

# ***The Holy Spirit and Spirituality***

## ***The Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit***

Lesson #8 for February 25, 2017

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11,14-31; Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:3-8; 1 John 4:1-3.

1. Read Matthew 28:19-20 (GNB):

<sup>19</sup>Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.

2. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He left a very specific task for His disciples to do. At the time, they had not even begun to understand all that was implied in that task. In fact, it was 3½ years before they were scattered by persecution and began to carry the gospel to the rest of the world. But, already on Pentecostal Sunday, Jesus had given them the means for accomplishing the task. The Holy Spirit that was given and descended on that day in the form of flames of fire was, in turn, commissioned to give gifts to God's church.
3. In our previous lesson, we discussed the fruit of the Spirit. That fruit is based on love. In what ways do the gifts of the Spirit differ from the fruit of the Spirit?
4. Notice that there is only one spiritual fruit given by the Holy Spirit although there are many aspects to that fruit. By contrast, there are many different spiritual gifts, some of which are more important than others.
5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11. It is God's plan that the gifts of the Spirit be used specifically for the building up of the body of Christ. God recognized that a growing organization such as the church needed—and needs—a variety of talents and gifts to make it run smoothly and to help it to grow. Thus, He gave—and gives—the gifts of the Spirit.
6. But, we all should recognize that without the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit would be useless. It is very interesting to note also that love, which comes at the beginning of the list of the fruit of the Spirit, is also an important part of the gifts of the Spirit. Notice that 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 are two of the main chapters discussing the gifts of the Spirit; right between them is the ultimate love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. Furthermore, Ephesians 4:11-13, another discussion of the gifts of the Spirit, is followed by Ephesians 4:15-16 with further references to love. Romans 12:3-8, another mention of the gifts of the Spirit, is followed by more verses about love. (See Romans 12:9-10.) In fact, love is an integral part of both the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13) Love is clearly identified as the most important part of the fruit and the most important part of the gifts! How many prophets do we have in the church today? The word *prophētēs* in Greek means someone who speaks on behalf of God. Do we have people like that in the church today? Shouldn't we all be speaking the truth on behalf of God in our day? (See Ephesians 3:7-10.) Could we as a church speak collectively on behalf of God?
7. H.M.S. Richards, the founder of the Voice of Prophecy, tells a story about his father who was also a pastor working at that time in Loveland, Colorado. It was early in the twentieth century; he got up to preach and noticed that Ellen White was in the congregation. He hastened to ask her if she would like to speak to the group. She responded: "Brother Richards, did you ask God for a message for today?" He responded, "Yes." She then

asked, "Did He give you one?" Again, he responded, "Yes." And she said, "Did you pray over it?" And again, he said, "Yes." Whereupon, she said, "Then, I want to hear it!"

8. Who is in charge of the gifts of the Spirit? Who gives them to whomever He wills? The Holy Spirit is the Giver of the gifts of the Spirit. God assures us that each member of the church has been given at least one gift. (Ephesians 4:7)
9. If the Holy Spirit is given by Jesus to carry on the work of Jesus after the ascension, wouldn't that work involve Jesus? Jesus promised to give us the greatest possible Gift after His departure. The Holy Spirit has been given to bless the church until the second coming of Christ. One of the very important ways that He does that is by giving those gifts of the Spirit.
10. As we look around in the world, we must recognize that different people have different natural abilities. What is the relationship between those natural, innate abilities, sometimes called talents, and spiritual gifts? The gifts are the ways that we express God's love. It is true that God sometimes picks out people with natural talents and gifts them to use those talents for the building up of the church. Spiritual gifts are very specifically for that purpose.
11. Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-31. Just as each part of the body is needed, so all the different gifts are needed. How are the gifts of the Spirit to be distributed? The gifts need to be used for the benefit of the entire church. Thus, not every person is to be given the same gift. Just as different parts of the body serve different functions but they all must work together for the benefit of the body, so the different gifts are to be used by different members of the church so as to bless all.
12. Do you recognize the spiritual gifts that have been given to some members of your church? Do you recognize the spiritual gift(s) that you, yourself, have been given?
13. There are widely different views about the purpose of spiritual gifts. According to the Bible, spiritual gifts are given for service, not for personal sanctification. They are not some kind of identification mark of super-saints or for the entertainment of the organization. Furthermore, they are not given to fulfill our own spiritual needs or to prove that we are a member of the church. Such a view of the gifts of the Holy Spirit would suggest that the gifts are more *Christian-centered* than they are *Christ-centered*. What is your view of the spiritual gifts? Do they focus more on Christians? Or, more on God?
14. The Holy Spirit interacts with human beings at a number of different levels:
  - 1) He keeps us alive physically—every beat of the heart and every molecular reaction. (Acts 17:25,28)
  - 2) He woos sinners, encouraging them to become followers of Jesus.
  - 3) He convicts and converts those who respond.
  - 4) He gives spiritual gifts to those who are prepared to receive Him and work to reach out to others.
15. It is very important for us to recognize that spiritual gifts are given for the furtherance of the unity of the church and building up of the church. (See Ephesians 4:11-16 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.) Spiritual gifts are ways individuals have of contributing to the good of the entire organization.
16. If a small group of Seventh-day Adventists were filled with the fruit of the Spirit and each exercised one or more of the gifts of the Spirit, forgetting about their individual or selfish

ambitions and working together as a united whole for the benefit of the group and for their community, what do you think the result would be?

17. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1; compare that with the several different lists of spiritual gifts given in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11,27-31; Romans 12:3-8; and Ephesians 4:11-12. How would you know if a pastor is speaking and acting God's love? If s/he is not speaking according to Scripture, it is not a message from God. Remember that we have not been given the job of judging other people. But, we must practice our skills at judging whether that person is telling us the truth. We must judge his/her message.
18. There are some Christians who think that the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament were restricted to the times of Jesus and the apostles. Thus, according to that view, today, the Holy Spirit would not be giving any spiritual gifts to His people. Sometimes, they use 1 Corinthians 13:10 in support of their views because Paul said: "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." (NASB) So, it is true that there will be a time when the gifts will cease; but, that will not come until, as 1 Corinthians 13 suggests, we no longer see through a glass darkly but face-to-face when Jesus comes again. Surely, we must recognize that the church still needs all the help it can get to grow and prosper. So, why shouldn't the Holy Spirit continue to give His gifts? We need each other to "bounce" our ideas off so that we do not get carried away with some crazy notion.
19. In this series of lessons, we have not yet discussed the latter rain. But, considering the situation and what we know from Scripture, doesn't it seem likely that the outpouring of the latter rain will be more extensive and more powerful than its first beginnings in the early rain? In the Middle East, the "latter rains" are consistently heavier than the "former rains."
20. In considering the role of gifts in the church, we must remember that 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:29; and 1 John 4:1-3 tell us that every gift must be tested by Scripture. So, how do you see the spiritual gifts being manifested and tested in the church today? Don't these verses suggest that the gift of discernment is very important? How is the gift of discernment to be exercised? We have never been given the task of judging other people. However, we are given the task of judging carefully between the rightness or wrongness of what people may say or teach and believe.
21. We also know that Satan will exercise false gifts especially as the history of this world comes to an end. So, we must be very discerning (1 Corinthians 12:10) so as to carefully detect any demonic power seeking to mislead the church in false teachings, false prophecy, lying visions, counterfeit tongue-speaking, occult healing powers, misleading signs and wonders, etc. as mentioned in Scripture. Counterfeits are going to be very dangerous in the final days of this earth's history and, yet, may be difficult to discern.
22. There are certain Christian groups that place special emphasis on certain gifts as being essential for each person's spiritual growth. Often, the emphasis is placed on speaking in unknown tongues. Most people in those groups do not believe that a person is a real Christian unless s/he can speak in tongues.
23. Our only safety in discerning between the true and the false will be a good knowledge of the Scriptures. Remember that the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit has been and will always be the Bible. Thus, each person's gift is to be judged by the Word of God.

The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles (*Manuscript 43*, 1907).... Let not the days

pass by and precious opportunities be lost of seeking the Lord with all the heart and mind and soul. If we accept not the truth in the love of it, we may be among the number who will see the miracles wrought by Satan in these last days, and believe them. Many strange things will appear as wonderful miracles, which should be regarded as deceptions manufactured by the father of lies (Letter 136, 1906).... Men under the influence of evil spirits will work miracles. (Letter 259, 1903)—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, 52.4-53.2; compare *Mar* 156.3-6; *NL* 47.2-48.2.

24. If in fact the Holy Spirit is continuing to give spiritual gifts to His children, why don't we see miraculous healings today as occurred in biblical times? Ellen White suggested that the greatest miracle of all is when someone becomes a Christian. First of all, we need to recognize that there are miracles taking place even in our day. In our last lesson, we mentioned the book *One Miracle After Another* as one example. Secondly, while there were times of great miracles noted in the Bible such as at the time of the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings, at the times of Elijah and Elisha, and at the times of Jesus and the disciples, Satan is just waiting for an opportunity to duplicate as far as possible any miracle which God gives us the power to perform. Remember what happened with Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh.
25. Ellen White commented:

**The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles.** God's servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. For this reason the Lord has marked out a way in which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work. Thus a guarding influence is thrown around those who come to the sanitariums for treatment.—*Medical Ministry* 14.2-3; *Selected Messages*, book 2, 54.2-3; compare *LDE* 169.2-3; *1NL* 105.4-5. [Bold type is added.]

26. Look around at your Sabbath school class or church group. Do you see people using their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the entire organization? Do you see some members trying to use their gifts to exalt themselves? Are we even looking for spiritual gifts today?
27. How can we be more sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit as He seeks to impart spiritual gifts to each one of us? Do we need the Holy Spirit to continue blessing us as we seek to use the gifts He has given us?
28. Have you recognized your spiritual gift or gifts? Will the Holy Spirit help us to recognize our spiritual gifts if we are not seeking ways to reach out and benefit other people?
29. If we do not feel that we have been given any spiritual gift and we become jealous of some others who seem to have spiritual gifts, are we suggesting that God does not know what is best for the church? It is the Holy Spirit who decides what gifts are to be given to each member. We need to humbly ask for His guidance in showing us what gift(s) He has given us and how we can use them for the best benefit of the group. Could we help each other

to recognize each other's gifts? Would it be helpful for each member of the class to pray privately that the various gifts within the group are better manifested?

30. Review 1 Corinthians 12:27-28; Romans 12:6-8; and Ephesians 4:11-13. If you were given permission to choose whichever gift you would like, which would you choose? Why would you choose that particular gift?
31. Have you considered the possibility that you might be a recipient of the gift of helps? Who among us has the gift of healing? Might you have the gift of hospitality? What kind of people would have the gift of generosity? Do you have the gift of administration? What happens to a church in which some of the gifts seem to be missing? Isn't every gift essential?
32. It is interesting to note that in the biblical setting, the major discussion of spiritual gifts comes in 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. These chapters were addressed to a Corinthian church fraught with serious spiritual problems. Besides the problems that we know about such as jealousy, envy, and strife among members, (1 Corinthians 3:3-4) immorality in the church, (1 Corinthians 5:1) and church members threatening to take other church members to civil court to solve their problems, (1 Corinthians 6:1) and even arguments over whether or not it was okay to eat meat that had been offered to idols, the church members in Corinth were apparently abusing their understanding of the Lord's Supper and misusing their spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 8,11,14) Why do you suppose it is in the context of such a church that spiritual gifts are most clearly described?
33. Let us review: 1) The sovereign God gives the gifts He chooses to give each one of us; we do not choose the gift(s) we want. 2) Each person is given at least one gift. 3) Every gift is for the purpose of building up the body of Christ, His church. Of course, that would also include reaching out in mission to the community.
34. Ellen White commented:

The present is our day of trust. To every person is committed some peculiar gift or talent which is to be used to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. All God's responsible agents, from the lowliest and most obscure to those in high positions in the church, are entrusted with the Lord's goods. It is not the minister alone who can work for the salvation of souls. Those who have the smallest gifts are not excused from using the very best gifts they have, and in so doing their talents will be increased. It is not safe to trifle with moral responsibilities nor to despise the day of small things. God's providence proportions His trusts according to the varied capabilities of the people. None should mourn because they cannot glorify God with talents which they never possessed and for which they are not responsible.—*Testimonies, vol. 4, 618.2.*

35. If each of us as church members could begin to use his/her spiritual gift(s) for the benefit of the entire church and then see the progress that would result, would it be easier for us to forget our selfish ambitions and praise God for what He is doing for the entire church? Are we prepared to commit our lives to Christ and thank Him for the gifts of the Spirit He has given us? Do we need to ask Him again to reveal those gifts? Have you tried exercising the gift(s) which you think you may have been given? Remember that when exercised, spiritual gifts grow and become more fully developed. The more we use them, the more efficient we will become in using them. The Bible and Ellen White suggest that

if we are efficiently using the gifts that we have, we may actually be given additional gifts as God sees fit. Do we see affirmation from other church members for the use of our gifts?

36. Could we expect to find true Christian joy in exercising our spiritual gifts in the proper way? Or, when we seem to be successful in exercising our spiritual gift(s), are we anxious to take the glory to ourselves?
37. A lot of careful research has been done to determine what it is that causes people to join a religious church or organization and then continue to participate in that church's growth and livelihood for years. It has been determined that there are three main reasons why people become permanently identified with such a group:
1. They believe in the doctrines and teachings of the group.
  2. They become actively involved by serving the group in some way.
  3. They become part of a sometimes smaller subset of the group where they feel a real sense of fellowship.
38. How do these three categories fit with our understanding of spiritual gifts? The researchers have found that a member must have at least two of these three characteristics for her/him to remain committed to the group.
39. What can we do to help others in our group discover their spiritual gift(s)?

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