it was never for self-edification. The satisfaction that comes from exercising a gift is the benefit produced in the lives of others. The idea that God would give a gift to some for some personal experience or the sense of having received something from God is useless.
7. The concept of edification in the NT is dependent upon increasing understanding of the Word along with the application to the personal life through exhortation, knowledge, comfort, correction, clarification or instruction. The books of the NT were written with this style: first to establish the truth (Rom 1-11; Eph 1-3), and then the application or exhortation based on the truth already understood (Rom 12-16; Eph 4-6). Never are we exhorted to feel something or have an experience in order to be edified. The concept that an emotion or sensation of being used by God is edification is not of a Biblical origin.
8. In the Bible the believers never are exhorted or motivated to edify themselves through the spiritual gifts. There are many Scriptural passages that refer to edification and exhortation, but none make any reference to or benefit of tongues (Eph 4:11 gives a list of gifts or gifted men whose purpose is to edify).
9. This self-edification, for the few that receive the miraculous capacity to grow spiritually, is not available for all those who have not received this gift. This idea inevitably creates an “elite” of the “spiritual”. The idea of a special power for the few to be able to grow spiritually is totally contrary to the NT. If anyone says that the gift is for everyone who wants it, then his teaching is likewise contrary to the NT: no spiritual gift is for everyone.

Paul probably is saying that the one who speaks in a tongue to “edify himself” with no intention of edifying others

10. , is simply “exalting” himself. No one has been able to explain how an unintelligible language or tongue could possibly edify the person who is speaking it. It does not fulfill any of the Biblical norms of edification.

F. Tongues are not for prayer or praise

The two phrases “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God” (1 Cor 14:2) and “if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God” (14:28) are used to imply that these tongues speakers had an intimate communication with God. It is essential, as always, to understand a verse in the light of its context and not independent of its context.

1. In 14:1-3 Paul is exhorting the Corinthian church to prefer prophecy over tongues in order to speak to men, instead of tongues which could only be spoken to God. For this reason it is useless as a gift for edification. In the assembly, speaking to the congregation is preferable to speaking to God. The prayers and praise to God are important in the church, but only when they are understood (1 Cor 14:15-16; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:4-6; Col 4:2; 1 Thes 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1, 8).
 1. The introductory “for” in v.2, indicates a reason for the exhortation in v. 1: to make sure that “love” motive is supreme (where others benefit) and the priority is given to prophecy or the revelation of the Word of God. However you interpret v.2 it must be in the light of v. 1. The reason the gift of tongues (without interpretation) is of little value is because it doesn’t speak to men, since no one can understand unless he knows the language. This is the same idea as to “speak in the air” (v.9). The meaning is that God is the only one that could understand him.
 2. The phrase “but to God” (v. 2) is not an *absolute statement*, in the sense that it describes how the gift should function. The following phrase is linked by the same introductory word, *gar*, or “for”, “*Indeed* no one understands him”. Paul is saying that the only one who could possibly understand a foreign tongue unknown to anyone present would be God. This is not a reference to a special prayer at all. If someone could understand the tongue speaker, then he would be speaking to men and not to God. When the tongue was used as in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:6-8) those present understood what was spoken, thus they spoke both to man and God, since both understood. Tongues are for a sign to men (1 Cor 14:22), thus the purpose of the sign is to be understood. Since genuine tongues (real languages) are to be understood by men, 14:2 is not an absolute, that is, is not the absolute purpose of the gift of tongues.
 3. Paul was not exalting tongues as a medium of communication with God, rather was demonstrating its limitations, especially in comparison with the gift of prophecy. Paul was not saying that tongues are for prayer and praise, but that prophecy is preferred. Tongues could be beneficial if used correctly and someone understood (either miraculously through the gift of interpretation or a foreigner in his language). Paul sought to limit the use of tongues in the congregation. It seems apparent that the idea of speaking “only to God” was a negative concept, according to Paul. In fact, Paul made it clear that if an interpreter was not present then tongues should not even be spoken (14:28).

4. The final phrase of “utters mysteries with his spirit” is probably a reference to the pagan practices in the mystery religions. “Among the ancient Greeks ‘the mysteries’ were religious rites and ceremonies practiced by secret societies into which any one who so desired might be received. Those who were initiated into these ‘mysteries’ became possessors of certain knowledge, which was not imparted to the uninitiated, and were called ‘the perfected,’”¹⁵ Perhaps they were trying to imitate the pagan practices to show that they were even more spiritual than their pagan neighbors.
2. The prohibition to speak in tongues without an interpreter does not exalt tongues as a medium of communication with God: “if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor 14:28). However, no one can speak to himself if he doesn’t understand what he is saying, so this is really not a form of communication. In the context of this verse Paul is obligating them to speak in a manner where it will not cause a disturbance, where only God could listen. Once again, these verses are corrective in nature, not instructive, that is, Paul is not saying that while the service is going on people should be speaking to themselves (impossible) and to God in a tongue. He is saying that no matter what you sense as a revelation or a tongue, you should not interfere with the on going congregational meeting. But, what sense is there to have a gift in order to speak to yourself in silence? If one takes this verse to support devotional tongues (“speak to God”), it must be understood in the same sense of “speak to himself”. He is saying that if you are not going to have a ministry with others, not bother the congregation. Again, these exhortations are all negative with regards to tongues; they in no wise can be understood to promote the universal practice of tongues.
3. As an instrument of prayer Paul made it clear that tongues are useless in 14:14-16. “14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What is *the outcome* then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. 16 Otherwise if you bless in the spirit *only*, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?” Paul determined to pray in his spirit, but WITH UNDERSTANDING, that is, in a language that he understood, not a tongue. As has been stated, without interpretation (v. 13) the prayer in a tongue is “unfruitful” (v. 14). This is categorical: to pray in a tongue, without an interpreter or understanding is useless, fruitless, and empty. This is why Paul ALWAYS prayed in his spirit and with his understanding in full function; he knew exactly what he was saying. When we pray both our spirits and our minds should be involved.
4. “So what should I do?” (14:15) introduces a conclusion to form an absolute: the prayer that the speaker can understand is preferred over that which cannot be understood. Applying these general principles to private prayers, if using a tongue, they are likewise “unfruitful” (unless interpreted, but then it would not be private). Thus there is no reason to pray in a language that you cannot understand.

¹⁵Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

5. Paul continues the argument concerning the weakness of tongues (14:16-17) to demonstrate the same principles apply concerning the prayer for thanksgiving or blessing. No one can understand, not even the one praying. If the prayer is not an expression of the heart of the individual, which it cannot be if even the one praying is ignorant of what he is praying, then God is not praised by a tongue. It makes no sense that God would give a gift in order that He could be praised without the persons even understanding what he is saying to God or even able to participate in the praise. He might as well be a robot. It would be God merely praising Himself without the participation of the heart or mind of the individual.
6. Some want to identify the prayer in a tongue with the phrase in Rom 8:26, “the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words” (NIV).
 1. The context implies that this applies to all believers (8:23, “we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body”). The verses in context speak of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and permanence of the love of Christ, all of which pertain to all believers.
 2. The phrase in 8:26, “groanings too deep for words”, *stenagmois alaletois*, does not indicate speaking in tongues. The word *alaletois* is something “inexpressible, without words, impossible to communicate with words.” It is not an audible sound. It is something unperceived by the believer. The verse says that it is the Spirit that emits the groanings, not the believer.
 3. In 8:21-22 the groanings are related to the desire for the fulfillment of the redemption when the body, the Temple of the Spirit, is free from the “slavery of corruption.” He wants His temple (our body) to be perfected in the worst way.
7. The concept of a special kind of prayer for worship and praise to God has no precedence in the NT. Every believer has a perfect access to the throne through the death of Christ (John 14:13-14; Eph 2:18; 3:12). Nothing can improve this access. Furthermore, we have a perfect acceptance before the throne thanks to our High Priest (He 4:14-16) which no language could improve. Since the tongues are literal languages, which language is more spiritual? Chinese? English? Spanish? French? The Holy Spirit does help all believers in prayer (Rom 8:26), but not through a tongue but because He “intercedes for us”. Nowhere in the Bible is there any motivation or exhortation to have a more intimate communication than what we have through Jesus Christ. It is all imagination and a bad understanding of certain passages that has motivated thousands to look for something that does not exist! There is no insinuation that the adoration of angels is better than that of men (Rev 4:11-5:14). Worship to God is always with understanding and is expressed in known tongues.
8. It is clear that tongues were to cease in a given moment (1 Cor 13:8). If tongues are for worshipping God supernaturally there is no reason for them to cease. This would make tongues just as important as love. But such is not the case. We are to be praising God forever, but “tongues will cease” (13:8). In Acts 10:46 Luke wrote, “...heard them

speaking in tongues and praising God.” It is not clear if the Jews with Peter understood Cornelius and the others magnifying God in a tongue or if the verse refers to two different events: speaking in tongues and then magnifying God (the most probable). The passage indicates (a) the tongue was real and understandable by the Jews, but not understandable to Cornelius. This is evident because they declared to be an identical expression of a language “as at the beginning”, or Pentecost. (b) Whatever they said in a tongue is not important in the text, but that the witnesses understood what they said and that it was a sign for the Jews that demonstrated that God was equally working among the Gentiles as He had been working among the Jews. When Peter had to give an accounting of his evangelistic efforts before the apostles and church leaders in Jerusalem his explanation was precisely the same as above (see 11:15-18). The purpose is consistently for a sign to the Jews. Thus it is evident that there is no reason for using a tongue in prayer or devotions.

G. Tongues are for a ministry to unbelievers

All of the context in 1 Cor 14 exhorts against the use of tongues in the assembly. It is restricted in almost every verse. Such were the limitations placed on tongues that Paul wanted to minimize his instructions at the end by saying that he did not want to prohibit the practice of tongues completely (14:39). Though they would eventually cease on their own accord (13:8), he did not want to be responsible for terminating their use prematurely. Paul permitted their use under certain restrictions: must have an interpreter, can only speak one at a time, no more than two or three per meeting, no woman was permitted to speak in tongues, etc. Some have used these restrictions to come to the conclusion that tongues only have a function in a private use, but this ignores their strategic use *outside* of the congregation.

1) All biblical tongues have only one purpose.

Some authors want to make a distinction between the nature and purpose of the gift of tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians. Such distinction is pure fabrication for the convenience of explaining certain experiences. They would say that in Acts that tongues were for a sign, but in Corinth they were gifts for the public and private edification. Others would emphasize that in Acts tongues were the confirmation of the “baptism of the Spirit”.

All the tongues in the NT have the same nature. It cannot be more clearly stated than in 1 Cor 14:22, “tongues **are for a sign**, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers.” This is a categorical and absolute statement of purpose. Also in Mark 16:17, 20 it is clear that tongues are for a sign. Every time in the NT historical narratives they were used for a sign (Acts 2:4-11; 10:44-46 with 11:15-18 and 19:6). They were not sought, nor desired by the recipient, because before the event none even knew what they were.

In 1 Corinthians Paul made it clear that his use of tongues was not for the congregation, nor in his devotional life, but rather outside of the congregation. The only benefit of tongues would be a demonstration of the power and presence of God to those who could appreciate what they meant.

2) Tongues are a sign to the unbelievers

The gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in another language as a demonstration of the power of God. It could only be appreciated by foreigners listening to their special dialect. There was a double miracle of a tongue and a miraculous interpretation

by someone who had not been exposed previously to the language. These are the only explanations of the antecedents in the Bible (Acts 2, 10 and 19).

A purpose for a tongue such as has been defined as ecstatic utterances or a “celestial or angelic” tongue cannot be demonstrated in Scriptures. It has also been shown that “devotional tongues” has no antecedent in the Scriptures. Since the gift of tongues is a dialect of an actual language, the purpose is to communicate with people of the same language.

By elimination the gift of tongues has its chief purpose outside the congregation while prophecy has its chief function inside the congregation. In 1 Cor 14:18-19 using an exaggerated statement, hyperbole, Paul declared that as far as he was concerned tongues are not for any use in the congregation: “in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

The connection between verses 21-22 is interesting. “Do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.” Children are going to want the gift of tongues for themselves, but the gift is for others. The use of tongues among believers is an indication of immaturity. If tongues are for “a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers”(v. 22), then it is impossible to consider its purpose as devotional tongues or a mystical praise or communication with God. When they were used as a sign, such as on the day of Pentecost, they were effective. When they were used in the congregations, the unbeliever did not accept them as a sign (14:23), rather they thought that the believers were “crazy”. In the church they are inefficient for evangelism.

3) Tongues are a sign especially to the Jewish unbelievers

In Isaiah 28:11 we have the prophecy of a sign “to this people”, that is, to Israel. As a result, every time that tongues appeared in Acts it is in the presence of Jews, since the gospel was restricted to the Jews for the first decade years (Acts 11:19)

However, Paul is not saying that tongues is the fulfillment of Isa 28:11, but rather that God has wanted to give the Jews a confirmation sign of what He was doing. The exact fulfillment of the prophecy occurred in 605 BC when Babylon invaded Israel and spoke to them in a foreign language as a sign (Jer 5:15). Since the church in Corinth was primarily Gentiles he wanted to clarify the use of tongues for the ministry.

Also Jesus declared that no sign would be given to this generation, except that of the resurrection (Mt 12:39; 16:4; Mar 8:12). The implication in 1 Cor 1:22-23 is that the Jews are anticipating a sign of confirmation, even though they were not going to receive it, so tongues were for all unbelievers in the time of the confirmation of the gospel.

4) Tongues are not a sign of the baptism of the Spirit after conversion

The teaching of the necessity of a baptism of the Spirit AFTER salvation, a second work of grace, has no Biblical foundation. However, this single doctrine is the basis of the grand schism in the Church of Christ today. From this misconception many other errors have spun off.

The baptism of the Spirit is the operation of the Spirit by which the believer is placed in the body of Christ, thereby becoming a co-participant of all that Christ is. Without the baptism of the Spirit it is impossible to be “in Christ”, that is, it is impossible to be saved! Before Pentecost the disciples of Christ were believers, but did not possess the Spirit, nor

had received the baptism of the Spirit. Today no one can repeat those conditions of having believed, but not have the Spirit, because the Spirit has been given to the world and is received as a gift in the moment of receiving Christ as Savior (Acts 2:38).

The Pentecostals want to teach that speaking in tongues is a sign for the believer that he has received the baptism of the Spirit. However, we have already seen that the purpose of tongues is to be a sign to the unbelievers, not to the believers (1 Cor 14:22). There is no declaration in the Bible that tongues would be the evidence of something that would occur after salvation. In Mark 16:17-20 the tongues would be a sign for an evangelistic ministry with unbelievers, especially for the disciples of Christ. In Acts 2:4-11 appears a demonstration of the effectiveness of tongues as a sign to unbelievers. The purpose was especially to convince Israel of the truth of Christ (2:36). More than seven years later, in the home of Cornelius, we see the second appearance of tongues in the history of the Church. It was not an on-going experience of believers. The reference to “as at the beginning” (14:15), with no reference to any other appearance of tongues even at Samaria (8:5-25) insinuates that nothing like the Pentecost manifestation had occurred in the seven year interval. The event did not occur after the salvation of Cornelius, but rather at the moment of his salvation. He was not a believer before (Acts 11:14-18) and the experience resulted in the confirmation that they had a genuine salvation experience (compare 11:14 with 18).

In Acts 19:1-6 we find the last time that tongues appears in Acts, the record of the first 28 years of the Church. The event occurred in Ephesus almost 13 years after the conversion of Cornelius. It was another salvation experience for the disciples of John, because they had not heard anything about Jesus, nor of the coming of the Spirit. They were another group of Old Testament believers, needing a salvation experience of the new covenant.

The only reference to tongues outside of the three occurrences in Acts is in 1 Corinthians 12-14. There is no insinuation of a baptism posterior to conversion. The only reference to the baptism of the Spirit indicates that it is part of the salvation experience. Paul says, “we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). Paul is teaching that this is a universal experience of all believers and, in fact, is the basis of the unity of the Body. There is no suggestion that tongues were ever related to this baptism in 1 Cor 12-14.

In none of the passages that refer to tongues is there even the most remote suggestion that they are evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. The theme in each case is the formation of the Body of Christ in the moment of the salvation of individuals.

All the purposes of the gift of tongues are lost if they are a supposed sign of the baptism of the Spirit. Tongues are a literal language. Why would there be a language to demonstrate such a second blessing? The gifts are for a ministry to others, exercised in love. If tongues are evidence of an individual's baptism in the Spirit, they do not function as a gift of the Spirit where nobody else benefits. Why would there be a clear declaration of purpose as a sign to unbelievers, if it were to be a sign to believers of their supposed baptism?

If there were such a sign that the believer had received the baptism of the Spirit after his salvation, the manifestation might be useful in the congregation, but all the argument in 1 Cor 14 is contrary. If this were true, tongues would be at least as important if not more so than prophecy: but the opposite is evident in 1 Cor 14. There would be no need of an interpreter, much less the need of restricting the number of participants in a meeting to two or three, by turn, who could receive the baptism of the Spirit. If tongues are evidence of the

baptism of the Spirit, why did Paul say he spoke more than the rest? If he had shown the evidence once, what was the need to repeat the evidence?

To respond to these questions, it would be necessary to invent a new purpose for the gift of tongues and also to make a distinction between the tongues in Acts and in 1 Corinthians. This is precisely what the Pentecostal/charismatic interpretation has sought to do; however, there it makes no sense Biblically or logically. It is a fabrication of man's imagination to desire to have a supernatural experience, beyond what the Scriptures promise.

H. Tongues and the spiritual power of the Spirit

Some have wanted to insist that tongues produce a spiritual revival in the church. What do the Scriptures teach? Just the opposite! The single church that emphasized tongues in the NT was likewise the most carnal (1 Cor 3:1-3). Tongues never guaranteed spiritual power or vitality. They were divided, accepted immorality, suing each other in pagan courts, discriminating among themselves, being drunk at the Lord's supper, and selfishly hoarding their funds. If tongues were so important for the spirituality of the church why did Paul teach that it was better not to use tongues? When Paul mentioned the gifts that edify the church, why did he not make a reference to tongues (Eph 4:11)?

The principle that none of the gifts of the Spirit would be distributed throughout the Body of Christ, means that no one gift would be given to every believer (1 Cor 12:17-20). Thus it becomes impossible for every believer to ever receive the gift of tongues. This would then make it impossible for every believer to ever receive the spiritual power that is promised. Inevitably this would create a spiritual elite, the have's and have-nots. Of course, the way around this obstacle is to ignore the teachings of Paul.

The purpose of tongues has nothing to do with the spirituality of the church. In fact, none of the gifts are signs of or guarantee the spiritual vitality of the church. The spiritual gifts do not guarantee infallibility nor inerrancy. The gifts are Spirit empowered internal motivation and unique capability to serve the needs of others in specific areas.

If tongues were so important for edification, why is there so little emphasis in the NT? They were never designed to signal spiritual growth. They are given to win the lost, especially the unbelieving Jews. The gifts of prophecy for producing the revealed Word of God and teaching for clarifying and applying the Word to our lives are the primary gifts for edification of believers. This is the emphasis of 1 Cor 14. By twisting the sense of the passage to mean something foreign to its original sense has caused the division in the Body of Christ.

I. The priority of the gift of tongues

The importance and priority of tongues given in many charismatic churches is similar to that of Corinth, which obligated Paul to make such strict corrections to their doctrine. In Corinth tongues was the priority, and Paul sought to minimize its practice. For example, Paul said that he spoke in tongues more than any of them (1 Cor 14:18), but never wrote concerning these experiences! It does not seem very important to Paul. He made it clear by an exaggerated declaration that he would never speak in tongues in the church (14:19).

All of the thrust of 1 Cor 12-14 is to devalue the importance of tongues placing a number of restrictions on its use. There is no evidence that any other church manifested

tongues except Corinth. Nowhere in the NT is there any exhortation to anybody to ever speak in tongues. Why, then, do churches today encourage and exhort believers to speak in tongues?

In 1 Cor 12:28 Paul spoke directly about the priority of the gifts, giving five categories which clearly identify the priorities by “first”, “second”, “third”, “then” and “then”. The order runs from “apostle” to “tongues”. All of the gifts are not mentioned, but sufficient in order to demonstrate priority categories of the gifts. Tongues, healing and miracles are given less priority than the gift of teaching! The churches should reflect this same priority list.

The gifts that are given priority in the church are those gifts that will edify. The context of 1 Cor 14 proves that tongues have little or no value for edification. The purpose of 1 Cor 12 was to refute the idea that tongues should be emphasized and that everyone should manifest the gift of tongues, just what the charismatic movement is teaching today. Even when the genuine gift of tongues existed, it should not be emphasized.

J. The emphasis on seeking the gift of tongues

Since the beginning of the Pentecostal movement many have sought the gift of tongues. Many today want to speak in tongues in order to have the security of the “baptism of the Spirit”. Several principles should be understood about seeking any of the gifts.

First of all, the gifts are sovereignly given, that is, God alone decides who receives which gifts. The desire of the believer has nothing to do with the allocation of the gifts (1 Cor 12:11, 18).

Secondly, it is evident in the context (12:12-20) one member (gift) cannot be changed for another member, or if it were possible, the sense of the passage would be lost. The Body is made up of its members, which are determined by God. To the contrary, the members would determine the Body, resulting in the monsters described in 1 Cor 12. Paul emphasized that all the gifts are important and immutable.

The passages that refer to seeking the gifts should be analyzed. First, no one in the Bible who spoke in tongues was seeking it. The only person who sought a gift of the Spirit is in Acts 8:18-24 when Simon, the magician, sought the power of the Spirit. He even wanted to pay for it. The principle of the passage is that it is sin to think that one can obtain a gift of God through human means or desires. It is an offense to His sovereignty.

The verses utilized for seeking the gifts are 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 12, 39. The word, “desire”, *zeloo*, can be translated as “desire or envy”, principally to say, “be jealous for”. It is the root of the English word “zeal”. Twelve times in the NT it is used to mean “zealous”. More significant is the nuance of an attitude instead of an action.

It should be noted that the context is directed toward the entire congregation, not individuals. Paul had just demonstrated the categories and priorities of the gifts (12:28). The gifts that should be given priority and emphasis are apostles, prophets and teachers, instead of the gifts in the fifth and last category (healing, helps, administration and speaking in tongues). The attitude of the congregation is to be zealous for protecting this priority.

However, there are concepts that contradict the idea of “desire” in the sense of “seek”:

1. The emphasis in the chapter is to be satisfied with the gift that God has given to each one in the Body. In 12:15 a member sought to change his identity. To seek a change or addition of giftedness is contrary to what Paul is teaching.
2. Two verses clearly declare that the gifts are distributed where God wants. To seek a gift is in violation of 12:11 and 18 that teach that the believer should accept the gifts that God gives them.
3. There are words in Greek to say “seek” (*zeteo, orgo*) and “desire” (*thelo, epithumeo* and *boulomai*), but they are never used in the Bible with reference to seeking a spiritual gift! Paul used these words many times (*zeteo*, 19 times; *orgo* was used for seeking the pastoral ministry in 1 Tim 3:1). The other words were used frequently also (*thelo*, 60 times; *epithumeo*, 8 times; *boulomai*, 5 times), but none of these words are used with reference to seeking the gifts.
4. The principle of 12:31 is that the church (plural form of verbs indicate a group) should be *zealous for* or *have enthusiasm for* or *emphasize* certain gifts, particularly the gifts that edify.

1 Cor 14:1 and 14:39 use the same word, *zeloo*, and should be understood in the same manner. The priority of love should be manifested in all the gifts through serving others, especially through your particular gift. The context (14:1-25) has nothing to do with individuals looking for a gift; rather the church should have preference and respect for the gifts that edify.

In 14:39 the same word is used along with “to prophesize”, but Paul is not saying that every individual should seek his own gift of prophecy. The individual is not in view. This is the attitude that the church as a whole should have toward the gifts that edify. Those with these gifts should be highly valued and protected for their ministry to the body.

In 14:12 Paul intentionally made a difference between “emphasize or be jealous for” (*zelotai* from *zeloo*) and the word “to seek” (*zeteo*). Literally this should be translated, “since you are **zealous** of spiritual *gifts*, **seek** to abound for the edification of the church” (NASV). If Paul wanted to encourage the seeking of spiritual gifts such as tongues, he could have used the word that would obligate it, but he did not.

When Paul wanted individuals to desire or seek something he used the imperative singular as in 1 Tim 3:1. Here the individual should extend his efforts to be acceptable as a pastor, aspire to the ministry (*oregetai*). There are areas of ministry that should be sought, but not the spiritual gifts. When Paul wanted the believer to seek something, he exhorted the believer to desire and seek it with energy. This concept is never applied to the spiritual gifts, nor is there any other indication that someone was able to seek a spiritual gift and thus received it. Actually, the entire context of the gifts is contrary to the concept of seeking a spiritual gift of any kind.

K. The Biblical restrictions concerning the use of the gift of tongues

If the gift of tongues is for speaking in a foreign tongue for the benefit of unbelievers (especially Jews). To speak in private or in the assembly is not the best manner to use it. The genuine gift of tongues was discouraged, but permitted under certain conditions and restrictions:

1. It must edify the church (14:26)

2. No one is permitted to speak unless an interpreter is known to be present (14:28) and immediately gives an interpretation of the tongue to the church.
3. Only two or three maximum is permitted to speak in any given meeting (14:27)
4. Those that speak in tongues have to speak in turn, never simultaneously (14:27)
5. The women are not permitted to speak, especially in tongues (14:34-35)
6. The meeting must maintain order and never get out of control (14:33, 40)

These restrictions are applicable only to the genuine gift of languages, that to speak in a literal dialect.

Conclusion

There is no proof or example that the gift of tongues brings ecstasy or speaking ecstatically with unintelligible sounds. There was no preparation for speaking in tongues, no excitement was necessary, no trance, emotion or special circumstances. The speaker is in full control of himself always and can stop anytime it is necessary (14:28, 32). The one speaking in a tongue is not more under the control of the Spirit than one exercising any other gift such as prophecy, helps or teaching. There was no the other common phenomena such as convulsions, “slaying in the Spirit” or falling to the ground, remaining motionless on the ground for long periods, foam in the mouth, cries, jerking, prolonged laughter, waiving back and forth in a trance like state, strange tone of voice or drifting into unconsciousness were ever present in the Biblical text. However, such experiences were very common among pagan sects in the first century even as today.

The declared purpose of the gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (14:22). Such purpose does not include the emphasis on devotional or private or angelic tongues. Only the capacity to speak miraculously in a real language previously unknown to the speaker is in harmony with the NT. Tongues are a foreign language used in order to win a hearing of the unbeliever for a presentation of the gospel message. This apparently was the use Paul made frequently of the gift (14:18) in all of his evangelistic travels, but was of such little importance that Paul nor Luke never mentioned any of these occasions in the first 22 years of Paul’s ministry.

The genuine gift of tongues has a minimum priority in the Early Church, except in Corinth, which distorted the emphasis and motivated the correction given in 1 Cor 12-14. The gifts of teaching, exhortation, leading, serving, administering, etc. should be emphasized in the churches. The special emphasis should be placed on the gifts that edify and benefit others. This is love. The perverted emphasis is the idea that a gift would benefit the individual. This is egotism.

Since we have the Spirit helping us in our prayers already and all the time (Rom 8:26), can we improve on the Spirit’s ministry through a tongue? Actually, no true believer needs any more help than he already has in Christ. The idea of needing a gift of a tongue for a better communion with God denies the value of the sufficiency of our justification in Christ and obligates an extra step in order to have a perfect communion with God. Also the provision of the gift of interpretation indicates that tongues has no purpose in isolation or in private.

The contemporary emphasis on the gift of tongues does not bring as a result a spiritual church, as is evident in the Corinthian church. The true spiritual gift was to be a

ministry to others, not to one's self. Lets protect and exalt the priority of mutual edification through the teaching, exhorting and serving gifts in the church. If the Bible really has the answers to our life's needs and seeking to be more like the Lord Jesus is the maximum fulfillment in this life, then lets not get distracted by experiences, feelings and sensations. Christ is head of the Church and His leadership is evident as He distributes His gifts for serving others even as He served his disciples. May we ever grow in a selfless attitude of giving ourselves for the benefit of others, without pride, knowing that this attitude is what pleases our Savior. This is where we should seek our satisfaction: doing what pleases Jesus.