

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts...

1 Corinthians 14:1

The Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian witness and service. The promise of the Father is freely available to all who believe in Jesus Christ, thereby enabling them to exercise the powers of the age to come in ministry and mission. The Holy Spirit desires to continually fill each believer with power to witness, and imparts His supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and the work of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today and are to be earnestly desired and practiced. They are essential in the mission of the church in the world today.

The Village Church Statement of Faith

There is much confusion today when it comes to the spiritual gifts, especially those typically called “sign gifts,” such as prophecy, healing and tongues. Theological convictions are diverse, but basically they fall along a single spectrum. On the one end of the spectrum is *cessationism*, which teaches that these sign gifts have *ceased*. On the other end is a form of *hyper-charismaticism*, which teaches the necessity of a second baptism or speaking in tongues for salvation, sanctification or Christian maturity.¹ Neither of these extremes is biblical.

To locate ourselves along the spectrum, we need to avoid two dangers: The first is a non-biblical restriction of the gifts – *cessationism*. The second is a non-biblical exaltation of the gifts – *hyper-charismaticism*.

The position that best avoids these dangers is *continuationism* as it teaches that the gifts continue. This is the view held by The Village Church. According to this position, the gifts of the Spirit are available today and are to be desired by God’s people, but we must be careful to practice them according to the Scriptures.

Restriction of the Gifts

Scripture nowhere states that the gifts have ceased. In fact, we have implicit evidence that they will continue until the future return of Christ.

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12

When will the gifts cease? The gifts will discontinue when “the perfect comes” and we see “face to face” and “will know fully.” When is this?

Cessationists teach that this refers to the advent of Scripture. With the canonization of the Bible, the gifts are no longer active.

Though a common interpretation in the Christian community, this view does not represent Paul’s thought. With the Scriptures, can we now say that we know fully and see face to face? It seems to be a much more convincing argument that the coming of the perfect refers to the return of the Son of God. As He has not returned, the gifts have not ceased.

Exaltation of the Gifts

Gifts are given according to the sovereign distribution of the Spirit for the purpose of edifying the body and advancing the gospel. Unfortunately, many churches today exalt the gifts beyond their proper biblical grounds.

There are various ways this can occur. Some teach that tongues are a necessary sign of salvation, sanctification or

¹ The term charismatic is formed from the Greek *charismata* which means “gift of grace.” Though anyone who believes in the ongoing role of the gifts is in this sense “charismatic,” the term has taken on certain connotations which are not true of all and therefore confusing.

maturity, whereas the Scriptures explicitly deny that tongues are universally possessed by all believers (1 Corinthians 12:27-30). Some center on the Spirit to the neglect of the Son, whereas the Spirit's primary testimony is to the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 15:26). Any teaching that focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit to the relative disregard of the incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation and future return of the Son is dangerous and unbiblical.

Walking in the Gifts

How therefore are we to live? The Scriptures say to pursue the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 39), exercise them in an orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:40), and subject them to the Word (1 Corinthians 14:37). As long as gifts are exercised in an orderly and humble manner, subject to the Scriptures, the context of the congregation and a spirit of love, we certainly encourage all members to pursue and practice them.

One of the best settings for the exercise of spiritual gifts is within the context of a group. To grow in an understanding and appreciation of the gifts, it is helpful to be walking in community with others who can grow together.

We encourage you to study more on this topic, especially the biblical passages we have included, and seek to serve one another in love. As you do so, constantly come back to the gospel. The gifts should continually push us back to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Where they do not do so, they are not functioning as they were intended.

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Recommended Resources

PASSAGES TO STUDY:

1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4

SERMONS:

Unique yet Part of the Whole by Matt Chandler

BOOKS:

Showing the Spirit by D.A. Carson

Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? by Wayne Grudem

The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts by Sam Storms