



## SESSION 4: Supernatural Lifestyle 2

The apostle Paul sets out some teaching about the body of Christ, the church, which will help us to grasp the context in which his further writing about the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be set.

### Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

God has given different gifts to His church so that we can all be involved in serving, helping, and building up the kingdom of God in our unique and different ways. Our tasks and ministries may be different to those of others but are no less important to what God is doing through his church, the body of Christ. And these gifts are given for the common good, not so that we can become spiritual superstars, in fact that's why the gifts are widely spread amongst God's people, available to all, and not summed up in one person.

### Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-9

#### Gifts of healing

The Bible teaches that sickness and death entered God's perfect creation when humanity first chose to sin in the case of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. But - our God is a healing God and throughout the Bible and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit today, he wants to reach out and touch sick people with his healing power through you and me. God has shown His heart towards us in Christ, and by His Spirit He wants to give us the power to go out and bring healing to others.

Jesus said: '*Heal those who are ill, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give*' Matthew 10:8.

#### The gift of faith

And that's also where the gift of faith comes in, because we might see a need in someone else's life, for healing or for God to show His power to them in some way but may be held back by fear of offending them if we ask to pray for them, or even because

we wonder if God will answer our prayer at all! If we have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit though, and are walking in the Spirit, then in that moment God can gift us a gift of faith to overcome our fears!

God can also give the gift of faith to sustain a Spirit-filled believer through long-term trials or difficulties, or perhaps persecution, so it may not always be to do with healing.

### **A message of knowledge or wisdom**

These gifts of the Spirit are a means of receiving information by the Spirit that we could never have known ourselves and can often unlock very difficult and challenging circumstances. The gifts of the Spirit can also become the key to perseverance under trials of all kinds.

Knowledge is the imparting of information that could not be known by the Spirit-filled believer without this gift, and wisdom is the awareness of what to do with that knowledge, or what God's heart and will is in any given situation. But these gifts are fragmentary – given to meet a specific challenge or moment in the believer's life. They are not intended to make us the fount of all knowledge and wisdom. The gifts are a means of receiving information by the Spirit that we could never have known ourselves and can often unlock very difficult and challenging circumstances.

What amazing spiritual gifts!

### **Miracles**

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about the ability to see miracles happen. Some healings may also be miracles, though not all, because God will often use medical means or the body's own ability to recover more quickly than expected, in answer to our prayers.

And there can be amazing interventions of God in other areas of our lives outside of health. Such as - miracles of Divine provision to meet our financial needs and the needs of others through our generosity; miracles of Divine protection, in other words God delivering us from danger, and miracles of guidance and even what some people might describe as coincidences, but we can see the hand of God in those situations. As with all the gifts of the Spirit these come to us through prayer, asking God and seeking Him, and being filled with the Spirit.

### **Distinguishing between 'spirits'**

In his handbook of Christian Theology, the Bible teacher Wayne Grudem describes this spiritual gift in a helpful way:

'Distinguishing between spirits is a special ability to recognise the influence of the Holy Spirit or of demonic spirits in a person'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (IVP, Leicester, 1994) 1082

For an example of this happening in the New Testament read Acts 16:16-18.

We really need this gift of discernment today because of some of the cultural attacks on Christianity, and the numbers of people who are messing with the occult or the paranormal to find spiritual experiences that might satisfy the longings in their hearts but failing badly. These are counterfeit, and the fact that Satan makes such imitations of spiritual things should not surprise us. When fraudsters make counterfeits, they don't usually copy things of low value, only the highest value notes. God gives us the Divine equipment we need for this battle by the gifts of his Holy Spirit.

## For discussion

- Why do you think that 'gifts of healing' are in the plural in 1 Corinthians 12:9?
- Look at the source of faith in Romans 10:17. How does that link to the 'gift of faith' Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 12? Could recalling appropriate Bible verses at times of special need or stress perhaps become a 'gift of faith'?
- Have you experienced anything that could be described as a miracle? If so, why not share that now?
- Why do you think there is such a lot of interest in the occult and the supernatural today?
- What would you say to a Christian who is becoming fascinated with horoscopes or using a Ouija board?
- Do you know anyone who needs your prayers to be able to live in the right kind of the supernatural?