

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 1 - LESSON 13

A HEBRAIC PERSPECTIVE

The Holy Spirit: Power Behind Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit: Instigator of Communal Connectedness



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A Hebraic Perspective:

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A Hebraic Perspective ***Holy Spirit: Power Behind Spiritual Gifts***

***“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers,
I do not want you to be ignorant”***
(1 Corinthians 12:1).

***“So also you: since you are
zealots of spiritual things,
seek that you may abound to the
upbuilding of the called-out ones”***
(1 Corinthians 14:12, literal translation).

What is a *spiritual* gift?

Simply, the Holy Spirit working through His people in a given manner at the time He chooses so that they can carry out the ministry appointed to them by God.

A gift endowed by the Holy Spirit can be identified by the *motivation* for its use. You walk in that gifting by being prompted or even impelled by the Spirit. His work in you will cause others to *praise God* as they see the result of His participation through you, just as those of Jesus's day gave God thanks when they saw what He did!

Almost anyone you encounter has talents or capabilities that have been developed from either their raw genetic framework or from intensive training. These are not spiritual gifts. *Gifts of the Spirit* have a supernatural quality, since the Spirit of Christ has given them to you! In other words, a spiritual gift is received after conversion.

A friend years back wrote this insightful passage to clarify the topic of spiritual gifts: “Every believer has a gift or gifts apportioned to him or her. Every believer is responsible to *exercise those gifts*. Every believer has some gift, therefore all should be *encouraged*. No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be *humble*. All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be *harmonious*. All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be *content*” (emphasis added).¹

Followers of Jesus are indeed privileged to be gifted by His Spirit. Yet, we are also held accountable by God to exercise that privilege as His Spirit prompts.

In the earliest Church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested in both the believers' individual and communal lives to build up the Body in love-grounded obedient trust. Through exercise of these various gifts, the followers of Jesus were continually aware of God's proximity and His loving concern for the spiritual growth of His people.

A further dimension of reliance on the Spirit within was *spiritual warfare*. They had no doubt that their Adversary, as dangerously ravenous as a roaring lion, had declared war on them for trusting in Jesus (see Revelation 12:17).

The reality of Satan and evil spirits wasn't new to them. Examples of demonic manifestations and interaction with man are threaded throughout the Older Testament. (See 1 Samuel 16:14; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:7; Zechariah 3:1.)

Even more dramatically, these early believers saw firsthand or heard accounts of demonic deliverance by Jesus and the apostles.

So one of the functions of the Holy Spirit was to provide the followers of Jesus with particular empowerment by which they could do battle against evil.

Great spiritual lessons can be drawn from the history recounted in the Hebrew Bible. The God Who guided Joshua and David in battle knew something about fighting and winning wars!

The first lesson in warfare was that every soldier had a *key purpose and specialty*. Not everyone was a scout, an armor-bearer or a javelin thrower. The *combination* of specialized warriors functioned as an effective army unit.

*“Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were **left-handed**, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss”* (Judges 20:16). The angle of shot for a lefty was opposite that which an enemy might anticipate, and their accuracy was an especially prized skill as well!

Others among the troops were *“armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed”* (1 Chronicles 12:2).

Each unique ability was needed for the good of the whole, just as with spiritual gifting. And because God shows no partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17), we must not consider one anointing greater than another. Once again, the principle of equal value finds scriptural precedent for us today. David led his troops against the Amalekites who had captured the families of his men. But his most exhausted soldiers stayed behind to guard their possessions.

After the battle was won and the families recovered, David passed an ordi-

nance: *“The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. **All will share alike**”* (1 Samuel 30:24). Each did his part to meet the needs of the whole, and was rewarded accordingly.

When Paul refers to the *variety* of gifting intended to serve God’s purposes, he’s able as a Hebrew Bible scholar to call upon his remembrance of his people’s military history. Each and every assignment was necessary for the well-being of the collective called-out ones: *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, **just as he determines**”* (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Paul’s military references in his letters to Timothy, Philemon and the followers of Jesus in Philippi reinforce the understanding that we *are* at war in the heavens. A warfare mentality demands that each soldier for Christ do his or her part through the power of the Holy Spirit. Much of the Church, however, has relegated the gifts of the Holy Spirit to something akin to an elective college course.

Whether at the level of home fellowship or congregation, the spiritual **coordination and cooperation** of the gifts to meet God’s purposes for each faith community is dependent on *discerning* and *obeying* the Holy Spirit.

Two chief reasons underlie the *lack* of coordination of gifts in faith communities:

- Failure to understand the *nature of the spiritual warfare* in which the Church is engaged.
- Ignorance of the *importance of spiritual gifts* in contending victoriously in this struggle.

The Church was called to take the offensive in waging war against the pow-

ers of darkness. As our Captain promised, ***“I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not withstand it”*** (Matthew 16:18). “Gates” don’t fight! They’re meant to be knocked down by our Lord’s troops as we invade enemy soil with the Sword of Truth.

The *gifts* of the Holy Spirit, the individual spiritual empowerment He gives as He judges best for each, equip us to fight vigorously and victoriously in the inevitable spiritual warfare we’ll encounter. The Spirit aspires to use *every follower of Jesus* to do his or her part.

Try to envision yourself and your faith community *at war* as the early Church did. Then try to grasp the nature of the power that’s required to wage and *win* the war. Again, a spiritual gift is *not* the same as a natural talent. Your *natural* abilities are put to use according to the impulse of your *mind’s* determination.

Spiritual gifts are imparted by the Holy Spirit to your *spirit*. Because they emanate from God to serve His purposes, spiritual gifts come to you *after your conversion*. At that point you are indwelled by His Spirit and available to be an instrument in His hand.

The Holy Spirit knows precisely which gifts are necessary within each faith community to wage the particular battles they encounter. No two battles are the same. Each must be fought with Spirit-discernment and with the weapons that will be effective when they are coordinated.

David, the warrior who had God’s heart and ear, was victorious because he was God-dependent in his battle strategies. Each time He sought His Lord’s tactics, God directed him differently yet precisely (see 1 Chronicles 14:10; 1 Samuel 23).

Spiritual gifts are a means by which our Father’s grace is poured out on His children. The Greek word for gift, “*charisma*,” comes from a verb meaning “to show favor, to give freely.” It is related to the word *charis*, which means “grace”. So our Father’s spiritual gifts are His favor freely given to you for you to walk in spiritual power on His behalf.

The gifts of the Spirit are also referred to as “*pneumatikon*”, as in “*manifestation of the Spirit*” (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). The indwelling Spirit manifests His presence in each believer through the particular gift or gifts He has imparted. His gifts are Spirit-breathed, and come with the power to use them and the wisdom to know when to use them.

Aren’t you overwhelmed with humble gratefulness as you consider the amazing love of our Lord to impart such gifts to mere humans? These gifts are *completely unmerited* by us, for they emanate not from natural inclinations or hope for recognition but from God’s desire to use us for His purposes.

Jesus spoke of the Spirit as “*power [dunamis, dynamic power] from on high*” (see Luke 24:49). Having walked the earth as a man, He recognized how frail we are in our own strength, no matter how noble our intentions. That’s why His promise is so necessary if we are to fulfill our Father’s plans:

*But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

Recognizing his own limitations, Paul relied on the wisdom and power of God to touch people’s hearts through him. The apostle insisted that his

preaching was “not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the **Spirit’s power; not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit**” (1 Corinthians 2:4,13).

Since the Holy Spirit was so vitally necessary to the work of the early Church, believers today must regain a biblical understanding of His importance.

[For more on spiritual gifts and their use in spiritual warfare, see our book, **God’s Instruments For War**. It contains a spiritual gift survey to help determine what gift(s) the Spirit has apportioned to you.]

Writers’ Observation:

In the military, people are assigned because of their particular specialty. For example, Mike was a helicopter pilot. His assignments were based on where a helicopter pilot was needed.

We’ve seen over the years that the most spiritually vibrant work of any marriage or faith community comes about as the individuals know and coordinate their spiritual gifts. Here’s a point for you to consider: What if our God, in His foreknowledge, has ordained certain of His followers to marry because of the gift(s) each brings with them into their marriage union? Sadly, we’ve found that the lack of knowing and using their gifts brings frustration into the marriage.

Oftentimes the Spirit draws people into a particular faith community because their gift(s) are needed there for the building up and service of that body. The individuals may not even be aware of the Spirit’s purpose for joining them to this family of believers. Yet, God’s Word speaks to this:

“In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

“A man’s steps are directed by the

LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?” (Proverbs 20:24).

Even without your conscious awareness, our Lord designed that you marry a particular individual endowed with particular gifts(s), even if your and/or your spouse’s relationship with Him didn’t come about until years later! And, He has placed you in a particular faith community because your gifts are needed in their midst.

It’s important for you to get hold of this reality. It will change your spiritual perception of both your spouse and others in your faith community! As you come to know the gifts of others, your collective purpose in God’s service becomes all the more clear.

Do you know what gifts the Holy Spirit has apportioned to you? Yes or No. If yes, what are they? [If no, please see our book.]

If yes, would you classify yourself as someone who zealously uses your spiritual gifts in the body and in the world, or as a complacent spectator who is apprehensive to use your gifts? Have you resisted His use of you in your gifting? When?

Describe two or three instances in which you experienced the Holy Spirit using your gifts.

If you're married, do you know your spouses gift(s)? Yes or No. If yes, how do you coordinate together in using your gifts?

Do you know the gifts of others close to you in your faith community? Yes or No. If yes, how do you coordinate together to use your gifts?

What benefits would derive in your faith community if each believer manifested the gifts of the Spirit to one another?

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“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church”

1 Corinthians 14:26

People share fellowship to not only worship God and praise Him communally (John 4:24), but also to stir one another in mutual edification (1 Corinthians 14:5,12). Communal worship and building up truly occur when the Holy Spirit within each person in the faith community is encouraged to participate (1

Corinthians 14:26, above).

Have you ever wondered why there are so few descriptions and instructions about faith communities in the Newer Testament? First, the apostles didn't have to explain what was so very well known among the Hebraic believers who comprised the early Church.

As to offices and anointings, there were already apostles and evangelists functioning in the synagogues prior to the time of Christ. Also, elders and deacons oversaw the gatherings and collected and distributed alms for the needy. Their activities were not new developments that originated in the Newer Testament.

One particular element was critical in the fellowshiping together of the earliest followers of Jesus: *communal participation*. This was made possible by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. The Hebraic model for faith community gatherings provided the freedom for participation, a pattern that was adapted into the Church.

Coming together as extended spiritual family was the means by which followers of Jesus were able to “one another” in obedience to the commands of Jesus. Paul's instructions to the family of Jesus in Colosse are precise:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you **teach and admonish one another** with all wisdom, and as you **sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs** with gratitude in your hearts to God (Colossians 3:16).*

These varied expressions of the Spirit's work in their lives were part and parcel of their relational intimacy with each other as brothers and sisters.

The participatory enactment we see in the earliest Church did not just spring

up in a vacuum. Far from it! The earliest Church understood their mutual accountability for *communal righteousness*. They communally stayed repentant in order that the Father would answer their prayers. Linked to their communal prayer life were *communal responsibility* and *communal participation* in their fellowship gatherings.

Many people who read the Bible in English are unaware that most of the commands in the Newer Testament are *plural*, addressed to the whole faith community — not singular, for the individual. Exceptions, of course, appear in personal messages to Timothy and Philemon, for example.

Paul's instructions to the body of believers in Philippi address them all together: "*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12). The majority of Christians who read this verse today would understand that they, alone, are to work out their own salvation. Not so!

Both the Greek verb and the pronoun which build off the Hebraic view of *communal responsibility* are plural. It would better be understood as "*You all work out you all's salvation with each other's help.*" We're commanded to collectively and communally help each other on our pilgrimage to salvation.

Because of their heritage as a people called out for God's purposes, our Hebraic ancestors in the faith clearly perceived themselves as *an interconnected whole*. They collectively desired to relate to God in love-grounded obedience. What we today might refer to as "body life" was an essential element of that communal

awareness. *Communal* responsibility, *communal* righteousness, *communal* participation all flowed out of their mutual commitment to God and to each other.

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is it any wonder you see the enactment of their communal responsibility shortly thereafter? "*All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need*" (Acts 2:44,45).

As it pertains to *communal participation*, giftings are manifested when the faith community of extended spiritual family is gathered together. Paul gives us a glimpse into communal participation as a means of sharing each other's gifting:

If the gift of tongues is exercised, let it be by two or at most three, and each in turn; and let someone interpret. And if there is no one present who can interpret, let the people who speak in tongues keep silent when the congregation meets — they can speak to themselves and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, while the others weigh what is said. And if something is revealed to a prophet who is sitting down, let the first one be silent (1 Corinthians 14:27-30)

This is the way the extended spiritual family in Jesus functioned until the Hellenists introduced the pagan religious practices that are now hallowed as "church services". Hellenist-influenced gatherings produce spectators. A few put on a performance for the many.

Communal participation is the indicator that the Spirit within each person is given the freedom to both worship God and build up one another (1 Corinthians 14:5,12).

Are you in a *participatory faith* community? Yes or No? Describe what it's like for you during your fellowship time with others.

How does what you've written align with what we cited about the earliest Church gatherings?

Recap: Your Life With The Holy Spirit

The early Hebraic believers appreciated their unique relationship with God because it fulfilled the Hebrew Scripture prophecies of their righteousness in Christ. They also clung to one another as an extended spiritual family, a "body" in which each *belonged* to the other. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their midst assured them of their acceptance and chosenness, "*a deposit guaranteeing [their] inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession*" (Ephesians 1:14).

We want to encourage you: The same power that came upon Jesus when He rose up out of the Jordan River is available to YOU and to everyone else who puts their trust in Jesus as the Bible stipulates. Paul describes it this way:

...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:19,20).

The Bible affirms certain signs that evidence the Holy Spirit is truly in someone who claims to be a Christian. In other words, it isn't what someone without the Spirit CLAIMS to be, but *proof of the Spirit's presence* that confirms his true status as our Father's child. Romans 8:9 sums it up simply: "*...if anyone does NOT have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ*" (Romans 8:9).

Let's review a few indicators of the Holy Spirit's indwelling:

First, the presence of the Holy Spirit in you indicates you've *embraced the true Gospel*. The 23,000 competing denominations worldwide each proclaim their own individual versions of the Gospel. Somebody's distorting the truth! So the Spirit's presence in you is your assurance that you've embraced the true Gospel.

Second, the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit causes you to *live repentantly*. You have a readiness to confess your sins and turn from them, and you're reluctant to even TOLERATE unconfessed sin in your life.

Third, your life is *empowered* by the Spirit. As Paul reveals, "*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines*" (1 Corinthians 12:4,11). When you're empowered by the Spirit of God in you, everyone who knows you will recognize it. Just look at the life changes in followers of Jesus in the Book of Acts! Out of your mouth will flow testimonies to our Father's glory. The Spirit of God IN you enables you to *experience* our Father and His Son.

Do YOU think that someone who experiences God can keep His mouth shut about what that Spirit is doing in and through him? We don't think so!

Although the Spirit's presence in you is unseen, His WORKING in each of us is evident. Weigh these realities about the Holy Spirit:

- He's either dwelling within you, or **He's not.**
- You either live convicted, repentant and empowered, or **you don't.**
- You either live communally responsible and actively participating, or **you don't.**

Would you and those who know you well in the faith attest that they see indicators of the Holy Spirit in you? Ask them to describe evidence that the Spirit indwells you.

Bibliography

1. Lars Wilhelmson, *The Church and Spiritual Gifts* (printed by The Church of the Valley, Inglewood, CA, ca. 1977).