

**Helpful Perspectives on
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
Edited September, 2022**

We are often asked questions such as these:

1. Is Christ Fellowship a charismatic church? A Spirit-filled church?
2. Do you believe in speaking in tongues? The gift of healing? The gift of prophecy?

Our answer is that we are most definitely Spirit-filled and certainly believe in the full Gospel. We seek to cultivate a Spirit-empowered community of faith in Jesus Christ. However, we are not a charismatic or Pentecostal church in the typical way that those adjectives are used. We are certainly not anti-charismatic or anti-Pentecostal. We give people freedom to learn, grow and disagree about these matters, because we do not see them to be as important as core doctrines of the Christian faith such as the Trinity or the deity of Christ.

However, on a practical level, these matters are important for the unity of any local body of Christ. Therefore, in our public gatherings, including worship services and other meetings, we do not speak in tongues. And yet, on a personal basis, we give full freedom for our members to interact with the Lord in private in what is often called a prayer-tongue or prayer language.

We simply ask that no one teach something we are not teaching from the pulpit. On the other hand, we hope our church is filled with people who can lovingly disagree on topics on which solid Christians have different positions such as end-time events, politics and gifts of the Spirit.

To bring us to full understanding and unity concerning the gifts of Spirit, may we all continue to immerse ourselves prayerfully in God's Word. We are guided by the Word of God. At Christ Fellowship we choose to focus on the doctrinal essentials and on our core mission. We are committed to proclaim Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. We want to focus all our energies on fulfilling his Great Commission to disciple the nations rather than focusing on issues of debate among Christians. Our hearts are to exalt our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, loving each other and reaching out to a lost world as we look forward to his return.

To achieve unity on this issue, our pastors read and discussed the book, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*.¹ We affirm the conclusions of the four contributing experts each of whom represents a different viewpoint. Those unified conclusions follow.

¹ Gaffin, Jr, Richard B., Robert L. Saucy, C. Samuel Storms, and Douglas A. Oss. *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

1. *Commitment to Scripture.* The authors agreed in their commitment to Scripture as the inerrant word of God and our absolute authority in all the matters we discussed. In practical terms, this means that the authors of these essays want to reaffirm to those who share their positions that Christians must continually be subject to the teachings of Scripture in every area of life and ministry.
2. *Fellowship in Christ.* The authors frequently expressed thankfulness for the fact that they could discuss these matters *as brothers in Christ together*. One of the significant results of our two-day conference was that we all (and I include myself as editor) left our conference with a greater appreciation for the genuine love for Christ and concern for the purity of the church that we saw in those with whom we disagreed. It is fair to say that at the end of the conference we all hoped that the Lord would give a similar experience to those who use this book as a basis for discussing these matters—that they too would grow in appreciation for the depth of commitment to Christ and desire to seek the good of the church that is found in the hearts of people who differ over these specific matters.
3. *The importance of experiencing a personal relationship with God.* All the authors shared a commitment to the importance of a genuine, vital, personal, and relational experience of God in our Christian lives day by day, an experience that includes prayer, worship, and hearing the voice of God speak both to our hearts and our minds through the words of Scripture in all our specific life situations. Regarding miracles, all the authors agreed that the greatest and most wonderful miracle that we have ever experienced is our new birth in Christ, and that Christians would do well to remember this with thanksgiving in the context of those other discussions. Regarding the power of the Holy Spirit, we also agreed that personal growth in holiness and faith is one clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's power at work, and that this truth should never be neglected.
4. *A measure of agreement on specific details about miracles and the work of the Holy Spirit.* Although the authors disagreed on many details and on matters of emphasis and expectation, they nonetheless agreed on some specific details in these matters:

- (a) *Healing and miracles:* God does heal and work miracles today.
- (b) *Guidance:* The Holy Spirit does guide us (but more study is needed on how the Holy Spirit uses our impressions and feelings in this matter).
- (c) *Empowering:* The Holy Spirit does empower Christians for various kinds of ministry, and this empowering is an activity that can be distinguished from the inner-transforming work of the Holy Spirit by which he enables us to grow in sanctification and in obedience to God. This empowering work of the Holy Spirit is not a new doctrine; previous generations sometimes called it "unction" or "anointing." The Holy Spirit can give us such empowering for ministry in varying degrees, not only in preaching, but also in prayer, evangelism, counseling, and other activities we do in the church for the advancement of God's kingdom.
- (d) *Revelation:* God in his sovereignty can bring to our minds specific things, not only (i) by occasionally bringing to mind specific words of Scripture that meet the need of the moment, but also (ii) by giving us sudden insight into the application of Scripture to a specific situation, and (iii) by influencing our feelings and emotions, and (iv) by giving us specific information about real life situations that we did not acquire through ordinary means.

VIEWS WE DO NOT SHARE

Circulating within the evangelical world, especially at the popular level, are several views that we do not agree with. These positions, as far as we know, are not endorsed by any academic leaders. In some cases they misrepresent the teaching of Scripture, and caricature other positions, hindering the body of Christ, not strengthening it in faithfulness to God's Word.

- (1) If a person has not spoken tongues, he or she is not truly a Christian.
- (2) If a person has not spoken in tongues, he or she does not have the Holy Spirit within.
- (3) People who speak in tongues are more spiritual than those who do not.
- (4) If someone who is prayed for is not healed, it is probably the fault of the sick person for not having enough faith.
- (5) God wants all Christians to be wealthy today.
- (6) It is always God's will to heal a Christian who is sick.

- (7) If we simply speak a "word of faith," God will grant what we claim with this faith.
- (8) There are apostles today in the same sense that Peter and Paul were apostles.
- (9) If we are truly guided by the Holy Spirit, we do not need to follow the directions of Scripture.
- (10) We should follow anointed leaders with fruitful ministries even if they deny the inerrancy of Scripture.
- (11) Speaking in tongues is usually demonic in origin.
- (12) In guiding us, the Holy Spirit never uses our intuitions, promptings, and feelings.
- (13) God should not be expected to heal today in answer to prayer.
- (14) God never works miracles today, because those ceased when the apostles died.
- (15) Charismatics and Pentecostals are not evangelical Christians.
- (16) The charismatic movement is part of the New Age religion.
- (17) The Third Wave movement (or the Vineyard Movement) is nonevangelical (or is a cult).
- (18) Charismatics are generally anti-intellectual.
- (19) Cessationists in general are rationalistic and their faith is mostly dry intellectualism.
- (20) It is legitimate to criticize another position by telling anecdotes of mistakes made by untrained laypersons.