

Spiritual Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

Would you consult with a physician who hasn't read a medical journal in 20 years? Would you hire a carpenter to remodel your house if his tools look rusted and neglected? Would you ask a member of your church to lead a Bible study who cannot locate the book of Genesis? How many people could honestly say yes to one of these questions? The plain and simple truth is that many Christians are either not seeking to become more effective in the spiritual life of their church, or they desire a greater role but lack the spiritual perspectives to achieve it.

God has endowed the Church with spiritual gifts to fulfill the Great Commission as Jesus informed His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”* (KJV) Our study guide is designed to reveal biblical truths, enlighten the curious, inspire pioneers for ministry, answer questions from new believers, and challenge everyone to become more involved in the harvest of souls for Christ. *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest,”* Luke 10:2. (ESV)

Your determination will make this happen. Every learning tool can assist your efforts but achieving your goals is usually the result of prayerful concentration accompanied by strategic planning. May the Lord richly bless your efforts to serve the Church for the eternal praise and glory of Jesus Christ.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

What a profound and inclusive introduction to the Bible. These first words taken from the book of Genesis will prepare us for the material ahead. Exposure to the fundamental truths about God should be thrilling and inspire you to learn even more. Self-discovery always seems to propel a learner into acquiring more knowledge than if spoon-fed. Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard began tinkering with electrical components in a rented one car garage in Palo Alto, California, in the 1930's. Hewlett-Packard has now become a multibillion-dollar company. All because of curiosity. Your personal investment into learning about God will deepen your appreciation and commitment. It was the ancient philosopher Aristotle who said, *“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”*

The word God itself is so minuscule. Three letters cannot adequately reveal the greatness and immensity of who is being introduced. How may one even dare attempt to explain the infinite with such finite vocabularies? Etymological inquiries merely grope through European languages in despair. The Hebrew text imparts to us the word אלהים (*el-o-heem'*, Strong's Dictionary, H430) which is the plural form of אל (El). What is of particular interest to any biblical study is that this plural is coupled with a *singular* verb and a third-person *singular* pronoun.

הָאָרֶץ	וְאֵת	הַשָּׁמַיִם	אֵת	אֱלֹהִים	בָּרָא	בְּרֵאשִׁית
earth	and	heaven		God	he created	beginning

In this text God is understood as a plural entity. Trinitarians and Unitarians will have their predictable interpretations, but the fact remains that God is revealed in a plural form which appears 2,601 times in the Old Testament. Our appreciation will be delightfully enhanced with the fourth group in the first sentence of the Torah because it is untranslatable. It has mystified Hebrew scholars for centuries. Why? Because it is not a word. It is composed only of the first letter (א *Aleph*) and last letter (ת *Tav*) of the Hebrew alphabet.

Somewhat astonishingly, Jesus may have given these letters new meaning when He said, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”* Revelation 1:8. He was most probably speaking in Aramaic but John records His words in Greek. *Alpha* is the first letter and *Omega* is the last letter of the Greek alphabet just as *Aleph* and *Tav* are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Was the first biblical writer inspired to place a symbolic acronym for Jesus right next to God? Might this peculiarity lend greater illumination to the complementary natures of both God and Jesus?

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John 1:3 *“All things were made by him (Jesus); and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (KJV)*

John 5:17 *“My Father is working until now, and I am working.” (ESV)*

Colossians 1:16 *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth.” (KJV)*

Hebrews 1:2 *“In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (ESV)*

Hebrews 1:10 *“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens.” (ISV)*

Revelation 4:11 *“You have created all things, and because of Your will, they exist and were created.” (HCSB)*

Proverbs 30:4 *“Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (KJV)*

Who is this son? Peter informs us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,”* Matthew 16:16. (KJV) From the very beginning until the present age, Jesus the Christ in union with God the Father have created and sustained our magnificent world. A precious holy union without parallel.

MAJESTY

What terminology might we engage to best clarify the divine quality of God? He is eternal, holy, sovereign, pure, absolute, illimitable, self-existent, loving, wise, compassionate, forgiving, and of course majestic. Perhaps we may best incorporate all of these attributes into one word – indescribable. Let the scriptures resound again.

“Honor and majesty are before him: strength and gladness are in his place,” 1 Chronicles 16:27. (ASV)

“The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty,” Psalm 29:4. (NKJV)

“They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD,” Isaiah 24:14. (KJV)

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” Hebrews 8:1. (KJV)

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever,” Jude 1:25.

Standing beneath the night sky overwhelms us with the majesty of God. Divine handiwork is visible to the naked eye and profoundly multiplied by the telescope. *“I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded,”* Isaiah 45:12. (KJV) *“Our sun fuses about 600 million tons of hydrogen into helium every second and converting 4 million tons of matter into energy every second as a result.”* (Wikipedia) This volume of energy is beyond human comprehension. Now multiply that by the billions of stars in just our galaxy. Only guesswork could anticipate the total amount of heat expended in our known universe. God is larger than all of it. This is external majesty. But what about internal majesty?

The complexity of all living matter is staggering. Each human body is a miraculous architecture comprised of intricate biological mechanisms that work in harmony to sustain a viable organism. Under the microscope we are submerged into a tiny universe of cells, hormones, electrical transports, chemically stimulated gates, and the infinite correlations between adenine, thymine, guanine, and cytosine. Better known as deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA for short. All this majesty and infinite harmony reveals the surpassing purpose of God.

PURPOSE (God the Father)

There is a purpose for everything under heaven (*Ecclesiastes 3:1*) and Oswald Chambers gives us a marvelous description of God’s intent for humankind that is amazing yet confounding, obvious yet vague.

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“We are not taken into a conscious agreement with God’s purpose – we are taken into God’s purpose with no awareness of it at all. We have no idea what God’s goal may be; as we continue, His purpose becomes even more and more vague. God’s aim appears to have missed the mark, because we are too nearsighted to see the target at which He is aiming. At the beginning of the Christian life, we have our own ideas as to what God’s purpose is. We say, “God means for me to go over there,” and, “God has called me to do this special work.” We do what we think is right, and yet the compelling purpose of God remains upon us. The work we do is of no account when compared with the compelling purpose of God. It is simply the scaffolding surrounding His work and His plan. God takes us aside all the time. We have not yet understood all there is to know of the compelling purpose of God.”

Chambers’ writings have blessed millions. *My Utmost for His Highest* is a daily devotional, self-published by his widow in 1927. She thoughtfully assembled it from his numerous sermons and the title comes from one of his better-known sermons wherein he exclaimed, *“Shut out every consideration and keep yourself before God for this one thing only – ‘my utmost for His highest.’ ”* We are even blessed with a website at utmost.org.

Yet could the purpose of God be as simple as the original act of creating Adam and Eve to live in a mutual and enjoyable relationship with Him? *“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ ... and God blessed them, and God said unto them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,’ ”* Genesis 1:26-28. (KJV) This reveals an often-overlooked desire. God doesn’t need us. He wants us!

Communion with humankind was His ultimate and final creation. His love was demonstrated in bestowing us with dominion over the earth and everything within it. We possess the enviable permission to dictate our will on every part of it, and along with that comes a responsibility to maintain it for God. *“And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,”* Genesis 2:15. (KJV) Here is an abundantly clear instruction for us to care for what we have been entrusted with. A responsibility not to be taken lightly.

Sadly, that trust was violated, and the rest is history. Our first purpose was to care for God’s creation as He first cared for us. Love had a bilateral purpose. We were relieved of an eternal privilege that day.

PURPOSE (*Jesus the Son*)

What should we regard as the purpose of Jesus? To atone for our sins? Serving as a model of God’s love? To reveal God’s expectations of righteousness? Yes, all of these but something even more lofty. The greatest purpose of the Son was to glorify the Father. Jesus glorified the Father through each miracle and every teaching.

“Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me,” John 10:25. (NASB)

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work,” John 4:34. (ESV)

“Jesus answered, ‘Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him,’ ” John 9:3. (KJV)

“After Jesus said these things, he looked toward heaven and prayed, ‘Father, the time has come. Give glory to your Son so that the Son can give glory to you,’ ” John 17:1. (NCV)

Of the greatest importance to us is that Jesus glorified the Father through His sacrificial death on the cross which removed our sins through His atoning blood. What greater act of love could better demonstrate the love of the Father for the Son than the Son loving the Father with obedience unto death? *“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,”* Matthew 6:10. *“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,’ ”* Matthew 26:39. (KJV) Herein is the Father glorified by the Son for expressing that it is the will of the Father that matters.

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PURPOSE (*Holy Spirit*)

How then does the Holy Spirit dovetail into this configuration? What purpose of grace is yet to be fulfilled? Fittingly, let us return again to the Genesis record to learn, *“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (or vapors).”* (1:2) All three entities were present at the creation of all things. Elohim is God in the plural state. Jesus created all that has been created. The Spirit of God hovered or contemplated the entire process.

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah,” Deuteronomy 6:4. (YLT) There is only one God, not three. Elohim is manifested in three different ways. God is *holy* and has a Spirit so then we should refer to this third manifestation as a *Holy Spirit*. The Father communicates with us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. *“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ ”* Matthew 3:16-17. (ESV)

Jesus promised the twelve that they would not be left without divine guidance. *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever,”* John 14:16. (KJV) Bible translators have attempted to describe the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, or Counselor. Manuscripts contain the word *παράκλητος* (*paraklētos*, G3875). Paraclete occurs five times in the New Testament and each one in the Gospel of John. It is a combination of *παρά* (*para*, G3844) meaning alongside of as in parallel plus *καλέω* (*kal-eh'-o*, G2564) meaning to call someone. Thus, it is a person who is called to assist in some manner. Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (*dictionary*) offers several examples, from legal counsel in a courtroom to a slave summoned by a king.

Spirit of God was Matthew's choice of words to describe the third person of the godhead. God the Father is grammatically masculine in gender; thus, we are licensed to apply masculine gender to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person who exhibits or manifests characteristics anticipated of a person, such as:

SPEECH: *“Yet when the Spirit of Truth comes, HE will guide you into all truth. For HE will not speak on HIS own accord but will speak whatever HE hears and will declare to you the things that are to come,”* John 16:13. (ISV)

POSSESSIVE: *“Or do you think the Scripture means nothing when it says that the Spirit that God caused to live in us jealously yearns for us?”* James 4:5. (NASB) God is righteously jealous for us. Exodus 20:5.

EMOTION: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,”* Galatians 5:22. (KJV)

AUTHORITATIVE: *“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them,’ ”* Acts 13:2. (ESV)

DYNAMIC: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,”* Acts 1:8. (NLT)

AGGRESSIVE: *“For what the flesh wants is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to the flesh,”* Galatians 5:17. (ISV)

SORROW: *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,”* Ephesians 4:30. (KJV)

The Holy Spirit is a person who displays characteristics expected of a person. He is perhaps best known for equipping believers with the necessary spiritual gifts for service to God. But the way in which these gifts were distributed at the Jewish feast of Pentecost has garnered an inordinate amount of controversy.

CONVERSIONS

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak different languages by the power the Holy Spirit was giving them,” Acts 2:4. (NCV)

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Many new believers quest to experience this same phenomenon while others dismiss its importance. What should have been an encouraging journey toward spiritual maturity has actually birthed two opposing factions.

Cessationism: a belief that prophetic utterance, speaking in tongues, and healing ceased with the apostolic age.

Continuationism: a belief that all gifts of the Holy Spirit have continued without interruption to the present age.

Unfortunately, disputes between the two camps have emitted words ranging from bickering to vitriol. How sad that genuine students of the Bible have been propelled into a maelstrom of scriptural confusion. Perhaps a bit of cautious stepping back into biblical history would be advisable. Apostle Peter explains (*Acts 2:17-22*) this event to be the fulfillment of a prophecy found in Joel 2:28, *“I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* (KJV) This part of his explanation is convincing. We can be assured that a predicted outpouring of the Holy Spirit did occur.

Our research next takes us to the region of Samaria (*Acts 8:14*) where the apostles Peter and John arrived to finish an earlier work of Philip, one of the seven deacons. Verses 15 to 17 have become a hotbed for disagreement resulting in conflicts which have seriously divided many Christians. The question is easy to articulate but the interpretation becomes problematic. Were those baptized by Philip genuinely saved without any involvement of the Holy Spirit? That's it. Nothing more. Is it possible that one may go to heaven on baptism and faith alone? Complicating the matter is the follow-up activity of Peter and John. (*verse 17*) *“When the two apostles began laying their hands on the people, they received the Holy Spirit.”* (NCV) Obviously there was a delay of some magnitude between the two events. We read no mention of a *“rushing wind or flashing fire”* (*Acts 2:2-3*) but whatever took place was stupendous enough that Simon, a local charlatan, wanted to purchase what he had observed. (*verse 19*) *“Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”* (ESV) He was immediately rebuffed by Peter for wanting to buy the gift of God for his own nefarious purposes.

New believers frequently question their receiving of the Holy Spirit. When does it happen? At the moment of believing the gospel? Only through the laying on of hands? If I don't speak in tongues, am I truly saved? Would Simon want to buy my conversion experience? Why can't I receive this Infilling of the Spirit though I am seeking?

Can there be a delay between conversion and the Infilling? Apparently, but it's not always the case. Philip began this work. Samaritans believed and were baptized. Peter and John finished the mission by the laying on of hands. Mennonites have termed the Infilling as, *“the second work of grace.”* We observe a much longer expanse of time between the commissioning of seventy disciples to preach the gospel (*Luke 10:9*) and the later Infilling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus' twelve disciples were undoubtedly members of this adventure. Each of the Twelve were saved by grace and committed to following Him, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,”* John 6:68. Yet, notice their obvious lack of spiritual maturity and boldness prior to Pentecost.

“The apostles also began to argue about which one of them was the most important,” Luke 22:24. (NCV)

“Jesus said to him, Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? The person who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, show us the Father?” John 14:9. (ISV)

“When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Luke 9:54. (NASB)

“Then Jesus said to them, If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?” Mark 4:13. (NLT)

Notice the change in their spiritual perspective after receiving the Infilling of the Holy Spirit during the festival of Pentecost. They were more bold in their faith and even stood up to authorities in the Temple.

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“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of our people, are we being questioned today because we’ve done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead,’ ” Acts 4:8-10. (NLT)

“For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, ‘The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’ There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus,” Acts 4:11-13. (NLT)

It was the Infilling at Pentecost that made the difference. Following the crucifixion and before Pentecost, the Twelve were hiding behind locked doors in fear of the chief priests. After the Infilling, they were courageously knocking down doors to proclaim the saving gospel to anyone who would listen.

Anxiety and doubts over a conversion experience often impedes the maturing growth of new converts who begin questioning their salvation because they have not experienced this Infilling of the Holy Spirit. Instead of listening to negativity, they should rather concentrate on how intensely they have died to selfish interests. Spiritual manifestations of *“rushing wind and flashing fire”* should not dampen one’s confidence. The joy of redemption should not be diminished over particulars and sequences. God will provide the lasting assurance that is needed.

Step by step, apostle Paul explains the simple process of conversion in Ephesians 1:13-14. *(both ISV & ESV)*

*“You, too, have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed in him you were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s own possession, to his praise and glory.” (ISV)*

*“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (ESV)*

Let’s closely analyze his teaching in separate, more detailed explanations to simplify our understanding.

- ❖ You were drawn in some manner to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ You heard important truths of salvation concerning the nature of sin and redemption.
- ❖ You genuinely believed the spiritually directed gospel message.
- ❖ You were sealed (σφραγίζω, *sfrag-id'-zo*, “stamped with a mark” G4972) by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ You were guaranteed of an inheritance in heaven.
- ❖ You were redeemed by God who purchased you as His possession.
- ❖ You as a believer will praise and glorify God for inheriting eternity in heaven.

Our research next takes us along with Peter and friends to meet Cornelius, a Roman military officer who lived in the town of Caesarea. It would greatly enhance your understanding of this event and its implications by reading Acts 10. Yes, the entire chapter. *“And while Peter was pondering the vision (lowered sheet with unclean animals) the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them,’ ” Acts 10:19-20. (ESV)* The significance of Peter and his friends being Jewish converts cannot be over emphasized, because just entering this pagan city alone would have been unthinkable for a Pharisee, not to mention what later ensued in the home of Cornelius. Originally, God wanted

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Israel to be a special light of salvation to the Gentile world (*Isaiah 42:6-7, Luke 2:32*) but they declined. Now the Holy Spirit was preparing these Jewish believing friends of Peter to make that expectation become a reality.

We shall learn a critical piece of salvation and the Infilling of the Spirit from this event. Here is a military officer, family, and friends listening to Peter explain the gospel. And then it happened. *“While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ‘Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ ” Acts 10:44-47. (ESV)*

Here is the critical piece to be understood from these events. It’s not the experience that matters, but rather what you have experienced that matters. In Acts chapter 11 the other Apostles back in Jerusalem were skeptical that God would grant the purity of their Holy Spirit to pagans. They even questioned the legitimacy of allowing this to happen. Peter is now on the defensive and needs to explain his interaction with these Gentiles.

To the praise and glory of God, he was able to convince his incredulous brethren. *“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them AS on us at the beginning,”(verse15)*. Focus your undivided attention on that little word “as” (ὡσπερ, *hoce'-per*, ‘*exactly*’ G5618) meaning the very same in quality and quantity. There is no mention of a “*mighty wind or flaming fire*” as was experienced at the festival of Pentecost. Jewish believers going with Peter were astonished to witness a second Pentecost. There are some Christian denominations who teach the Infilling or baptism of the Holy Spirit took place one time only (*Acts 2:4*). In counter response other Christians would say Peter was at both places, Pentecost and Caesarea. He should be able to tell the difference. Precisely! For in the mind of Peter, it was exactly the same thing, and his fellow Apostles began glorifying God. The Infilling of the Holy Spirit is not exactly the same for everyone. It’s not the experience that counts. It’s what you experience that counts.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

New believers might ask, *“What are these gifts? How do I learn more about them? Should I even care?”* Do you remember one of the first questions in this study? *“Would you hire a carpenter to remodel your house if his tools are rusty and neglected?”* Before ascending into heaven, Jesus charged the Apostles with completing a world-wide mission and gave them simple instructions on what to do. Now, we are the *laborers of the harvest*. Jesus is calling upon modern-day Christians to *enter the fields*. We have been charged with the same mission and given the same spiritual gifts of ministry. They are appropriately labeled the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Your first personal encounter with the Gifts of the Spirit may already have been or at some time may be with a well-intended believer in the charismatic movement. They strongly emphasize the Gifts. Nine by their count as taken from 1 Corinthians 12: Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning, Tongues, and the Interpretation of Tongues. Charismatic gatherings usually anticipate someone to speak in tongues followed by someone else giving an understandable interpretation of the message.

Charismatic lecturers frequently speak on their particular Gift and how it has transformed or enhanced their ministry. Attendees seeking their own Gift will be asked to voluntarily come forward at some point for prayer and the laying on of hands, so that they may receive their Gift.

Roman Catholics list seven Gifts of the Spirit in their official *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* at Section 1831: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. Notice that these harmonize with the Seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, the Seven beatitudes, the Seven last words from the cross, the Seven deadly sins, the Seven virtues, and of course, Seven being the most perfect number in the Bible.

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Did you observe that the most critical Gift of all is missing from every list? It is the Gift that has grown dim in too many societies. Much of the evil enveloping nations today could be eliminated if more of it would be shared. It is one reason why there is so much discord in both the church and the marketplace. Sharing this Gift could alleviate loneliness and hopelessness. Its presence would serve as a barrier against demonic forces. Paul introduced it to the church at Corinth because it was the very Gift which seemed to be lacking.

“I may speak in different languages of people or even angels. But if I do not have love, I am only a noisy bell or a crashing cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge, and I may have faith so great I can move mountains. But even with all these things, if I do not have love, then I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and I may even give my body as an offering to be burned. But I gain nothing if I do not have love,” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. (NCV)

The most complete enumeration of the Gifts along with adequate commentary is given by apostle Paul in Romans 12:4-18. It is more extensive but so much easier to understand. All believers seeking a deeper interaction with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit should read it, study it, so that they may prosper because of it.

“Each one of us has a body with many parts, and these parts all have different uses. 5 In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body, and each part belongs to all the other parts. 6 We all have different gifts, each of which came because of the grace God gave us. The person who has the gift of prophecy should use that gift in agreement with the faith.

7 Anyone who has the gift of serving should serve. Anyone who has the gift of teaching should teach. 8 Whoever has the gift of encouraging others should encourage. Whoever has the gift of giving to others should give freely. Anyone who has the gift of being a leader should try hard when he leads. Whoever has the gift of showing mercy to others should do so with joy.

9 Your love must be real. Hate what is evil and hold on to what is good. 10 Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves. 11 Do not be lazy but work hard, serving the Lord with all your heart. 12 Be joyful because you have hope. Be patient when trouble comes and pray at all times. 13 Share with God’s people who need help. Bring strangers in need into your homes. 14 Wish good for those who harm you; wish them well and do not curse them.

15 Be happy with those who are happy and be sad with those who are sad. 16 Live in peace with each other. Do not be proud but make friends with those who seem unimportant. Do not think how smart you are. 17 If someone does wrong to you, do not pay him back by doing wrong to him. Try to do what everyone thinks is right. 18 Do your best to live in peace with everyone.” (NCV)

God in His infinite wisdom decided which Gifts would best suit each believer. *“All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills,”* 1 Corinthians 12:11. (ESV) How does one know which gift has been given? What is far more important is your commitment to serving Christ to the best of your ability? Loving others especially in a time of need may be the gift they will remember you for most. *“The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others,”* I Corinthians 12:7. (CEV)

May your continued journey of faith receive a rich blessing from Christ as you endeavor to serve the body of believers in your church. Devote yourself to *“labor in the harvest”* that other souls may enjoy the blessing of eternal life with God. Commit yourself to seek ways of sharing the best of all the Gifts. Hopefully this study has in some way contributed toward your understanding of the Kingdom with greater *Spiritual Perspectives*.

Spiritual Perspectives

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