

Diverse Gifts, Same Gospel, Same God

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[0 : 0 0] Earlier this year, we started preaching to the book of 1 Corinthians. If you're here, you would remember that. And then we took an eight-week break over the summer, and we're picking it up again today in 1 Corinthians.

But we're not going to pick up where we left off. We are going to jump in in chapter 12. And the reason for that is because 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, which we're going to do the next five weeks, is the New Testament's most thorough treatment on the subject of spiritual gifts.

And over the last couple of years, or probably for four years or so, we've been talking about the idea of preaching through this. And there's lots of discussion around this topic. Some people want more discussion and understanding.

Some people are more cautious. And so for the next five weeks, we're going to be going through these three chapters in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, as we look at the topic of spiritual gifts.

I wonder what your thoughts or feelings or experiences or fears are when it comes to church and spiritual gifts. Maybe you are new to church. Maybe you're not a Christian.

[1 : 1 1] And someone invited you to church this morning, and you thought, I hope it's not one of those churches where people are falling over and doing all sorts of wild things. I don't know what I'm getting myself into.

Maybe you have been to church, and you stepped into a church which was very charismatic, and you wondered if you stepped into a cult. Maybe you've seen some stuff online where pastors are claiming supernatural powers and abilities to do all sorts of miraculous and wonderful and outrageous things.

Maybe you grew up in a church that was more charismatic, and that was a wonderful experience for you. And you really longed for more of that. Others may have had experiences and are extremely nervous or cautious of these things.

Some of us maybe grew up in a church that was more charismatic, and you've become more cautious over the years. Some grew up in a very conservative church and have become more open to things of the spiritual gifts.

All of us probably have a unique story, experience, thoughts, or feelings when it comes to Christians and charismatic gifts and spiritual experiences.

[2 : 2 2] So what does the New Testament have to say? What does the Bible have to say about this? What does 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 say? Well, in the next five weeks, we're going to dive in and take a look and try and understand what is the New Testament's teaching as clearly as we can explain it.

But the big idea for the series is this. I think we've got on the screen. This is what I would love us to take away. I think the Bible would want us to see this. Okay, I know that sounds very wordy.

Let me read it again. Okay, that's a summary of the next five weeks, which we're going to try and unpack.

Now, where are we going today? Well, today we're going to read the first 11 verses of Corinthians chapter 12. And so if you've got your Bible, why don't you open up and EJ is going to come and read the scripture to us.

Let's listen to God's word. Okay, good morning church. And today's scripture reading is from 1 Corinthians chapter 12, 1 to 11.

[3 : 59] You can follow it with the screen or with your Bible. Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you are led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is accursed.

And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit. Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and the other the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

[5 : 03] To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy.

To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues.

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills. This is the Word of God.

Great. Thank you, EJ. Okay. So, in this passage, we are going to see two things. We are going to see the proof, or maybe a better word is the validity of spiritual gifts, and the character or the nature of spiritual gifts.

So, let's dive in. Firstly, the proof or validity of spiritual gifts. Look at verse 1 and 2 with me. Paul writes this. He says, Now, concerning spiritual gifts or spiritual things, the Greek says, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

[6 : 10] Okay. That's a good start. Verse 3, he says, Rather, I want you to understand. So, the subject of spiritual gifts and their origin and their makeup and their purpose is something that Christians have fought and argued about for many, many years.

Right? And there have been many vicious battles fought. But the Bible tells us that this is something that God doesn't want us to be ignorant about or uninformed about. He wants us to know God's will and to understand His purposes and His plans for it.

God doesn't want us to be stuck or pulled in a hundred different directions or simply following the most articulate person of the day. He wants us to read His Word and to know what is God's will with regarding to the subject.

Now, that may be surprising because of how much confusion there is around the subject of spiritual gifts. But the Bible tells us we can have a measure of confidence. Look at verse 2.

He says, When you were pagans, or the word there means Gentiles, in other words, before you were Christians, you were led astray to many mute idols, however you were led.

[7 : 20] So here, these Corinthians, before they became followers of Jesus, they would worship in the various gods and the deities and the idols and the temples. And what characterizes these idols or gods or the ancestors that they worshipped?

One thing Paul says that characterizes them is the fact that they were mute. They couldn't speak. They were unable to communicate. They couldn't lead and guide you through the challenges of life, through decisions, through knowing what is the will of God.

And if you think about that, think about in Hong Kong when people burn incense at the shrines or burn paper up to their ancestors. You can burn all the paper you want or the paper cars or handbags or whatever it is.

You can burn all that you want. Think about that. Your ancestors are never going to speak to you. They're never going to guide you. They're never going to say, in this decision, this is the will of the Lord.

They're never going to speak to your anxieties or your fears or your worries or your hopes or your dreams. They cannot alleviate these things. They cannot tell you what is true and what is wrong. Because these so-called gods and shrines and statutes cannot speak to you.

[8 : 35] Think of how God speaks about, or the book of Isaiah speaks about the idols of the Babylonians when the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon.

Look at what he says in Isaiah 46. He says, their gods, they lift their idols to their shoulders. They carry it from one place to the next. Then they set it in its place and there it stands.

It cannot move from its place. If one cries out to it, it does not answer. It cannot save him in the time of trouble. And the point is, these idols that the Babylonians and the Corinthians were worshipping are mute.

They cannot lead. They cannot speak. And God says the same thing in Psalm 115. These idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak.

They have eyes, but they do not see. They have ears, but they cannot hear. They do not make a sound in their throats. But the point here Paul makes is that these gods, these idols, they cannot speak.

[9 : 43] They cannot help you. They cannot guide you. They cannot give you wisdom. But our God, the living God, the God we spoke about last week, who is seated high and lifted up on the throne, the God of all creation is not like that.

He does speak. He is living and alive and he communicates with his people. As Psalm 50 says, our God comes.

He does not keep silent. And this is the point that the one we worship and adore and sing to, the Holy One we heard about last week, is not silent.

He is not mute. He is not deaf. Well, how does God speak? Well, the Bible says God speaks in a variety of ways. Psalm 19 says, he speaks through creation.

When you see the majesty of creation, you see the human body, you're surely astounded and say, this is not chance. There must be some creator God. If God speaks, John 1 tells us with the coming of the Lord Jesus.

[10 : 44] The Lord Jesus, the most profound statement of God's faithfulness, that he hasn't abandoned his people. He has come to us. Oh, the Bible says that the gospel speaks to us.

Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross proclaims that there is hope and life in his name. Jesus' death and resurrection says, your sins are forgiven.

Your guilt is atoned for. You are loved. You are redeemed. You are accepted. When he spoke about the fact that God speaks that she is loved. Well, how do you know that? Well, Jesus went to the cross.

He died. He rose again. It speaks of God's love for us. And of course, the Bible. The Bible is how God speaks to us. This is God's written word.

It is living and active. That means it accomplishes what God wanted to accomplish. It's not just philosophy. This is God's word to us. But the Bible also says that God speaks by his spirit.

[11 : 41] Romans 8 says, The spirit himself bears witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God. So God speaks in a variety of ways. Now, here's the challenge.

How do you know when it's God speaking or when it's somebody else claiming to speak on behalf of God? So I come to you and say, I feel the Lord is speaking.

This is, I've got a message from God for you, John. Well, how do you know? I mean, how do you know I haven't just dreamt it up or imagined it or I just want to be an encouraging guy or I just want to be nice?

I'm sure we've all heard crazy stories of cults and spiritual abuse where people say, The Lord is saying, and it certainly wasn't the Lord that was saying.

And of course, one of the dangers with this is it opens up the door to great spiritual abuse, right? Because if I say to you, the Lord is saying, well, how can you argue with me?

[12 : 37] I mean, if you disagree with me, it sounds like you're disagreeing with God, right? And so I can really abuse people and get my will by saying, this is what God has said. The Lord has spoken to me. He's given me a message.

And so how do we really know whether it's of me or God? How do we know? Well, that's where Paul helps us. And look at verse three. In verse three, Paul gives us a litmus test, a test to check the validity of these things.

It's not perfect, but it helps us a lot. Look at what Paul says in verse three. He says, therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God or by the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is accursed.

And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit. So what's the fundamental mark, whether it truly is of God the Holy Spirit speaking?

Here it is. When someone says, I feel like God is speaking, that message is consistent with the entire message of the Bible, which is the Lordship and the glory of Jesus and the centrality of the gospel.

[13 : 44] When the centrality of the gospel, the Lordship of Jesus lifted up, okay, that feels like we're on relatively safe ground. When Christ is minimized or put to the side or something else is put in the center or something else is lifted up, we're on dangerous ground.

Or when a word seems to elevate you or make much of you rather than Jesus, we're on dangerous ground. And so sometimes you hear stories of people who create a real stir and there's a following and there's a revival and there's some new teaching.

And somebody's claiming some special revelation about the gospel of Jesus and the death on the cross. And the Bible says, be very wary. That sounds like that's not of God.

But here's the litmus test. Maybe in a church service or a small group and someone says, I feel like God the Holy Spirit is speaking to me and I feel like he wants to share something. Here's the question.

Does that word call you to follow Jesus more wholeheartedly? Does it bring an increased surrender and repentance to your life in light of his Lordship?

[14 : 50] Does it infuse your heart to the fact that Jesus is Lord, I am not, let me bow down and follow him? Does it impress upon you that Jesus is Lord of every area of your life?

Or does it just make you feel good about yourself? About 15 years ago, 16 years ago, 2008, there was a Canadian evangelist, revivalist guy called Todd Bentley.

And he had this revival in Lakeland, Florida. And it caused a real stir. He initially was meant to be a week of revival meetings. And it went on and on and went on for about four months.

And these very wild scenes and people falling over and stories of miraculous healings. And there was one story where he said God told him to kick this lady in the face with his biker boots.

And he says, as he kicked the toe of his boots, hit her face, God's spirit came upon her. And lots of wild things. And over the course of about four months, about 400,000 people flew to Lakeland to go visit it.

[15 : 57] People sold their homes and traveled down to Florida saying, this is the new thing. The revival is here. God is going to turn the world upside down. Well, I was a little bit cautious.

I'm a bit skeptical. Because this seemed a bit strange for me. But I didn't want to be arrogant and prejudge something before. So I wanted to just listen up. But I was a bit cautious. But one day, Todd Bentley said something that made me think, this is not of God.

He said, I was in my bedroom one night. And an angel appeared at the end of my bed. And the angel said to me, people have heard enough about Jesus. Don't tell them about Jesus.

It's time to start talking about the Holy Spirit. And when I heard that, I thought, this is weird. This is not of God. That is not consistent with what the Bible would say.

To put Jesus to the side and to elevate something else. And so as they went on the revival meetings, actually, who was at the center? Actually, it was Todd Bentley. Actually, it was all about him.

[16 : 55] And, of course, more and more money flowed and needed more giving and donations. And it became all about him. But what does Jesus say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Well, John 15, Jesus says this. When the helper, the spirit of truth comes, he will bear witness about me. Or again, John 16. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

He will glorify me. That's Jesus. He will take what is mine. That's my teaching, my gospel. And he will declare it to you. We'll pick up later how the story ended with Todd Bentley.

But the New Testament says we should test the spirits. But what is the test? The test is, is it making much of Christ? Is it elevating Christ in the gospel? Is it saying, Jesus is Lord. Follow him.

Bow down to him. Surrender to him. Or is it putting Christ aside and making something else the center? And the point here is that not only does God speak, but he speaks consistently.

[17 : 53] He speaks coherently. He speaks with clarity. God is not yes and no. He doesn't say to one church, this is the most important thing. Focus on this. But then to another church, oh, this is the most important thing.

And then to a third church, don't worry about that stuff. Just focus on this. His message is clear and consistent. God doesn't say a different thing to different generations. Sometimes you hear people saying, I just feel the Lord saying, he's doing a new thing.

We've spoken about this. No, he's generally not. He's doing the same thing he's been doing for 2,000 years. He's telling us about Jesus. He's glorifying Christ. He's saying, bow down and surrender to Jesus.

Follow him. Now, of course, each church may have its strengths and weaknesses. So maybe we've got a weakness and God says to us, watermark, you need to focus on this weakness. You're strong in those areas, but you need to think about this.

But by and large, God's message is consistent, coherent, clear. The glory and the magnificence of Jesus. Let's follow him. Christ is Lord.

[18 : 54] Life is found in him. So how do we know if God is speaking? How do we test the spirits? Does it magnify Jesus? Does what this person say claim to be from the spirit?

Does it call us to obedience and follow Jesus? Okay, so the test, the validity of spiritual gifts. But now, the question is, with that foundation, Paul then tells us about the nature of spiritual gifts.

What are they like? How do they work? How do they operate? And we're going to look at this over the next couple of weeks. But what we see throughout the New Testament is that spiritual gifts are not just a personal spiritual exercise to make me feel good.

They're not signs of holiness or maturity to make me look good in front of others. They are diverse abilities which are empowered by God to enable us to serve God's people in diverse ways.

Okay? Spiritual gifts are diverse abilities empowered by God in order to help us serve God's people, not ourselves, in diverse but also specific ways.

[20 : 00] So, if you've got your Bible or the bulletin, look at verse 4 to 11 with me again. I'm going to read it for us again because it's so rich. Paul says this.

So, having laid a foundation about the validity, he now says, let's talk about their nature. Verse 4. Now, there are a variety of gifts, but it's the same Spirit. There are a variety of services, but it's the same Lord.

There are a variety of activities, but it's the same God who empowers them all and everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom.

To another, the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healings by one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy.

To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

[21 : 03] What's the big idea here? The big idea is diversity and unity. Diversity and unity. Paul says the fact that diverse gifts and diverse types of gifts are given to diverse people that look and function in diverse ways should not cause division or competition or rivalry.

Rather, they should lead to humbly serving one another, which brings us together. So, why does Paul need to tell them this? Why is Paul making this point?

Well, as you read 1 Corinthians, what you find out is the Corinthians had one spiritual gift in mind which they elevated and thought was the most important. Do you know what it was? The gift of tongues, right?

So, if you are not familiar with this, gift of tongues is when somebody speaks in a way that is maybe not logically coherent or not their natural tongue.

It could be another language, known language, or it could be almost like a heavenly language. And the Corinthians were thinking, this is the sign of spiritual maturity. If you can do that, you're a holy Christian.

[22 : 12] God must really be pleased with you. And Paul's point here is he's saying, actually, there's diverse gifts. There's a diverse range of gifts.

There are spiritual gifts. There's activities. There's services. And he wants to help them to see that actually the spiritual gifts like God himself are meant to be an expression of unity even in the midst of our diversity.

And he's going to say this in three ways. The first is this. The unity and diversity of the gift giver. Unity and diversity of the gift giver. Look at verse four to six.

Now, there are varieties of gifts, but it's the same spirit. There are varieties of services, but it's the same Lord. He means the Lord Jesus. There are varieties of activities, but it's the same God.

He means God the Father, who empowers them all and everyone. So, here Paul uses the Trinitarian God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who gives and empowers various gifts and services and activities.

[23 : 15] Is God himself diverse and varied? Yes, he is. Trinity, Father, Son, Spirit. Is the Trinity in competition or rivalry with one another?

No, they're not. Though they are diverse and varied, they work together with unity and oneness of heart and mind. So, none is more important or better or worse than the other.

They are diverse and varied, but they're unified. So, sometimes you hear people talking about a very spiritual church. Okay, that church is a very spiritual church. But is that really such a thing?

Is it possible for a church to be full of the Spirit, but also not full of Christ and full of the Father at the same time? Is not a Spirit-filled church really just a God-saturated church? Because verse 8 to 10 says that the Spirit gives gifts, but actually it's the Father, the Son, and the Spirit together who are the source of spiritual gifts and operations and activities.

So, unity and diversity in the gift-giver. What about unity and diversity in the gift-receiver? Look at us. Well, who receives these gifts? Obviously, it's the super-holy ones, right?

[24 : 26] The really, really righteous ones, the ones that are very spiritually mature. They receive spiritual gifts, and the rest of us, well, we just suck. No, not at all. Look at what our passage says. Verse 6.

There's a variety of gifts, the same Spirit, varieties of services, the same Lord Jesus, variety of activities, the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

Now, that doesn't mean that all Christians have all of the spiritual gifts. What it means, as Andrew Wilson says, that everybody has something to offer, and nobody has nothing to offer.

So, all of us, if you're a follower of Jesus, all of us are given some kind of spiritual gift or service or activity to bring and contribute to the family of God. And the point is, spiritual gifts are not rewards or badges of honor for elite believers, for the special class, those that have got it all together, to mark them out as the genuinely mature ones and contrast the rest of the church.

No, they are gifts of grace, not meritocracy. They're given to all Christians in all of our diversity. So, are you an extrovert? Okay, God's given you some gifts. Are you an introvert and shy?

[25 : 38] God's given gifts to you to use. Diverse personalities, diverse cultures and backgrounds and races. Are you a leader or are you someone who likes to more follow? Are you articulate or are you not very articulate?

It doesn't matter your personality type. God has given gifts to all believers for the common good. Look at verse 11. He says the same thing. All these are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions, not to some, but to each one as he wills.

So, here's the question. If you are a Christian, the question is not, do I have a spiritual gift? Or, I'm not sure if I have one. But what is the spiritual gift that God has given you?

And how are you using it? How are you using it? Third thing and final thing is this. Unity and diversity in the gift giver. Unity and diversity in the gift recipient.

Unity and diversity of the gifts themselves. Now, in this section, Paul lists nine spiritual gifts, right? Are these all the spiritual gifts that they are?

[26 : 46] No, obviously not. Because at the end of the chapter, Paul's got another list of nine. But it's not the same nine. There's some overlap. There's some difference. And as you read the rest of the New Testament, there are a whole lot of other gifts.

So, in Romans 12, Paul gives other ones. And in 1 Peter 4, I think it is, there are some other gifts. In total, the New Testament lists about 20 different gifts that the Bible says are spiritual gifts.

But even these are probably not exhaustive. These are just simply examples of the kinds of things that God does. So, for example, the Bible never talks about the spiritual gift of leading worship, right?

But I think it's fairly obvious. There's a difference between someone who's just a good musician and someone who's gifted in leading the congregation in worship. Well, the Bible doesn't talk about the spiritual gift of comfort.

But surely some people have got that gift of coming alongside someone who's grieving or struggling and walking alongside there and being there for them. That's not just a personality. That's a gift. And so, even the 20 or so gifts that are listed are just examples that Paul gives.

[27 : 49] Now, we saw in verse 3, along with the rest of the New Testament, what's the purpose of the ministry of the Spirit? It's to magnify Christ. To raise Christ.

That Jesus is Lord. Well, here in verse 7, we see another purpose. What does verse 7 tell us? To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

For the common good. Not so that individuals can parade their spirituality or have individual ecstatic experiences, which serves no one but themselves. The purpose is for the whole church to be built up and encouraged and strengthened and edified as we seek to follow Jesus together.

So, when someone says, it's not fair. I never get to show my spiritual gift. The response is, since when was it about you anyway? It's not about you.

It's about the common good. What is it about? It's about helping one another to exalt and hold on to Jesus. It's about loving God and loving others more than ourselves.

[28 : 54] And so, when do these spiritual gifts come into play? When do you use them? Well, maybe on a Sunday morning, possibly. Last week, Ed came and shared with us during worship. He felt like God had put something in his heart.

And did you notice, what did Ed share last week? One of the things he said was, I feel God is calling us away from worldliness to follow Jesus more wholeheartedly. That sounds like verse 3, right?

Magnifying Christ. That sounds authentic. So, Sunday morning, possibly. But surely, most of the time we're going to use our spiritual gifts is outside the hour and a half of a week on a Sunday morning.

Surely, it's when you're in your community group and someone's struggling, going through a hard time. Or when you're meeting a friend over lunch or over coffee and you're able to encourage them and point them back to Christ. Or as you visit somebody in hospital who's sick and unwell and you're able to encourage them and remind them of Jesus.

Or as you visit someone who's just lost a loved one and they're grieving. Or as you are at home with your children, you're trying to point your children towards Christ. That's where the manifestations of the gifts come about.

[30 : 00] God's gifts are given to minister and encourage the body of Christ to keep holding on to Jesus and to advance the gospel for the common good. Now, as we come to a close, two questions I want to address.

First is this. Are all spiritual gifts miraculous gifts? The list of nine that Paul has here all sound pretty miraculous, right?

It talks about gifts of healings and miracles and prophecies. But the New Testament also tells us there are many gifts, spiritual gifts, that seem quite ordinary, quite mundane in some ways.

Not necessarily that miraculous. There are gifts of hospitality, gifts of encouragement, gifts of leadership, all of which seem remarkably ordinary.

And yet, there are gifts of God, given by God to empower us, to encourage one another to hold on to Jesus and to live out the mission. But even in this list, some of the things that sound very miraculous may not be as miraculous as they first seem.

[31 : 02] Most commentators talk about the fact that the gift of wisdom, it could be that in a moment, God just gives you a word of wisdom. But it could also be that God gives you the ability to read a situation profoundly wisely and to know how to handle it and how to go forward.

And also in Corinthians, wisdom is often contrasted. The wisdom of the Corinthians who love Greek wisdom versus the wisdom of the cross. The spiritual gift of wisdom may be to know how to live according to the gospel rather than worldly wisdom.

So some spiritual gifts may be truly miraculous. God put something in your mind. You could never have known it yourself. And insight to revelation, it truly comes from God and builds up the church.

One time, Charles Spurgeon was preaching. And he saw a man at the back. And he said, You, sir, were keeping open your shop open last Sunday. And you've made a profit of nine pennies. And this is what you did with it.

And he said, He'd never seen the man before. Didn't know him from Bar of Soap. Spoke exactly into his situation. And the guy was not a Christian and came in and said, God is in this place. And he followed him.

[32 : 07] God can do that. But often, the spiritual gifts are maybe not that miraculous. It's coming alongside someone that's struggling. And it's able to just encourage them. But God gives you a word at that time, which builds them up and helps them to hold on to Jesus.

Others, sometimes you serve Christ and his people. And as you surrender yourself to God and depend upon him, you find yourself being used in the most remarkable and wonderful ways, like hospitality, or encouraging, or serving, which seem rather ordinary, but may bear incredible spiritual fruit in the lives of others.

And so if you think about it, Watermark, I feel like God is really at work in Watermark. It's a wonderful, lively spirit of God is here at church. But very seldom do we have miraculous gifts of the spirit.

But maybe actually as you host someone, as you welcome somebody that's new, as after the service, you're chatting with someone and you say, hey, can I pray for you right now? That's God using you in a very ordinary and a mundane way.

So are all spiritual gifts miraculous? Not necessarily. Some may be, but they may not all be. What about second question? What's the relationship between spiritual gifts and natural gifts?

[33 : 20] Well, this is a tricky one. Let me try and say this. On the one hand, they obviously can't be the same thing. If spiritual gifts are just the same as your natural gifts, then what's the point in calling the spiritual gifts, right?

There must be some kind of empowering by the life of God and the spirit of God. But on the other hand, it seems like they're not completely disconnected. There's some continuity.

So for instance, it doesn't seem likely to me that somebody who cannot teach anybody anything for all the money in the world, will suddenly, when they become a Christian, become a profound teacher of the Bible, right?

It seems like there's some kind of continuity. Or maybe somebody who is, um, has no leadership skill whatsoever. And that's, they hate the idea of that and would never ever think of being used like that.

Suddenly they become a Christian and become a dynamic, powerful leader. It seems like God uses our wiring and our personality in some ways as hints towards, what are the spiritual gifts that he's given us?

[34 : 25] In fact, we see this because both Paul and Jeremiah in the Bible speak about being called and set apart before they were born for the ministries to which God had called them.

God had somehow used their wiring, their personalities in a way that would correspond with the spiritual gifts that God is working in them. So, spiritual gifts are not just natural gifts.

They're empowered by God. They're given by God. But we grow in them as we grow in spiritual maturity, in holiness, independence and reliance upon him, seeking to magnify Jesus, God will grow our spiritual gifts for the common good.

Okay, let me close with this. Todd Bentley, 2008, Lakeland Revival. Lots of question marks. Is this really of God? Lots of concerns.

Well, after four months, the numbers started to dwindle at the revival because a lot of the, there were lots of stories of healings, but there were no proven healings that took place in all of those four months.

[35 : 27] And though the crowd swelled up to 10,000 at its height, after four months, the numbers were dwindling and had to move to smaller and smaller venues. And eventually, Todd Bentley thought he left. He left the ministry and he went on his own way.

At the same time, he said, God has told me to leave my wife and to marry an intern in the ministry. An intern with whom he happened to have an emotional relationship. And so his wife was sick.

She wasn't very well, uh, healthy, which maybe is not a good thing. If you're a healing minister, you know, to have a wife that is not well. And his three young kids. And he left her married his intern.

And he went on the road and thousands of people had sold homes and moved to Florida to be part of the revival. People had left their jobs. Thousands and thousands of people had given up so much to follow this man that they thought was going to usher in healing and revival and, and wholeness and wellbeing only to be abandoned and left for good and to be left high and dry.

Now friends, 2000 years ago, there was another religious leader who also started a revolution and crowds followed him and people left things to, to flock to him, to follow him.

[36 : 36] But Jesus Christ is no Todd Bentley. Jesus didn't take the money and run. In fact, Jesus said some difficult things and thinned out the crowds. And when the crowds wanted to make him King and elevate him, he said some hard things and a lot of the crowd left him.

And in fact, Jesus was so steadfast and focused that even when everyone abandoned him, he didn't abandon his mission, his mission to go to the cross and to die on the cross for sinners like you and me, that we could be brought into his family.

And on the cross while he's dying there, he cries, I says, father, why have you forsaken me? Why have you forsaken me? And for the first time ever, God is silent. Remember Psalm 50 says, our God comes.

He is not silent on the cross. God was silent. He didn't answer Jesus. All he showed him was his back and Jesus died alone, but he died alone so that you and I would never have to hear God's silence.

So that when we cry out to God, God is not silent to our cries. We can be brought into his family. Jesus died alone, said we will never be alone. So he will be with us. And after 40 days, he, he, he, he dies.

[37 : 41] He rises from the dead. He meets his disciples. And now is the time to start a revolution. I mean, if anyone's going to start a revolution, that's the guy who died and rose again, right? And Jesus has a chance to, to gather the crowds and to launch his ministry, but he doesn't.

He leaves them. And his disciples must have felt like the followers of Todd Bentley. What are you doing? Why are you abandoning us? We've given up everything to follow you. Where are you going? But Jesus says this.

He says, it's better that I go. It's better that I leave you. Why? Because if I leave you, the Holy Spirit will come. Why is it better that Jesus left us? If Jesus was still here, we would have to go to Israel or walk the streets of Palestine to meet him.

But now, because Christ has ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit has come, all of us, no matter your background, your culture, your ethnicity, whether you're in the remote parts of Mongolia, you're in the city of Hong Kong, or you're in the Serengeti of Africa, all of us have the opportunity to encounter the living God, the God who hears, the God who speaks.

Tim Challies writes this. He says, I'll close with this. Somewhere in our minds, we may think that we believe that the Holy Spirit is some kind of consolation prize. We understand Jesus had to die.

[38 : 55] Maybe we even understand why he then had to ascend to the Father's side. But still, we find ourselves thinking that since he couldn't be here anymore, he left us a kind of deputy. A substitute teacher, an interim.

Someone who's good, but not quite the one we want. But that's never how Jesus talks about the Spirit of God. He says that you and I are better off for with the presence of the Holy Spirit than if Jesus himself was still here.

Jesus provided with the fullness and extravagance that no other religious leader ever has or ever will. Jesus promised that he'll come back again and he'll take us with him, to be with him forever.

But until that day comes, he's given us his Spirit to know him, to speak, to hear, and to minister to our hearts, that we can cry out to him and know him better.

Let's do that now as we pray. Lord Jesus, your Word is rich and full of life. God, your Word challenges us and encourages us, but ultimately, God, we don't just want to know the Word in our heads, we want to know you in our hearts.

[39 : 58] And you, God, have left us, the Spirit of Jesus. You sent us, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, the Spirit of Jesus, to be with us. God, I pray for us as a church.

Won't you speak to us? Speak, oh Lord, through your Spirit. Come and revive our hearts. Come be a consuming fire, breath of life, come and breathe in us. Lord, make us a church which is a God-saturated church, full of God the Holy Spirit, Christ the Son, God the Father.

I pray, and help us, Lord, as we follow you to make much of Jesus, to glory in Christ on the cross. In your name I pray, Amen.