FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE *Holy Spirit*

ROCK CHURCH

REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

As a foundation, we believe in what is termed “The Apostles’ Creed” as embodying all the fundamental doctrines of orthodox evangelical Christianity. In addition to the fundamental doctrines of the faith we realize that there are a number of variant nuances of interpretation and denominational emphases that polarize the Body of Christ toward diverse positions. As a non-denominational ministry, the Rock Church is intentional in teaching the core doctrines of the Christian faith without fixating on discordant beliefs. In this regard we affirm the general statement as originated in the early church by St. Augustine, “In Essentials, Unity; in Non-essentials, Liberty; in All Things, Charity.” We draw upon our Statement of Faith and Christian Conduct for guidance in interpreting particular matters Scripturally and with spiritual wisdom. In addition, we do continue to affirm the Orthodox teaching on the Holy Spirit as taught in the Scriptures. “The Holy Spirit—*We recognize the Holy Spirit as the third member of the Godhead who is incessantly at work: convicting, convincing, and comforting*. As the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the personal agent of the Father and Son for revelation and regeneration. We believe in the Holy Spirit, who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower in ministry all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is an abiding Helper, Teacher, and Guide. We believe that the seeking believer is filled with the Holy Spirit and power for service, either at the time of or subsequent to regeneration, which is a separate work from the indwelling Spirit for salvation. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit and in the exercise of all Biblical gifts of the Spirit as reflected through the fruit of that same Spirit. See John 14:26; Acts 1:4-8, 2:4; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; and Ephesians 1:13–14.”

1. How do you talk about emotionally charged topics and still keep the unity of the Spirit?

Our take: Jesus said that the world would know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:34-35). No matter our differences, Christ's disciples must demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit toward one another in every situation. Begin with prayer, be committed to remaining calm, be a good listener and be more committed to "doing right versus being right" (1 Cor. 13:2). As noted above, there are many topics in the Scriptures that have historically resulted in division. The challenge isn't the doctrine of Scripture, but how believers interact over the variant doctrines. At the Rock Church, those who hold variant views on the theology of what is termed Pneumatology (Theology of the Holy Spirit) are welcome at the Rock Church, as we seek to engage in healthy conversation in relation to mutual understanding of the variant underpinnings in Scripture. As truth and love are affirmed, it is our priority to seek to exalt Jesus Christ and His holy Word, without division, murmuring and disputing. (Philippians 2:14-16; 2 Timothy 2:23-26) We are exhorted to hold fast to sound doctrine (2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2:15, 4:2-4; Titus 1:9, 2:1) and to protect the Church from un-Biblical teachings (1 Timothy 1:18-20; Acts 20:27-32) while at the same time affirm our love for one another (John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:1-13). It is to be noted that major themes in the New Testament Epistles deal with right doctrine and church conflict.

2. Is the Holy Spirit a force of power or a Person?

Our take: The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is identified as a person by John, using the Greek masculine "He"(ekeinos) in John 16:13. Personal transformation is a result of a relationship with the Person of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-9). The Holy Spirit speaks (Acts 8:29; 10:19-21, Heb. 3:7; Rev. 22:17), has fellowship and communion with us (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14), can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), has a will (1 Cor. 12:11), can be insulted (Heb. 10:29), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), etc.

It is an error to think of or to refer to the Holy Spirit as merely a force or power. The Holy Spirit is presented as a personal being with a self-identity different from both the Father and the Son. Both the Father and Jesus make this distinction when speaking of Him. The Holy Spirit says, "Separate Barnabas and Saul to Me." He also is identified as "I" in Acts 13:2. Personal human

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beings have self-identity with a mind, will and emotions. Another quality of being personal is that one has life. A person is identified as a self-conscious being, cognizant of his own existence and the existence of others who also have a self-identity. A will indicates the ability to think, to reason, to choose, with a self-consciousness that is exclusive to persons. The Holy Spirit in Scripture possesses all of these qualities, as also do God the Father and God the Son. The Holy Spirit speaks (Acts 8:29; 10:19-21, Hebrews 3:7; Revelation 22:17), has fellowship and communion with us (Philippians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 13:14), can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11), can be insulted (Hebrews 10:29), intercedes (Romans 8:26) and many other attributes of divine Personhood. For an extensive study of the Holy Spirit as God, a variety of systematic theologies are available with chapters devoted to Pneumatology (i.e. Theology of the Holy Spirit).

3. Is the Rock Church aligning with a special movement active in signs and wonders?

Our take: The Rock Church is seeking to align with the move of the Holy Spirit, not with any particular denomination or historic movement. As a background to the various church movements over the past century it is important to have an overview of recent church history. Fundamentalism as a movement arose in the United States, starting among conservative Presbyterian theologians at Princeton Theological Seminary in the late 19th century. It soon spread to conservatives among the Baptists and other denominations around 1910 to 1920. The movement's purpose was to reaffirm key theological tenets and defend them against the challenges of liberal theology and higher criticism. The Pentecostal movement has its roots in a revival that began around 1901 in the United States where many experiences were attributed to a renewal by the Holy Spirit. In the 1960's and 1970's another renewal movement brought about the birth of Charismatic churches. In the 1980's, what was termed the "Third Wave," brought another movement that initiated the Vineyard Churches.[1] It is the intention of the Rock Church leadership not to align with a particular group or movement but to continue to operate as a non-denominational ministry with a focus on Establishing Pervasive Hope to San Diego and beyond. The Rock Church is careful not to condemn or malign other ministries who operate within the core tenets of the faith as noted above. However, the Rock Church leadership wants to continue to learn from other ministries within the wide spectrum of the Christian faith to glean from Biblical best practices within Christian orthodoxy and faithful and

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1 Grudem, W. Systematic Theology p. 763

successful ministry paradigms that are bearing God honoring fruit of the Spirit in fulfilling the Great Commission. In all our ministry pursuits the leadership seeks to be discerning within the wisdom of God. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17-18) As leaders we seek to evaluate various ministries in accordance with Scripture and first-hand observation and conversation. We will not condemn nor endorse a ministry based on hearsay or rumor, but instead seek to hear and evaluate ministries through first-hand observation within its full context.

4. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church?

Our take: The Holy Spirit is to reveal the reality of who Jesus is in and through our lives (John 16:14). He also empowers us for ministry, convicts us of sin, pours the love of God into our hearts, transforms us into the image of God (John 15:26-27). Jesus affirmed His direct teaching about the Holy Spirit when he stated, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears he will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore, I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:7-15 ESV). Earlier Jesus stated, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:26-27)

As such, it is central to this discussion to know that the Holy Spirit will testify of Jesus Christ, glorify Jesus Christ and bear witness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ should always be central to what the Holy Spirit is doing within the Church. In addition, the work of the Holy Spirit

should always be in harmony with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in empowering the Church to be witnesses to Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8) should bear the fruit of the Spirit in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23), while diminishing the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) and confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). As revealed in Scripture, the Holy Spirit brings confirmation of God's presence and grace to the Church as He empowers, purifies, reveals and unifies God's people. (For a more detailed theology of this discussion consult Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem, Chapter 30, pages 634-653.)

5. Are signs, wonders and miracles still manifested in the Church today?

Our take: Absolutely. We believe that Jesus performed miraculous signs and wonders during His ministry on earth Acts 2:22). They were always done to glorify God (John 17:4) and demonstrate the power of the Kingdom (Matt. 12:28). He also instructed His disciples to do the same (Matt. 10:5-15) and said that we would also do the works that He did (John 14:12). "A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which He arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to Himself."[2] Often throughout Scripture the term "signs and wonders" is used as a primary expression of God's miracles (Ex. 7:3; Deut. 6:22; Ps. 135:9; Acts 2:22; 4:30; 5:12; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). In addition, the Bible declares many miracles of healings and demonic deliverances (Matt. 11:4-5; Luke 4:36-41; John 2:23; 4:54; 6:2; 20:30-31; Acts 3:6; 5:15-16; 9:32-40; 28:9; Gal. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28). A purpose of miracles is to authenticate the message of the Gospel (John 3:2; 4:29; Acts 8:6-8; 9:35; Heb. 2:4). Miracles also testify that the Kingdom of God has come to humanity (Matt. 10:7-8; 12:28; Luke 4:18). In addition, miracles set people free from their hindrances and brokenness (Matt. 8:15; 14:14; 20;20, 34; Acts 9:36-41). And finally, miracles were often done for the primacy of the glory of God (Matt. 9:8; John 9:3). Now the question again is raised if miracles were limited to just the apostles and their followers until the Cannon of Scripture was closed. In Matthew 10:5-15 Jesus clearly gave the apostles authority to "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as you go preach saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:6-8) In this context this exhortation was given specifically to the apostles and their message was only to go to the Israelites in neglect of the Gentiles. Does this mean that this authority was only

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2 Grudem, W. Systematic Theology p. 355.

for the apostles and was only for the Jews? If such a view is taken, most the New Testament teaching (e.g. John 14-16) would be limited to the disciples when they were present and therefore not for ongoing benefit for the historic Church at large. Unless one holds to a strong dispensational perspective of Scripture, where God interacts with His people differently during different eras of history, it should be the natural and most literal interpretation of Scripture that God continues His authority and works through His people throughout the New Testament and beyond. However, this does not negate the fact that certain Scriptural precepts are specifically for a historic time and purpose, often as relevant to a particular culture (e.g. head coverings of 1 Cor. 11:5).

Needless to say, the general principles given in Scripture that guide the Church should be applied in their cultural context (e.g. 1. Cor. 11:5, on authority). As previously noted, the special authoritative revelation of Scripture is limited to Scripture (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18), however the works of God in personally working in and through His people do not have such a distinctive limit (as noted in the discussions above). (For a further study of this discussion see Systematic Theology by W. Grudem pages 358-368). It should be noted that the Bible also notes many instances of "false" miracles (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7; Acts 8:9-11, 13; 16:18). It is noted that when the "man of sin" comes it will be "with all power, signs, and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth." (2 Thes. 2:9-10) This reveals that there are those who work false miracles by the power of Satan and will not speak the truth but will preach a false Gospel (also note Revelation 13:11-14). Also see Mark 16:17-18.

6. Are there not false and deceptive miracles and spirits?

Our take: Yes, the Bible teaches that there would be many deceiving spirits in the last days (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Satan is also described as a master deceiver (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3, 14; Rev. 12:9). But, just as false teaching shouldn't stop us from preaching the Gospel, false signs shouldn't stop us from ministering in the supernatural power of God. The Bible gives many examples of false and deceptive miracles and spirits that occur to draw people away from the one true God (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7; Matt. 7:23; Acts 8:9-13; 16:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Rev. 13:11-14). In fact, 1 Timothy 4:1-2 declares of the last days, "Now the Spirit expressly

says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron." (ESV) In addition, Paul warns of deceitful religious leaders, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 ESV) The Apostle Paul warned Timothy, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Timothy 4:2-4 NKJV) Within this mix of false miracles and teachers will be those who seek to teach a non-Biblical Gospel (Galatians 1:6-8). The Apostle John also gives strong warnings of these elements of false doctrine and false spirits (1 John 2:18; 4:1-6).

As such, Christians are challenged to be both open and discerning when in the presence of miracles. Those who are involved in the signs and wonders will have a genuine profession of Biblical faith (1 Cor. 12:3). They will believe in the incarnation and deity of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2). They will also show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives and bear Godly fruit in their ministry (Matt. 7:20; John 15:5; Gal. 5:22-23). In addition, the focus of miracles should not draw glory or attention to a person, draw a primary awe to the miracle itself or even focus on the person of the Holy Spirit. We are to be reminded that the Holy Spirit will seek to bring glory and witness to Jesus Christ (John 15:26-27; 16:13-14; Acts 1:8). As such, we should be thankful to God that the Holy Spirit is working dynamically to glorify Jesus Christ through His word and works. Though believers may not agree on every point of doctrine and are not completely sanctified in every area of conduct, God is not limited in His power to do as He wills, when He wills to exalt Christ. And throughout Scripture the testimony of miracles will bring glory to Jesus Christ and will often result in the salvation of the lost (John 12:32). It is there that the repeated phrase throughout Scripture is manifested, "then they will know that I am God." (Exodus 6:7)

7. Should believers seek to see miracles today?

Our take: Yes, we are to seek God and everything that He has promised to give His children. The Bible teaches us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1) of which the gift of miracles is one. We believe that one of the things that He has promised us is the ability to do

the works that Jesus didJohn 14:12. At the outset of this discussion, it should be the utmost priority that believers seek God above everything (including miracles) and that nothing should supersede the pursuit of Him (Matt. 4:10; 6:33; Exodus 20:3). It is Biblically wrong to seek for miracles to affirm one's own glory or power (Acts 8:21-22). It is wrong to seek miracles simply to be entertained by an experience (Luke 23:8). It is wrong to for skeptics to seek miracles as a ground for criticism. "And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, 'When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.' So He left them and departed." (Matt. 16:1-4 ESV).

This rebuke against seeking signs is repeated in the Gospels in several places where the motive of the inquirers was to test Jesus (Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16). It should be noted that this rebuke is against the hostile unbelieving skeptics who are seeking a miracle to find fault with Jesus. Never does Jesus rebuke anyone who comes in faith, or in need, seeking for a miraculous healing or deliverance for oneself or others. In addition, Paul does not negate miracles when he writes in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (NKJV) Paul wouldn't be denying the desire of miracles in connection with the proclamation of the Gospel as he affirms this in Romans 15:18-20, "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel." (Also note 2 Corinthians 12:12)

Dr. Wayne Grudem writes, "There is nothing inappropriate in seeking miracles for the proper purposes for which they are given by God: to confirm the truthfulness of the Gospel message, to bring help to those in need, to remove hindrances to people's ministries, and to bring glory to God. In the Gospels many people came to Jesus seeking miracles, and He healed them

for these purposes. Moreover, when He sent His disciples out preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, He told them, 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Matt. 10:7-8). How could they do this without seeking God for miracles everywhere they went? Jesus' command required them to seek for miracles to happen. After Pentecost, the early church prayed both for boldness to preach the Gospel and for God to grant miracles to accompany the preaching of the Gospel. They cried out to God, 'And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants to speak Your word with all boldness, while you stretch out Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.' (Acts 4:29-30)."[3] Miracles are the work of God within His grace to reveal His glory and Person. The result is that people would know that He alone is God and that our faith can be strengthened.

8. What does the Bible teach about the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

Our take: We are all indwelt with the Holy Spirit at salvation (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13, Rom. 8:9) and are encouraged to be being continually filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit throughout our life (Eph. 5:18). The fact that there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit is not in question across most theological circles. There are seven primary passages in the Scriptures specifically noting this promise (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5; 11:16 and 1 Cor. 12:13). Questions do arise over the baptism with the Holy Spirit in relation to whether this experience happens at conversion, sometime after conversion, or both. In the Gospels John the Baptist affirmed that, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Matt. 3:11) Subsequently, Jesus states that, "John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5; 11:16). The discussion for ensuing baptisms with the Holy Spirit comes into question in relation to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where he teaches, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (NKJV). As such, there are those who teach that the baptism with the Holy Spirit only happens at conversion. In an inductive approach to studying the Scriptures, no matter how this text is translated, it seems most consistent with the context and word structure that Paul is referring to the baptism with the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus taking

3 Grudem, W. Systematic Theology p. 371.

place here at salvation. Therefore, receiving the Holy Spirit does refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life when regeneration occurs as we are brought into the body of Christ as part of the Church. (Some even teach that water baptism is a symbolic representation of the spiritual reality that has taken place.) However, the question is asked, can there be successive experiences of this baptism with the Holy Spirit? Some denominations teach that there are prepositions describing various experiences with the Holy Spirit. They would teach that when a person receives Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures the Holy Spirit comes "into" the believer (1 Corinthians 12:13). In our Christian experience the Holy Spirit is also "with" the Christian. However, at times they would teach that the Holy Spirit also comes "upon" the believer for subsequent empowerment. Though there are Biblical examples of these prepositions in relationship to the Holy Spirit, we should be cautious in building a theology using prepositions that aren't always consistent with the intended teaching. It should be noted in this discussion that Jesus' promise that the disciples would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5), was fulfilled in Acts 2:4 and they "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Of significance is that this experience is described as being both "baptized" and "filled." The "filling" of the Holy Spirit is also supported by other Biblical passages (Ephesians 5:18, Acts 4:8, 23, 31). Others in the early Church received the Holy Spirit subsequent to Pentecost in Acts 8:17; 10:44; 19:6 as the Gospel expanded from Jerusalem to Judea and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Since Acts 1:5 and Acts 2:4 seem to use the terms of filling and baptism interchangeably some teach there is a definite subsequent experience to salvation where the Holy Spirit empowers the believer in his or her relationship to God. Others teach that a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit at salvation and there are subsequent "fillings" of the Holy Spirit. No matter what terminology is used, there is an experience with the Holy Spirit where the believer is exhorted to be seeking to be filled on an ongoing basis with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18, "Be continually being filled (present tense imperative verb) with the Holy Spirit.") Within this experience believers need to be guarded against teaching that there is a "second-class" Christianity; the "haves" and the "have-nots." All believers have the Holy Spirit. The filling (or some interchange the word "baptizing") with the Holy Spirit is part of the maturity, empowerment and fellowship with God as part of one's growth and renewal. Such fullness of the Holy Spirit can result in renewed worship and thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:19-20), renewed relationships to others (Ephesians 5:21-6:9) and increased experience of sanctification and empowerment for ministry (Acts 4:8, 23, 31).

9. Do all believers have all of the gifts of the Spirit?

Our take: The Holy Spirit disperses gifts individually as He wills so that we would mutually benefit one another as an expression of the Father's love (1 Cor. 12). However, since the Holy Spirit indwells us as believers, we have the potential to be used by Him at any time with any gift. We should be open to the Holy Spirit giving whatever gifts and however many gifts He chooses. To affirm a Biblical balance on seeking and growing in spiritual gifts we must remember that Paul clearly says that spiritual gifts are appointed to each person individually by the Holy Spirit according to His divine choice. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:11, "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (ESV) In addition he affirms that, "But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (1 Corinthians 12:18 ESV). Later, Paul declares that God has distributed various gifts throughout the church and not all are apostles, prophets or teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28-30). In this way he reminds the Corinthians that the distribution of gifts are ultimately a matter of God's sovereign will, and they are for the good of building up the church. None of us have all of the gifts of the Spirit and we need to continually depend on the Lord working through His community to mutually benefit one another.

However, there are aspects of the spiritual gifts where God will work His purposes by empowering members of the body of Christ to display elements of spiritual gifts that they do not necessarily possess. For example, there are believers who are gifted evangelists (Ephesians 4:11) but all the church is commissioned to evangelize and disciple within the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Some may have the gift of giving (Romans 12:8), but all believers are to be generous (2 Corinthians 9:7). There is a gift of mercy in Romans 12:8, yet all are challenged to be merciful (Matthew 5:7). There are definitely uniquely gifted individuals in the church called to exercise those gifts for the building of the church. However, all believers need to be open to serving God's purposes in all areas of service as enabled by God for the moment as opportunities present themselves within the providence of God. In addition, God's people need to guard their hearts against having division within the church over the various gifts. Love should always be at the foundation of all that God does for His glory alone. There should not be any hint of spiritual "elite-ism" in the body of Christ where believers are made to feel like they are less than other believers (1 Corinthians 12:25). Nor should any in the body of Christ be exalted above other believers as all members of the body of Christ serve diverse function with Christ alone exalted at the Head. As Paul affirmed, "yet I will show you a more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:31 NKJV) The way of the Spirit is the way of love (1 Corinthians 13). The Church is encouraged to desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1) but to

also pursue love. As noted, the Scriptures declare that we should earnestly desire spiritual gifts, yet the greatest is to pursue the more excellent way to love (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:1-8). As such, there is a gift of evangelism, but all believers should be sharing their faith. There is a gift of giving, but all believers should be generous. There are gifts of healing, mercy, service, prophecy, etc., but all believers should participate in stepping out in encouraging and building up others through these virtues. In essence, this is love in action to edify others for the kingdom of God.

10. Are there distinctions between spiritual gifts that are natural and spiritual gifts that are supernatural?

Our take: Everything God does is supernatural and therefore all the gifts He gives and empowers are supernatural (Psalm 72:18). The Scriptures affirm that there are diversities of spiritual gifts, ministries, activities but it is the same Lord who works all things for the benefit of all (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). The point of this analysis is to caution us against making a supernatural/natural distinction in gifts whereby we think that some spiritual gifts are "supernatural"' and other spiritual gifts are simply "natural." There are natural talents that God does empower, but the spiritual gifts are unique endowments that are given through the Holy Spirit. Since God divinely appoints the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28) believers should not devalue or de-emphasize any of the gifts to be taken as less significant (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

11. What is the spiritual gift of "speaking in tongues"?

Our take: The gift of tongues is the God-given ability to praise Him in an unknown language from your spirit, therefore uninhibited by the limits of your mind (1 Cor. 14:2, 14). It serves two primary purposes in the Bible: 1) as a means for declaring the wonderful works of God to people in a foreign language (Acts 2:7-11), and 2) as a spiritual prayer language for personal edification unless it is interpreted by someone with that gift for the edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:4-5). Speaking in "tongues" is to be understood as prayer or praise that is spoken to God or out loud where that speaker does not understand the specific content. At the outset it should be noted that the Greek word glossa often used for "tongue" is most commonly translated in the Koine Greek to mean "language." However, because of the modern usage

of glossa in the Church for speaking in "tongues," this term will be used in our discussion. At Pentecost the disciples gathered in Jerusalem and "began to speak in other languages (tongues), as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4) As a result, visitors from various nations all heard in their own languages a declaration of "the mighty works of God." (Acts 2:11)

As defined by Scripture we learn that a person who speaks in a tongue "speaks not to men but to God." (1 Cor. 14:2) If there is no interpreter present the individual should "keep silence in the church and speak to himself and to God." (1 Cor. 14:28) "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful," (1 Cor. 14:14) and therefore the believer does not know the words. It is a general understanding from the Apostle Paul that if tongues are spoken in a congregational setting for all to benefit, an interpretation should accompany the prayer or praise. "Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." (1 Corinthians 14:13-19 NKJV)

From the New Testament we learn that at times tongues could be a known human language (Acts 2:6), while at other times it could be a language that no one understands (1 Cor. 14:2). Some have argued that tongues should only be limited to known human languages (as at Pentecost), but because this happened once does not require that it always happen in this manner (cf. 1 Cor. 14). The fact that Paul stated, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all," is evidence that this experience wasn't a known human language, as it wouldn't serve a purpose when Paul would be alone.[4] In addition, Paul affirms, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels," (1. Cor. 13:1), giving hint to something beyond natural language.

Of final importance in this discussion is the primacy that Paul gives to order and harmony in the public gathering to avoid confusion. "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep

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4 Robertson, A. and Plummer, A. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, p. 314.

silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." (1 Corinthians 14:27-33) It should always be noted that the fruit of a true work of the Holy Spirit would be in harmony with "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

12. How is the Church to discern unique signs and wonders that are not recorded in the Bible? (E.g. gold dust, feathers, etc.)

Our take: Everything the Holy Spirit does must correspond to the nature and character of God as revealed in his Word. All extra-Biblical experiences need to be evaluated in the light of who He is (John 14:6; 16:13). It has already been discussed that there is potential for false signs and wonders in addition to the true miracles from God. For discernment believers need to study the Scriptures and consider any experience in the light of God's truth. When Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted for 40 days Satan sought to do miracles, but Jesus' response was the Word of God. Without detailed knowledge of God's nature and His ways as revealed in the Bible, the Christian is liable to be open to deception at every turn. Christians need to make regular, prayerful reading of the Bible and obedience to God's commands the highest priorities in their lives. A valuable start point in the evaluation of any apparent "miracle, sign or wonder" should be this: does it appeal in any way to a person's sinful desires. For example, consider a situation where "gold dust" or perhaps "angel's feathers" are manifested at a gathering. Is there a biblical precedent for this type of miracle? Does this "wonder" accord with what the Bible reveals about God's priorities and his purpose in doing miracles? Does it give glory to God amongst the people? Is the Biblical Jesus lifted up by such a manifestation? Does it lead people to repentance and salvation? Is God permitting a deception to occur in order to "test His people"? Is the appearance of gold dust or angel's feathers something that would tend to excite and captivate "the old nature" in us? Does the miracle excite us and do little else?

To be sure, there are many unusual experiences that take place in the Bible that were indeed the manifestation of God's presence. In the wilderness God provided a miraculous food

substance called Manna (Ex. 16). At Pentecost fire appeared on top of people's heads (Acts 2:3). It should be noted that there are aspects of God and His revelation that go beyond human explanation. The Trinity is of course a Scriptural revelation of the Person of God, though the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible. Nor can the finite mind truly explain the triune Being of God. Our rational understanding of God's essence should not be expected to be humanly definable. Of course no one would deny that nothing is impossible with God (Jer. 32:17; Mark 10:27). In addition, we must accept that some of God's ways and thoughts are higher than our human ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). However, do miraculous signs from God occur today when there are no Biblical examples? At first we need to test our experiences by Scripture and then is it also supported by reason, church history and edifying experiences. For example, is there any mention of gold dust or gold powder in the Bible? The single mention, in Exodus Chapter 32:20 is, however, not a miracle. It is in fact a judgment on the people for their evil in making a calf of gold to worship: "And he (Moses) took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it into powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it."

Angel feathers are not mentioned in the Bible. Given that angels have been appearing to, and ministering to, God's people over a period of thousands of years without feathers being mentioned in the Bible surely gives the Christian cause to reflect. An angel, who is spirit, is not of the same substance as a feather, which is a physical object and outside the spiritual realm. Granted, the Bible tells us that some have met angels and been unaware of the fact. Had feathers been present, that might have changed their perception. It should be noted that even some of God's great leaders of the past have made errors in discernment. Joshua provides one such example. Why was Joshua deceived? The Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the Israelites because "they did not consult the Lord about it" (Joshua 9:14). Where miracles happen in a gathering of people we need to pray for spiritual discernment in that situation. Even "in the natural" there are several indicators to look out for. Do the leaders of the gathering accept these manifestations uncritically or do they warn those present to exercise caution and biblical judgment as a safeguard? Is there a point in the meeting where the Bible is faithfully preached? Is holiness, righteousness or repentance mentioned in any way that leads people to the foot of the cross for salvation, the greatest miracle of all? Do you have a feeling that the meeting is "hyped" and that it is more of an "entertainment" than a godly pursuit?

Now all of this is not negating that a true miracle has occurred in these manifestations. It is

just that God's people need to seek for the Lord to reveal His purposes and glory in these unique signs that are sometimes a message of a metaphor or sometimes a manifestation of God's glory to draw people to Himself. There are a number of unusual circumstances that God allowed to happen in the Scriptures as He was revealing His purposes, plans and/or Person to the world. For example, Isaiah was asked to walk about naked (possibly in undergarments) and barefoot for three years as a sign for what was to come (Isaiah 20:2-4). Ezekiel was to lay on his side for over a year and to eat his food cooked on cow dung as a metaphor of God (Ezek. 4:4-17). Micah affirmed, "Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches, for her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of My people—to Jerusalem." (Micah 1:8-9 NKJV) These are surely not prescriptions for all believers, but are definite occurrences where God sanctioned unusual actions on the part of His people to convey a message. In addition, we have the example of Jesus taking a present substance such as water, and caused it to become something it wasn't, wine. Jesus could also take a present substance, like dust and cause it to be turned into gold. These would be in the same class of demonstrations that the Lord can make one thing out of another. All in all, God's people need to be discerning while at the same time believing expectantly that the God of the Bible interacts miraculously with His people according to His own will and purpose.

13. What is prophecy, does it occur today and how do we discern what might be false prophecies and false prophets?

Our take: The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to reveal God's heart and mind in such a timely and relevant manner that results in edification, exhortation and comfort to those who hear it (1 Cor. 14:3 & 29-33). We are to use spiritual discernment and test prophecies (1 Thess. 5:20-21). Several characteristics of false prophets and their prophecies are that they minimize the incarnation and deity of Jesus (1 John 4:1-3), they promise peace without a call to repentance (Jer. 23:16-22), they don't have an personal relationship with God and live lives compromised with sin (Matt. 7:22-23).

In the Biblical sense, prophecy should not be defined as "predicting the future," nor as "proclaiming a word from the Lord," nor as "powerful preaching." A better Biblical definition,

as the New Testament writers understood prophecy is "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."[5] Prophecy is a valuable gift of the Holy Spirit for the benefit, encouragement, and building up of the Church. However, misuse and abuse is often found in both the frequency and methods in which people claim to be speaking on behalf of God. The office of prophet is first seen in the Old Testament and carried with it a tremendous responsibility. Prophets were to speak to the people, on behalf of God, the words that God puts in his mouth (Deut. 18:18). The prophet's speech and writing held absolute divine authority. Guidelines, qualifications and test of authenticity are given in Deuteronomy chapters 13 and 18:

- *He is one taken from among his brethren (18:18).*
- *He is to speak to his brethren in the Name of the Lord (18:19).*
- *He may with his prophecies show signs and wonders (13:1).*
- *If he prophesies anything contrary to God's Law already revealed (Scripture), he is to be rejected in spite of any signs or wonders (13:1–3). (God may permit false prophets to test our obedience to His Word.)*
- *If he predicts the future and the prediction fails to come to pass as he prophesied, he is to be rejected (18:20–22).*[6]

The last standard requires prophets to be 100% accurate with their prophecies. If even a small part of their prophecy did not come to pass they were to be rejected as false prophets and not listened to. The New Testament also contains people who were given authority to speak and write God's very words and record them as Scripture. However, "apostle" not "prophet" was the term that Jesus gave these representatives of God. The Greek word prophetes (prophet) was understood as one who speaks on the basis of some external influence, but did not imply divine authority. New Testament prophets did not speak with divine authority, according to the following passages:

1. Acts 21:4. Prophecies could be ignored. Paul didn't heed the warning to not go to Jerusalem.
2. Acts 21:10-11. Prophecies were not 100% accurate as the Romans, not Jews bound Paul).
3. 1 Thess. 5:19-21. Prophecies were to be tested. Authoritative teaching wouldn't be something that needed testing. All of these passages indicate that New Testament prophets spoke with less authority than New Testament apostles or Scripture.

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5 Grudem, W. "Why Christians Can Still Prophesy," Christianity Today, (Sept. 16, 1088), 29-35.
6 Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, Foundations of Pentecostal Theology (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 335–336.

We see in the New Testament both the office of prophet (Eph. 4:11) and the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2). Regarding the latter, Paul explains that Spirit-filled believers may be given the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 13:31). Thus, having the gift of prophecy, as it is understood in the New Testament, does not make one a "prophet," especially by the standards of an Old Testament prophet. In addition to providing opportunities for participation by everyone in the congregation, another great benefit of prophecies is they can also provide edification, "up building and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3) to believers.

Prophecies in the church today should not, however, be considered God's words in relation to being equal to the Bible. If someone feels that God is bringing something to mind that is meant to be shared with the congregation, it would be best to say "I think the Lord is putting on my mind that . . ." or "it seems to me that the Lord is showing us . . ." or a similar phrase. If anyone makes the claim today, "Thus says the Lord," they are subject to the same qualifications and tests of authenticity found in the Old Testament. It should be noted that this phrase is not used in the New Testament. Such prophecies must be 100% accurate, without exception, pointing toward Jesus, and not contradicting Scripture, otherwise God's Word demands that they be labeled as false prophets and we are not to fear them (Deut. 18:20-22, Jer. 23:25-32).

Prophecy is different and subordinate to teaching. The New Testament "prophecy" was based on a kind of spontaneous prompting from the Holy Spirit (Acts. 11:28; 21:4, 10-11; note the perceptions of prophecy in Luke 7:39; 22:63-65; John 4:19; 11:51). This special, spontaneous "revelation" must accompany a legitimate prophecy. Never in the New Testament is "revelation" cited as the source or basis for any act called "teaching" or done by a "teacher," or described by the verb "to teach." Teaching is simply an explanation or application of Scripture (Acts 15:35; 18:11, 24-28; Rom. 2:21; 15:4; Col. 3:16; Heb. 5:12) or a restatement and explanation of apostolic instructions (Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 2:2, 3:10, et al.). This is what we refer to as "Bible teaching" or "preaching" today. Therefore, "teaching" a message formed from conscious reflection on Scripture, containing an interpretation and application of the text, carries more authority than prophecy and prophecies are to be subject to authority of Scripture. Prophecy is a valuable gift, as are many other gifts, but it is in and through the Bible that God and only God speaks to us his very words, even today, and throughout our lives. One should never seek frequent guidance from prophecy; rather, Scripture is where one will find guidance for their life as the sufficient and reliable standard. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

14. What is the use/understanding of the term “impartation”?

Our take: Impart simply means to convey, transmit or share. Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). We want to impart everything that Jesus has given to us – the Gospel, salvation, forgiveness, healing, faith, hope, love and the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 2:8; Acts 8:17; Rom. 1:11).

I Thessalonians 2:8 - So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

In recent Charismatic ministries, there has arisen a ministry term and practice of what is called “impartation.” As a term, “impartation” is found in the Scriptures and it is a Biblical practice though not all Biblical instances refer to the current impartation practice. The term “impart” is used a couple of times in the Old Testament. One example is found in Psalms 119:130 used to express how the Lord’s words give light and understanding to life in reflection to His word. “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” (ESV) In the New Testament the term “impart” is used 4 times; once in Romans 1:11, Ephesians 4:28, and 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

The definition of the Greek word “impart” μεταδίδωμι is: “to share with someone else what one has—to share, to give.”[7] The context of Romans 1:11 makes a clear statement that Paul wanted to “share” (impart) his spiritual gift (possibly his teaching gift) that the church would be established in the faith. The emphasis is that the believers would be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith in the Gospel as they shared together their faith in the Gospel. Paul qualifies what the spiritual gift is by concluding, “that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Romans 1:12).

In relation to the usage of the word “impartation” in association with the recent ministries from the Toronto Blessing, Bethel and Kansas City Prophets, etc., a good example is portrayed when Paul laid hands on young Timothy where there is a connection to the gift that was in him. “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Timothy 1:6). Though the current church practice of “impartation” is not necessarily associated with the Biblical use of the word “impart”, the intention to encourage believers to

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7 Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (568). New York: United Bible Societies.

be open to receive from the Holy Spirit His empowerment for ministry is Biblical and should be commended. The proper Biblical practice should be for God's people to selflessly build each other up in the faith through the work of Jesus Christ in the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. To use the term "impartation" in such practices is both Biblical and pragmatic and therefore should not be considered a challenge within Christian orthodoxy.

15. How are we to understand spiritual manifestations that are done by other religions and cults that are similar to what God does (i.e. Kundalini Spirit)?

Our take: In order to spot counterfeit manifestations we must be diligent to first understand true manifestations of the Spirit in the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15). Satan is an imposter and always seeks to provide counterfeit experiences that encourage people to follow false gods (Deut. 13:1-4). Such experiences will often draw attention to an individual or proclaim a false gospel. Counterfeits don't diminish the value of that which is truly authentic.

The manifestations of spirits within other cults and religions have become known as the "Kundalini spirits" and dates back as far as the 8th Century. Kundalini is the manifestation of bizarre behaviors that are envisaged by deep Eastern Kundalini yoga meditations, enlightenment and the laying on of hands by a Shaktipat (Kundalini Master or Guru). Some physical and psychological effects associated with the Kundalini are, but not limited to, involuntary jerks, tremors, shaking, itching, tingling and crawling sensations, especially in the arms and legs. Proponents testify of energy rushing or feelings of electricity circulating through the body. Others report intense heat (sweating) or cold, and at times with visions and sounds associated with especially when the energy passes through the chakras (energy points in the body).

Since Satan can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) it is to be expected that Satan can mimic or provide false signs and wonders that do not result in the exaltation of Jesus Christ or the building of the Church. Such experiences will often draw attention to an individual or proclaim a false gospel. Any manifestation of a spirit needs to be discerned in alignment with the teaching of the Bible. In 1 Peter 5:8 the Church is taught to, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (NIV) "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert" are aorist active imperatives (cf.

1:13; 4:7). In other words believers are taught to be "alert" and "sober." "The definition is as follows. Νήφωa: a figurative extension of meaning of νήφω 'to be sober, to not be drunk,' to be in control of one's thought processes and thus not be in danger of irrational thinking—'to be sober-minded, to be well composed in mind.' The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (NIV) The Christian is reminded by Paul the Apostle of the Spirit's identifier of being one of self-control. Paul also affirms in 1 Corinthians 14:32, "the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets." (NIV) This is not to say that miracles do not exist today, but that we must be discerning of the fact that there are possible "miracle frauds."

16. How do we discern "manifestations of the Holy Spirit" when there is no Biblical example to support it (laughing, barking, drunk in the Spirit, etc.)?

Our take: The manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given for the benefit of the whole church (1 Cor. 12:7). As such, we will embrace those manifestations that have an obvious benefit to the church and be cautious with those that seem to have questionable benefits, are divisive or bring attention to a person instead of Jesus Christ.

The following is a quote from the Assemblies of God website on their response to the various "manifestations" of the Spirit: "A move of God which includes manifestations of the Holy Spirit, must always be welcome in the Church. Yet we must be careful to keep our focus and desire on Jesus Christ rather than on any manifestation. In our seeking we must willingly obey God's Word in everything we do. We must also realize that when God creatively pours out His Spirit on a person in a way that is not recorded in Scripture, it is not intended to be a normative experience for either the individual or the church. How can we recognize a Spirit prompted and controlled manifestation? Does it bring glory to Jesus and edify the Body? The confirmation that a spiritual experience is real and biblical lies in the spiritual growth of the believer. Is there a humility that lifts up Jesus? Is the believer becoming more and more like Jesus? Are the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control—increased after a personal experience in the presence of our Lord? These fruit will have a direct effect on one's testimony and will ultimately draw others to Christ."[8]

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8 http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/sptlissues_manifestations.cfm

There are other cases in churches around the world that “dance in the Spirit,” “get drunk in the Spirit”, “laugh in the Spirit,” as well as experiences that have prolonged twitches and make various animal noises. When individuals act in a way that is contrary to the norms of natural behavior confusion and contradiction can happen and therefore discernment is needed. In 1 Cor. 12-14, we see Paul address the various spiritual gifts and the boundaries by which they should be exercised. Contextually, the Corinthians were being swayed by “false and mute idols” due to their pagan influence (1 Cor. 12:2). Paul desires to set the gifts in their proper context because they can be beneficial. These texts could also apply to alleged “manifestations” to provide Biblical guidance within our discernment. A few key points out of 1 Cor. 12-14 are provided as examples:

- 12:1 – We are to not be ignorant about the gifts. We need to understand how and why they are available.
- 12:3 – One way of discernment between good and evil spirits is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord.
- 12:4-6 – There are various gifts that are distributed by the Spirit alone, not by other human beings. This is crucial. Though the gifts vary, the work is completely Spirit-led and directed.
- 12:7 – The gifts are given for the “common good” of the church, not for personal use.
- 12:11 – Paul concludes the list of the various gifts with the reminder that these are all works of the Spirit, distributed as He sees fit, for the good of the body of Christ.
- 12:12-26 – The unity and diversity of the Spirit is of the highest importance, because they function for the greater good of the church.
- 12:27-31 – Paul lists the first three “parts” in an apparent order of significance (though this is debated). After “teachers” he mentions miracles (*dunameis*), healing, helping, administrating, and various tongues in one lump category. Fee believes tongues are listed last because of the abuses occurring in the church at that time (chapter 14). What is important is that all gifts are listed with equal importance, not elevated above the other, but to further Pauls’ point about the diversity and use within the church.
- 13:3 – But more than any gift we have or exercise, we are to have love. Love for Christ and love for the church. This is not a prescription for those outside the church, although there are plenty of other passages to support that, the focus here is in the body of Christ. We should preach this ethic of love toward the body of Christ above a false love rationalized by miracles toward all that don’t trust in Christ as Lord and God.

- 14 – I will conclude with my thoughts on this chapter overall. Worship should be done with intelligibility. Paul's address of the "supernatural gifts" in chapter 14 is to be done with "strengthening, encouraging, and comfort" to the body (14:3). There is no room for mysterious utterances without interpretation, healings without Christ glorified, prophecy without substance, etc. The gifts play a very small part to the greater function and mission of the church. The ultimate and primary message must always be Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul himself mentions in 1 Cor. 15 the importance and details of the gospel by which he preached.

There is huge value for the church to pray for and seek the gifts, but even greater need for us to seek love toward the church while pursuing gospel mission. If the Spirit desires to work with gifts in our church and context then we should embrace it. But the gifts are outlined clearly, and there should be order and edification for the church as Jesus Christ is exalted. When we focus primarily on the miraculous as opposed to Jesus Christ, we take our eyes off of gospel mission and the church errors in drifting from God's empowerment.

17. What does the Bible state about being "slain" in the Spirit?

Our take: The Term Slain in the Spirit is not in the bible but examples of people falling over in the presence of God or an angel is common (Daniel 8:17-18, 27; 10:7-19 John 18:5-6, Acts 9:3-4, Rev. 1:17). We are not seeking for people to be "slain in the Spirit" but neither are we surprised when they fall down at being overwhelmed by Him.

Though the term "slain in the Spirit" is not found in the Bible, it is commonly used in charismatic circles to designate an experience of the Holy Spirit upon a person where they generally fall to the ground under an overwhelming sense of God's power or presence. This does not mean the person dies, but that he or she is so overcome by the presence of the Spirit that he or she falls down to the ground being completely overcome. In the Great Awakening in the United States there are records of people falling to the ground in repentance under the preaching of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards.[9] There are various occurrences in the Bible where people do fall down before the presence of the Lord. The following are a few instances of Biblical experiences of falling before the Lord. In the Old Testament there

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9 Arnold a. Dallimore, George Whitefield, The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival, Volume II (Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois) pp. 179-91. Jonathan Edwards, Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 2 (Banner of Truth) p. 266-68.

are numerous passages of God's people falling to the ground in relation to visions and divine interactions, and these are Biblical narratives that are descriptions and not prescriptions for application (Genesis 17:3; Deut. 16:4,; 9:18-29, Joshua 5:14; Judges 13:26; 1 Chron. 21:16; Ezek. 1:28; Daniel 10:7-9).

In the New Testament we discover in Acts 9:3-4 (see also Acts 26:13-14) it states, "As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" This is an important story about Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus where he was in route to persecute the church. As he is traveling with his men, a bright light shines and knocks him off of his horse. His men are fearful but see and hear nothing. Almost immediately he is led to a believers house in Damascus where Paul finally comes to terms with what has just happened. This starts the ministry to the Gentiles in support of the theme of Acts 1:8 in proclaiming the gospel to the entire known world. Now clearly by a simple reading of the story we can see the falling down occurred by the flash of light scaring the horse and causing Paul to fall. It nowhere suggests he fell voluntarily, although because he was in the presence of the Lord he did indeed fall to the ground. The participle "falling" or "he fell" comes from the root word pipto, simply meaning, "to fall." Its general usage indicates one falling down from an upright position. It is a pretty literal and straightforward word associated with the falling of many things including walls (Heb. 11:30), houses (Matt. 7:25), or cities (Rev. 16:19). The context will conclude two main points: First, the falling down was not done by any human agency. The falling down occurred by the blinding light of the presence of the Lord. Any person in Paul's position would respond the same way. Second, the emphasis in this passage is the glory of Christ the Lord being revealed in Paul's life and how that will further impact his life in Gospel ministry. The Bible gives no prescription of being "slain in the Spirit" but rather acknowledges that people have at various times experienced an overwhelming sense of God's presence. The experience of being "slain in the Spirit" should be treated with Biblical discernment. Falling prostrate before the glory of the Lord as seen in Scripture is to be an experience only brought on by God and never be autosuggestion, coerced or faked.

18. Should solid Biblical exegesis be the only way to interpret our experiences in the Holy Spirit?

Our take: The Bible is the primary but not exclusive means for interpreting our experience (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible itself teaches us that we can also rely on prayer, wise counsel, and church history as valid means of interpretation (Jer. 33:3; Prov. 15:22; James 1:5; 1 Cor. 11:16). Let's use everything God has given us. J.P. Moreland's paper on the balance of Biblical is helpful to this discussion.[10] J. P. Moreland explains accurately why we cannot limit revelatory authority to just Scripture (although its primacy cannot be ignored). He challenges the idea that Scripture is in-and-of-itself sufficient for our understanding of God. As Moreland points out in his paper, there are real things in the real world that we experience. As such, there are things that we can learn from our experience that do not take away or add to Scripture. Experience, reason and history are subservient to Scripture, but they do provide insights in our interpretation of our relationship to God. None of us is capable of perfect exegesis as it is difficult to objectively interpret God's word without our subjective worldviews. That is, if perfect exegesis were possible then theological debate would not occur, since perfect exegesis would yield perfect truth, which would be without question.

Since we all bring in our thoughts and experiences into how we do exegesis (this is unavoidable), perfect exegesis has not occurred. To argue against any form of natural law on the basis of Scripture (or to argue that exegesis alone is sufficient for us to understand the eternal Godhead) is a self-defeating argument. Simply put, if we truly hold to a continuational point of view, then we must hold that revelation can and does happen apart from Scripture. This does not mean that revelation that does happen out-side of Scripture has the same authority as Scripture, or is not subject to Scriptural analysis, but rather that it is something that God can continue to speak through.

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10 http://www.kingdomtriangle.com