BIBLE STUDY COURSE



GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

DISCOVER · UNDERSTAND · LIVE

The Nine Gifts, Their Purpose, and How They Build Up the Church



"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7

Preface

The gifts of the Holy Spirit have been a source of encouragement, discussion, and disagreement throughout the Christian church. Scripture teaches that these gifts are given by the Spirit for the common good and for the building up of the body of Christ.

This study guide is designed to examine those gifts carefully through the lens of Scripture. Its purpose is not to rank gifts, elevate spiritual experiences, or determine who is more spiritually gifted. Instead, it asks practical questions: What does Scripture say? What is the purpose of each gift? How should it be exercised? And how should spiritual claims be tested?

Throughout this study, we will distinguish between what Scripture clearly teaches, how passages are interpreted, and what people may experience or claim today. Because Christians hold different views about some spiritual gifts, this study seeks to approach those differences with honesty, humility, and respect.

Above all, spiritual gifts are about serving others. They should be exercised in love, humility, accountability, and a desire to strengthen the church and bring glory to Christ.

May this study encourage a deeper understanding of God's Word, a greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and a willingness to faithfully use whatever gifts God has given for the good of others.

Let us study with open hearts, discerning minds, humble spirits, and our eyes fixed on Christ.

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Course Introduction

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to serve others and build up the church. This course examines the gifts named in Scripture, beginning with the message of wisdom. Each study asks what the biblical passage says, what purpose the gift serves, how it may be exercised with love and humility, and how a church can responsibly evaluate what is offered.

The aim is not to identify who has the most gifts or to make unusual experiences the center of Christian life. Paul writes that the Spirit's manifestations are given *"for the common good"* (1 Corinthians 12:7). A gift is therefore best understood in relation to the people it serves. Its use should direct attention to Christ, strengthen the church, and reflect the character the Spirit forms in believers.

Biblical Foundations for the Course

The New Testament discusses gifts in several places, including 1 Corinthians 12–14, Romans 12:3–8, Ephesians 4:11–16, and 1 Peter 4:10–11. These passages have different emphases. First Corinthians addresses the diversity of gifts within one body and the need for love and order. Romans connects gifts with sober judgment and faithful service. Ephesians describes gifts in relation to equipping believers and growing toward maturity. First Peter urges believers to use what they have received as stewards who serve one another.

The passages should be read in their own contexts. They are not presented as a single ranking of Christians or a complete checklist that every person must satisfy. The Spirit distributes gifts; believers are called to use them faithfully.

Christians hold different views about how some gifts operate today. This course will distinguish what a passage explicitly teaches from a proposed interpretation or modern example. Where Christians disagree, the studies will identify the question rather than claim a certainty the text does not provide.

Three Principles That Govern the Gifts

Although the gifts of the Holy Spirit differ in their expression and purpose, Scripture gives several principles that help the church understand how they should function. Throughout this study, three principles will appear repeatedly: **the common good, discernment, and testing**. These principles do not replace love, humility, accountability, or faithfulness to Scripture. Rather, they provide a framework through which those qualities are put into practice.

How the Three Work Together

These three principles provide a simple pattern that can be carried through every study in this course:

COMMON GOOD → DISCERNMENT → TESTING

Common Good: *Who does this serve, and does it build up the Body of Christ?*

Discernment: *What is actually being presented, and how should it be understood?*

Testing: *Does it withstand examination by Scripture, truth, character, fruit, and the believing community?*

Together they help keep spiritual gifts in their proper biblical setting. **The common good gives the gifts their direction, discernment encourages careful understanding, and testing provides accountability.** Love and humility should govern all three, while Scripture remains the *authoritative standard* by which every spiritual claim is ultimately measured.

What This Course Will Explore

Foundation	Guiding question
Biblical setting	What does the passage say within its original argument?
Meaning	What does Scripture tell us about this gift, and what remains uncertain?
Purpose	How does the gift serve the common good and strengthen others?
Practice	How can it be exercised responsibly, humbly, and in love?
Testing	How can Scripture, counsel, character, and observable fruit help us assess a claim?
Response	What faithful action should follow from what we have learned?

This pattern keeps each study grounded in Scripture while making room for practical application. It also helps separate three things that can easily become confused: **what the Bible says, what someone thinks it means, and what a person reports experiencing today.** All three may be worth discussing, but they do not carry the same authority.

The Shared Posture

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." — 1 Corinthians 12:7

The gifts belong to the Spirit. They are received, not earned as a badge of spiritual standing. No believer possesses every gift, and no single gift makes its recipient more valuable than another member of the body. Paul's picture of the church in 1 Corinthians 12 calls believers to depend on and care for one another.

Love governs the use of every gift. Paul places 1 Corinthians 13 between his discussions of gifts in chapters 12 and 14. Even a striking ability or persuasive message cannot replace patience, kindness, truthfulness, and concern for others. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, he directs the gathered church toward building one another up.

For that reason, a claimed gift does not excuse arrogance, coercion, secrecy from appropriate counsel, or refusal to be corrected. A person may speak sincerely and still misunderstand an impression or apply a passage poorly. Humility allows a believer to offer something for consideration, listen to questions, and acknowledge a mistake.

Gifts and Spiritual Maturity

Gifts and maturity are related, but they are not identical. A person may communicate a useful insight and still need to grow in character. Likewise, quiet acts of service may strengthen the church without attracting attention. The fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23 gives us an important picture of the character Christians are called to cultivate.

This course will therefore ask two questions throughout: **What is being offered?** and **How is it being offered?** Truth matters, and so can motive, manner, accountability, and the effect on the people involved. Gifts should be exercised with respect, humility, and consideration for the people they are intended to serve.

Testing and Receiving What Is Offered

Scripture instructs believers to test spiritual claims rather than accept or dismiss them solely because they sound impressive or feel powerful (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1). Testing begins with the biblical text. It also involves careful attention to facts, the character of the claim, its consequences, and the counsel of mature believers.

Testing need not be hostile. It protects the church and the person offering the gift. A thoughtful response can say, “Let us consider this carefully,” without pretending to know more than is known. When a matter affects another person’s reputation, safety, or major decisions, patience and appropriate accountability are especially important.

How to Use Each Study

1. **Read the cited passages in context.** Notice who is speaking, who is being addressed, and the concern the passage answers.
2. **Separate text from interpretation.** Identify what Scripture states directly before deciding how it applies to a present situation.
3. **Discuss significant questions with mature believers.** Invite correction and listen to people who may see something you have missed.
4. **Work through the reflection prompts honestly.** You do not need to force an answer where the evidence is incomplete.
5. **Choose an act of faithful service.** The goal of study is not merely to define a gift, but to love God and serve others more faithfully.

In Conclusion

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given for the good of others and the strengthening of the church. As we study them, our goal is to understand Scripture faithfully, remain open to the Spirit’s work, and exercise every gift with love and humility. We can ask questions, test what is offered, and acknowledge what we do not yet know. With that posture, we begin with the gift of wisdom: learning to seek God’s truth and apply it in ways that serve others and honor Christ.

The Gift of Wisdom

A Bible study on wise counsel, the Spirit, and service

STUDY ONE • WISDOM

“For to one is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom.” — 1 Corinthians 12:8

This study examines the “message of wisdom” named by Paul. It also draws on the Bible’s wider teaching about wisdom so readers can seek it, practice it, and evaluate counsel. A particular Spirit-given message of wisdom should be distinguished from the wisdom all Christians are invited to ask God for and grow in.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11	The Spirit distributes manifestations for the common good; verse 8 names a message of wisdom.
James 1:5–8	Those who lack wisdom are invited to ask God.
James 3:13–18	Wisdom from above is shown in conduct and described by its moral qualities.
Proverbs 9:10; 2:1–6	The fear of the Lord and attention to God’s instruction are foundational.
1 Corinthians 1:18–31; 2:6–16	God’s wisdom is centered in Christ and contrasts with merely worldly status.
Acts 15:1–21	A community weighs Scripture, testimony, and pastoral consequences in a difficult dispute.

1 What Is the Gift of Wisdom

The Greek expression in 1 Corinthians 12:8 is often translated as “word of wisdom” or “message of wisdom.” Paul does not provide a formal definition or a step-by-step case study. In context, it is a manifestation given through the Spirit for the common good. It may involve timely, fitting speech that applies God’s truth to a real situation; that description is an interpretation of the passage, not a guarantee that every wise suggestion is a special revelation.

Wisdom is more than collecting facts. It involves sound judgment about what is true, good, timely, and loving in a concrete situation. Knowledge may identify what is known; wisdom considers how to act faithfully with that knowledge. Both appear in 1 Corinthians 12:8, but Paul does not define a rigid boundary between them.

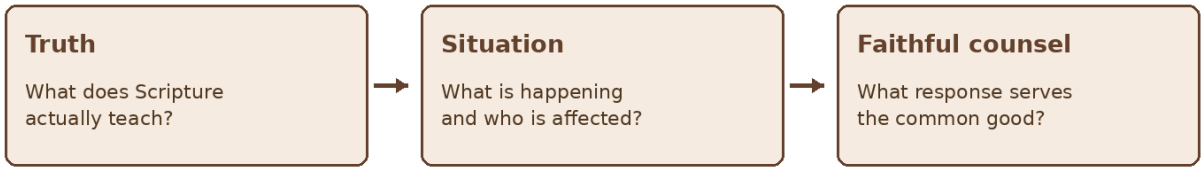


Figure 1 Applying truth to a real situation

2 Wisdom Is Rooted in God

Proverbs connects wisdom with reverence for the Lord, teachability, and attention to instruction. James invites believers who lack wisdom to ask God. That invitation is for the whole church, whether or not someone receives a particular manifestation named in 1 Corinthians 12.

The New Testament also insists that God's wisdom cannot be reduced to what looks impressive or advantageous. In 1 Corinthians 1–2, Paul centers God's wisdom in the crucified Christ. Wise counsel should therefore be measured by faithfulness to Christ, not by confidence, novelty, eloquence, or personal influence.

3 What Wisdom from Above Looks Like

James 3:13–18 connects wisdom to humble conduct. James contrasts selfish ambition and disorder with wisdom that is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere. These qualities do not turn discernment into a simple checklist, but they provide a strong test of the posture and direction of counsel.

Quality in James 3	Question for wise counsel
Pure and sincere	Is the counsel truthful, with no hidden agenda?
Peaceable and gentle	Does it seek peace without concealing wrongdoing?
Open to reason	Can the person hear questions and corrections?
Merciful and impartial	Are affected people treated fairly and compassionately?
Good fruit	What conduct and outcome does this counsel tend to produce?

Peaceable does not mean avoiding every difficult conversation. Wise counsel may call for correction or a firm boundary. The manner and purpose still matter: truth should be spoken with humility and concern for those involved.

4 How the Gift Serves the Church

A timely message of wisdom can help people apply biblical truth when several duties or concerns seem to compete. It may clarify a next step, help leaders weigh consequences, or redirect a group away from pride and toward faithful service. The aim is the common good, not dependence on one person's supposed insight.

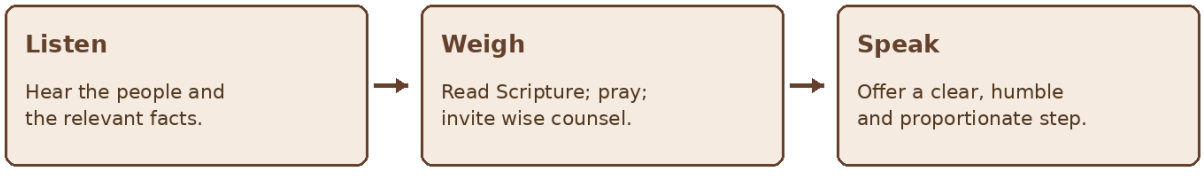


Figure 2 A responsible pattern for offering counsel

Acts 15 offers a useful picture of communal deliberation: the church addresses a disputed question through testimony, Scripture, and a decision communicated to others. The passage does not explicitly label anyone's contribution the gift of wisdom; it illustrates why important judgments benefit from shared examination.

5 Wisdom and Ordinary Decision Making

Not every decision requires a supernatural impression. God may form wisdom through Scripture, prayer, experience, careful listening, and counsel. A person may offer a particularly timely word without needing to announce “God told me.” The content can be tested on its merits, and the speaker can remain open to correction.

Helpful practice	Why it matters
State what you know	Separates established facts from assumptions.
Name the principle	Shows how Scripture bears on the choice.
Consider alternatives	Prevents one possible application from becoming absolute.
Allow accountability	Protects people affected by consequential advice.

6 Test Counsel Before Acting

A proposed message of wisdom should agree with Scripture, reflect the character described in James 3, and serve people rather than elevate the messenger. When a decision has serious consequences, consult those with appropriate responsibility and relevant knowledge. Time can also expose overlooked facts or a better course.

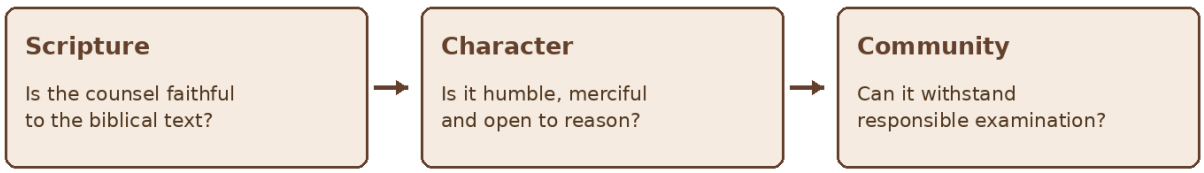


Figure 3 Three checks for a proposed message of wisdom

Be cautious when someone claims unquestionable authority, demands secrecy, pressures a quick decision without good reason, or uses “wisdom” to control another person. A persuasive tone cannot make untested counsel binding.

7 A Practical Wisdom Journal

Use this page of questions with an actual situation. Record the issue before writing your preferred outcome.

Prompt	Write or discuss
What is the decision?	State the question in one sentence.
What is known?	List facts, affected people, and relevant responsibilities.
What does Scripture address?	Name a passage and its principle in context.
What remains uncertain?	Separate unknowns from guesses and fears.
Whose counsel is needed?	Include mature believers and relevant expertise.
What is the next faithful step?	Choose an action proportionate to what is known.
What did I learn?	Revisit the outcome and remain willing to correct the course.

Reflection and Discussion

- When have I confused confidence or eloquence with wisdom?
- How does James 3 challenge the way I give advice?
- Where do I need to ask God for wisdom rather than assume I already have it?
- What decision in my community would benefit from patient, shared discernment?

A Prayer for Wisdom

Father, You give wisdom generously. Teach me to listen before I speak, to understand Your Word in context, and to treat people with mercy and fairness. If Your Spirit gives me a timely word, help me offer it humbly for the good of others. Make me open to correction, patient with uncertainty, and faithful to Jesus Christ. Amen.

Further Study

Read James 1:5–8 and 3:13–18 together. Then read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a whole, paying attention to love, the common good, and the building up of the church. Compare Proverbs 2 and Acts 15 as examples of seeking and practicing wisdom in different settings.

The Gift of Knowledge

A Bible study on Spirit given insight, truth, and responsible speech

STUDY TWO • KNOWLEDGE

"For to one is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, and to another the message of knowledge according to the same Spirit." — 1 Corinthians 12:8

Paul names a "message of knowledge" among the Spirit's manifestations for the common good. This study explores what the passage establishes, what remains open to interpretation, and how a claimed insight can be shared without making assumptions about another person. It follows the same pattern as the Wisdom study: Scripture, purpose, responsible practice, testing, and reflection.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11	The Spirit distributes gifts for the common good; verse 8 names a message of knowledge.
1 Corinthians 8:1–3	Knowledge without love can become prideful; love shapes its use.
1 Corinthians 13:2, 8–12	Even remarkable knowledge is partial and must be held humbly.
Colossians 1:9–10	Paul prays for knowledge of God's will that bears fruit in a worthy life.
1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1	Spiritual claims are to be tested.
Acts 5:1–11; John 4:16–19	Narratives sometimes cited in discussion, though neither identifies the event by Paul's term.

1 What Is a Message of Knowledge

The phrase in 1 Corinthians 12:8 is translated "word of knowledge" or "message of knowledge." Paul states that it is given through the Spirit, but he does not define its content or give a procedure for recognizing it. Some Christians understand it as Spirit enabled insight into a person or situation that the speaker could not have learned ordinarily. Others emphasize a Spirit given grasp or communication of revealed truth. The verse alone does not settle every detail of these views.

In either reading, the purpose of a gift in this chapter is service. A claim to know something should direct attention to truth and the good of others, not to the status of the person speaking. Ordinary learning, observation, and research are also valuable; a person should not label every accurate deduction a supernatural message.

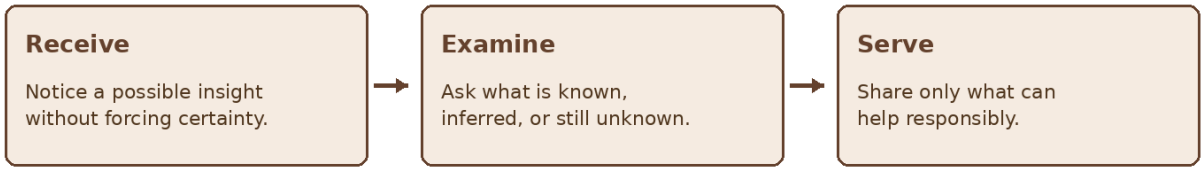


Figure 1 A careful path from possible insight to service

2 Knowledge and Wisdom

Paul places wisdom and knowledge side by side in 1 Corinthians 12:8 without defining a rigid boundary between them. A useful working distinction is that knowledge concerns what is true or known, while wisdom concerns fitting application. This distinction helps discussion, but it should not be presented as Paul's complete definition of either gift.

Question	Knowledge	Wisdom
Primary focus	What is true or relevant?	What is the faithful response?
Possible service	Clarifies a matter needing attention.	Guides action in light of truth.
Shared requirement	Love, humility, testing.	Love, humility, testing.

3 Knowledge Must Be Governed by Love

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul warns that knowledge can puff up while love builds up. In 1 Corinthians 13, even extensive knowledge means little without love, and human knowledge remains partial. These passages do not dismiss knowledge; they govern its use. A true statement can still be delivered carelessly, at the wrong time, or to the wrong audience.

Before sharing something personal, consider whether it is necessary, whether it is your place to say it, and whether a private conversation would protect the person involved. Never use a claimed revelation to embarrass someone publicly, compel a confession, or bypass ordinary safeguards.

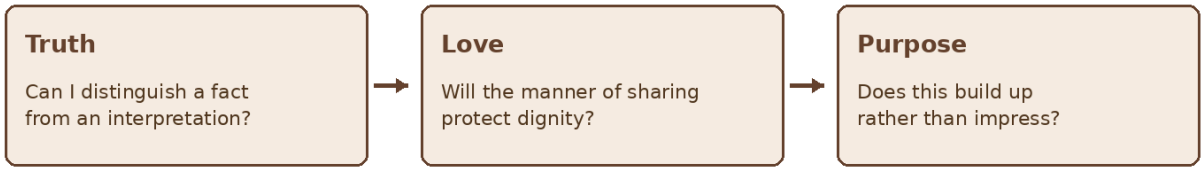


Figure 2 Three questions before speaking

4 What Biblical Narratives Can and Cannot Show

Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 includes knowledge of her life that prompts her to consider who he is. Acts 5 describes Peter confronting Ananias and Sapphira about deceit. These are biblical narratives of particular people and events. Neither text calls the incident "the word of knowledge," so they may illustrate possible discussion points but cannot by themselves define the gift in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Jesus' unique identity also matters when reading the Gospels. Do not assume that every action Jesus took establishes an ordinary ability or authority for every believer. Read each narrative in its own setting before applying it to contemporary experience.

5 Distinguish Observation from Interpretation

A strong impression may contain a useful concern without a reliable explanation. If someone senses that a person is struggling, the appropriate response may be a gentle question or an offer to pray, not an announcement of what caused the struggle. The more specific a claim becomes, the more carefully it should be tested.

Layer	Example	Appropriate response
Observation	“You seemed quiet today.”	Ask how the person is doing.
Impression	“I wonder whether something is weighing on you.”	Offer it tentatively and allow correction.
Unverified conclusion	“God showed me the cause of your problem.”	Withhold the claim until there is sound basis; do not pressure the person.

6 Test a Claimed Word of Knowledge

Compare the content with Scripture and established facts. Ask whether it is consistent with Christlike character and whether mature believers can help weigh it. A claim about another person’s private life deserves particular care: do not spread it, investigate intrusively, or treat it as proven merely because it felt vivid.

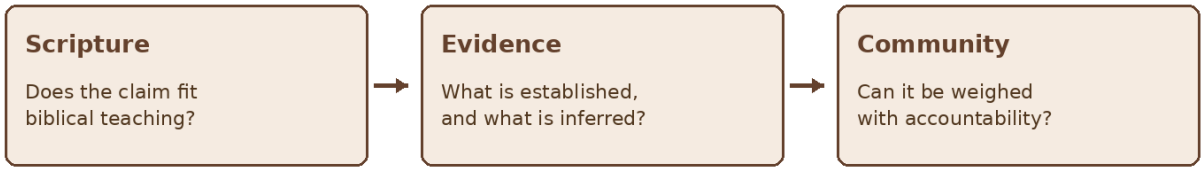


Figure 3 A responsible test of a knowledge claim

A mistaken impression does not need to become a crisis of identity. Acknowledge the error, repair harm if necessary, and learn from it. The willingness to be corrected is part of speaking truthfully.

7 A Practical Reflection Journal

Use these prompts when an insight seems significant. Write before discussing it with others so that later facts do not overwrite your original memory.

Prompt	Record
What did I notice?	Describe the experience without explaining its source.
What do I actually know?	Separate facts from memories, inference, and assumptions.
What are other explanations?	Consider ordinary possibilities and missing information.
Who could be affected?	Consider privacy, dignity, and foreseeable harm.
How should I respond?	Choose prayer, a gentle question, counsel, or waiting.
What happened later?	Record correction and what the outcome taught you.

Reflection and Discussion

- How might knowledge become a source of pride rather than service?
- When is a gentle question better than a confident statement?
- How can 1 Corinthians 8 and 13 shape the way I share what I think I know?

- What kind of accountability would help me handle a personal impression responsibly?

A Prayer for Truth and Love

Father, teach me to love truth and the people to whom I speak. If Your Spirit brings something to my attention, give me patience to test it and wisdom about whether to speak. Guard me from pride, assumption, and careless words. Help me admit mistakes, protect the dignity of others, and use whatever knowledge You give for the common good. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1–3 and chapters 12–14 in full. Compare the purpose of knowledge in Colossians 1:9–10 with the humility of partial knowledge in 1 Corinthians 13:8–12. Read John 4 and Acts 5 in context, noting what each passage says and what it does not say about the gift.

The Gift of Faith

A Bible study on trust in God, Spirit given confidence, and service

STUDY THREE • FAITH

"To another faith by the same Spirit." — 1 Corinthians 12:9

Paul lists faith among the Spirit's manifestations for the common good. This study distinguishes that gift from the trust in Christ shared by all believers, explores what the passage does and does not explain, and offers a responsible way to pray and act when someone senses unusual confidence in God. The focus remains on God's faithfulness and service to others.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11	The Spirit distributes manifestations for the common good; verse 9 names faith.
1 Corinthians 13:1–3	Even faith associated with moving mountains is nothing without love.
Mark 9:14–29	A father brings both belief and unbelief to Jesus in a desperate need.
Hebrews 11:1–40	Faith looks to God's promises; faithful people experience different earthly outcomes.
James 1:5–8; 5:13–18	Believers ask God for wisdom and pray in times of suffering and sickness.
2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17	The Christian life is marked by faith nourished by hearing the message of Christ.

1 What Is the Gift of Faith

In 1 Corinthians 12:9 Paul says that faith is given "by the same Spirit." He does not provide a formal definition or specify how this manifestation differs in every case from the faith of ordinary Christian life. Many Christians understand it as a particular Spirit given confidence in God for a situation, enabling persistent prayer, courage, or action that strengthens others. That description is a possible interpretation of the gift in context, not an explicit definition supplied by Paul.

All believers are called to trust Christ. The gift named among varied manifestations need not imply that those without this particular gift have no genuine faith. Paul's emphasis is the Spirit's distribution and the good of the whole body. A person who experiences unusual confidence should offer it humbly, without treating it as proof that a desired outcome is guaranteed.

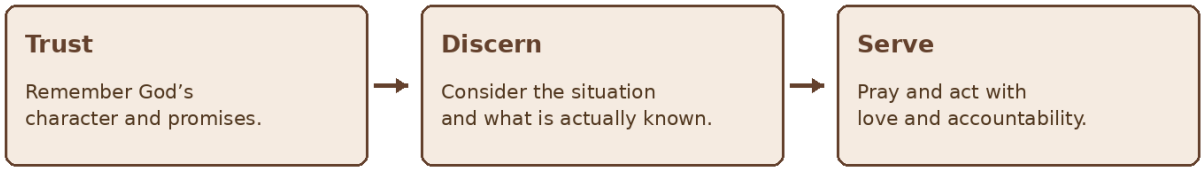


Figure 1 Confidence directed toward faithful service

2 Faith Is Directed Toward God

Biblical faith is more than optimism about a preferred result. Hebrews 11 portrays people who trusted God and obeyed amid uncertainty. Some saw deliverance; others endured suffering and died without receiving what they hoped for in this life. Their differing circumstances do not divide them into the faithful and the faithless.

The object of faith matters. Confidence in God's goodness and power is not the same claim as certainty that God has promised a specific event at a specific time. When Scripture gives a promise, read its context before applying it. When the outcome is not revealed, pray boldly while leaving room for God's wisdom.

Statement	What it expresses
"God is able."	Trust in God's power.
"I will keep praying and serving."	A faithful response within my responsibility.
"This exact outcome will happen."	A specific prediction requiring stronger grounds and testing.

3 Faith and Love Belong Together

Paul's striking example in 1 Corinthians 13:2 says that even faith capable of moving mountains amounts to nothing without love. The point does not belittle faith. It warns that a dramatic claim or extraordinary confidence can be exercised without care for people.

A person expressing faith should listen to those affected, respect their dignity, and avoid making their pain into a demonstration. Prayer offered with faith can be gentle. It does not require blaming someone for a delayed answer or demanding that they publicly agree with a prediction.

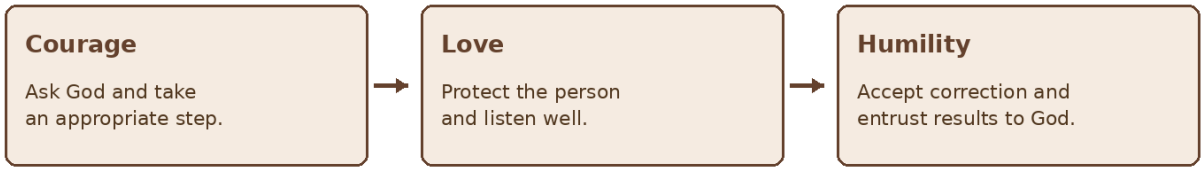


Figure 2 The posture of faith in community

4 Faith Does Not Remove Uncertainty

In Mark 9:24 a father turns to Jesus while admitting the weakness mixed with his belief. His words show that a person can seek Jesus honestly without pretending to possess perfect certainty. The passage concerns a particular encounter with Jesus; it should not be made into a formula for ensuring every requested outcome.

Fear or questions may be present even when someone acts faithfully. Courage often means doing what is right while the result remains unknown. Mature faith can pray, seek wise counsel, take ordinary precautions, and continue to care for others.

5 What the Gift May Contribute

In a season of hardship, one believer's settled confidence may help a group persevere in prayer and obedience. Someone may encourage others to remember God's character, resist despair, or take a costly

but appropriate step. Such encouragement must be weighed by Scripture and the actual responsibilities of the people involved.

Possible contribution	Responsible expression
Encouragement	“Let us keep praying and supporting them.”
Perseverance	Continue a faithful task without assuming success is immediate.
Courage	Take a prudent step consistent with Scripture and wise counsel.
Hope	Remind others that God remains present even if the outcome differs from expectation.

The Spirit’s work may strengthen people through ordinary care as well as remarkable events. Confidence should not be used to dismiss medical treatment, safety needs, financial realities, or the expertise relevant to a decision.

6 Test a Claimed Assurance

When someone says they have special faith for an outcome, ask what they are claiming. Is it a statement about God’s ability, a call to prayer, or a specific prediction? The clearer the distinction, the easier it is to respond wisely. A specific claim should not be imposed on others as though questioning it were disobedience to God.

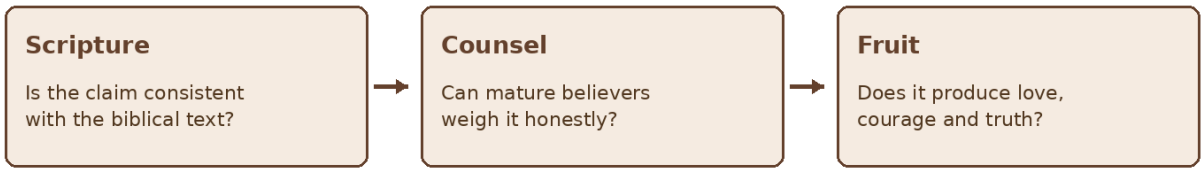


Figure 3 Testing an assurance without dismissing prayer

If the hoped for event does not happen, tell the truth about the outcome. Do not shift blame onto a suffering person for allegedly lacking faith. Continue practical care, prayer, and companionship. Honest correction can protect the community and deepen trust.

7 A Practical Faith Journal

Use these prompts when you sense strong confidence or when someone asks you to join them in prayer.

Prompt	Record
What am I trusting God for?	State the request and the situation clearly.
What has God promised?	Identify the passage and its context, if one applies.
What is my interpretation?	Separate a hope or impression from an explicit promise.
Who is affected?	Consider consent, dignity, and practical needs.
What is faithful today?	Choose prayer, service, wise counsel, and appropriate action.
What happened over time?	Record the outcome honestly and continue learning.

Reflection and Discussion

- How is trust in God different from certainty about my preferred outcome?
- What do the varied experiences in Hebrews 11 teach about faithfulness?
- How can a person offer encouragement without pressuring someone who suffers?
- Where might God be calling me to pray and take a responsible step today?

A Prayer for Faith

Father, strengthen my trust in You. Teach me to pray with hope, act with courage, and care for people with love. If Your Spirit gives me unusual confidence in a difficult moment, help me offer it humbly and test my interpretation honestly. Keep me from making promises *You* have not made. Let my faith remain rooted in Jesus Christ whatever the outcome. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as one discussion of gifts, love, and the building up of the church. Read Hebrews 11 in full and notice the different outcomes experienced by faithful people. Compare Mark 9:14–29 with James 5:13–18 as you consider prayer, dependence, and care for those in need.

The Gift of Healing

A Bible study on prayer, compassion, and God's healing work

STUDY FOUR • HEALING

"To another gifts of healing by the one Spirit." — 1 Corinthians 12:9

Paul names "gifts of healing" among the Spirit's manifestations for the common good. This study considers what the passage says, how the church is instructed to pray for the sick, and how to care faithfully for people whether healing is immediate, gradual, or not seen in the way requested. Christians differ on the operation of this gift today; the study distinguishes biblical teaching from proposed explanations and personal experiences.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:7–11, 27–30	The Spirit distributes gifts for the common good; Paul mentions gifts of healing and asks whether all possess them.
James 5:13–16	The sick are invited to call the church's elders for prayer and anointing in the Lord's name.
Mark 1:29–34; 2:1–12	Jesus heals and shows compassion; his works also point to his authority and identity.
Acts 3:1–16; 9:32–35	Healing in Acts directs attention to Jesus rather than to the person praying.
Philippians 2:25–30; 2 Timothy 4:20	The apostolic circle also experienced illness and costly care.
2 Corinthians 12:7–10	Paul prays about his affliction and receives an answer centered on God's sufficient grace.

1 What Are the Gifts of Healing

In 1 Corinthians 12:9 Paul uses plural language often rendered "gifts of healing" or "gifts of healings." He repeats the phrase in verses 28 and 30, but does not explain why it is plural, assign categories of illness, or provide a method for exercising it. Interpretations of the plural differ. We should not build a detailed system from a grammatical feature that Paul does not explain.

The immediate context supplies the clearest purpose: the Spirit gives manifestations for the common good, and the members of Christ's body need one another. Paul's question in verse 30 expects that not everyone has the same gift. At the same time, James 5 calls the church to pray for the sick; prayer is not limited to people identified as having a healing gift.

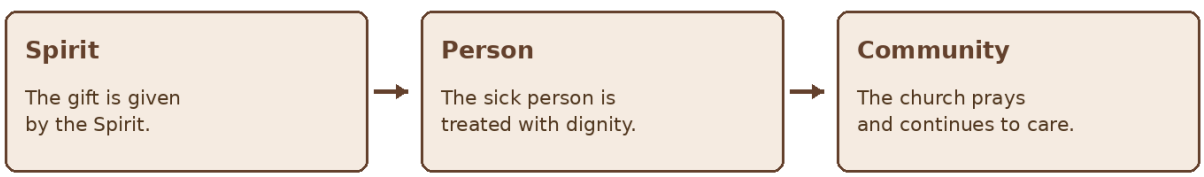


Figure 1 The gift belongs within the care of Christ's body

2 Healing in the Ministry of Jesus

The Gospels portray Jesus healing people with compassion and authority to forgive sin. His healings are also signs that reveal who He is and what God's kingdom is bringing. *We* should read those accounts as testimony to Jesus, not as a formula that every believer can repeat at will. The healer in the Gospel narrative is the Lord to whom the church prays.

Jesus often responds to particular people rather than treating them as examples for an audience. In Mark 2:1–12, the healing of the paralytic is linked to Jesus' authority to forgive sins. That narrative does not license us to presume that a sick person's illness was caused by a particular sin. (RE: John 9:1-3) Personal blame requires evidence and should never be invented from a condition.

3 Prayer for the Sick

James 5:13–16 tells a sick person to call the elders of the church, who pray and anoint in the name of the Lord. The passage encourages expectant prayer and acknowledges the Lord as the one who raises up. It also includes confession and mutual prayer, but it does not teach that every illness is the result of personal sin.

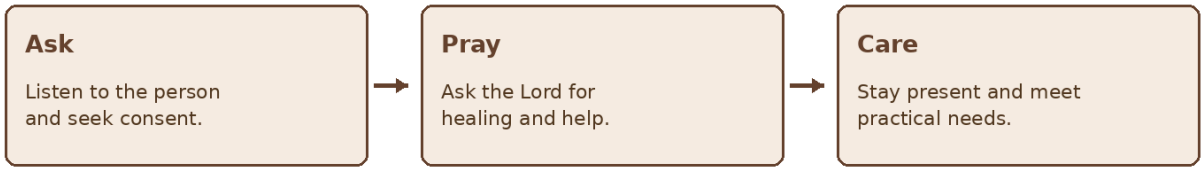


Figure 2 Prayer continues in practical care

Prayer can be offered plainly and without performance. Ask what the person would welcome, respect their privacy, and avoid public details unless they consent. Continue companionship, meals, transport, or other appropriate help after the prayer ends.

4 Healing and Unanswered Requests

Scripture includes remarkable healings and also records believers who remained ill or faced ongoing affliction. Paul describes Epaphroditus as seriously ill before God showed mercy (Philippians 2:25–30), and he says he left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). In 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, Paul's repeated plea about his "thorn" receives an answer concerning grace and strength in weakness; the precise nature of the thorn is disputed.

These passages caution against promising a particular timetable or treating an unhealed person as a failure. We may pray earnestly for healing and still acknowledge that we do not control the outcome. A delayed or different answer does not remove a person's worth, God's compassion, or the church's duty to care.

Careful statement	Why it matters
"We will pray for healing."	Expresses a genuine request to God.
"We will remain with you."	Commits the church to care beyond a single moment.
"I cannot promise an outcome."	Speaks truthfully without weakening compassion.
"Your illness is not proof of weak faith."	Rejects an unsupported and harmful judgment.

5 Healing and Ordinary Care

Prayer and appropriate medical care can be pursued together. Receiving care does not show a lack of faith, and prayer should not be used to pressure someone to stop treatment or ignore urgent symptoms. People facing illness deserve truthful information, personal agency, and support from those responsible for their care.

Spiritual support can include listening, asking permission before touching or praying aloud, protecting confidential details, and helping with practical needs. When someone reports improvement, celebrate with gratitude while remaining accurate about what is known. Do not declare a medical condition resolved on the basis of a momentary impression.

6 Test Claims and Protect People

A testimony about healing can encourage others, but it should be told accurately and with the person's permission. Distinguish a prayer request, an observed change, and a verified medical conclusion. Do not use someone's suffering to establish the status of a speaker, solicit money, or create pressure for a public display.

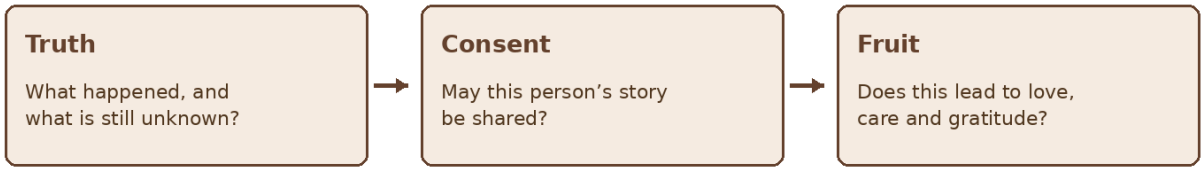


Figure 3 A responsible way to assess a healing testimony

When no healing is apparent, do not invent an explanation or blame the person. Continue prayer if welcomed, offer practical support, and make room for grief or disappointment. The church serves the sick person, not a preferred account of the event.

7 A Practical Prayer and Care Journal

These prompts help a person or small group pray responsibly and follow through. Record only information that the affected person has agreed may be shared.

Prompt	Record
What has the person requested?	Use their words and respect their boundaries.
Who may be involved?	Identify elders, family, and care partners with permission.
How will we pray?	Ask the Lord for healing, comfort, wisdom, and strength.
What practical help is needed?	Note transport, meals, visits, or other agreed support.
What is known afterward?	Describe changes accurately without overstating them.
How will we continue caring?	Plan a follow up even if the outcome remains uncertain.

Reflection and Discussion

- How does 1 Corinthians 12 place healing within the common good?
- What does James 5 instruct the church to do when someone is sick?
- How can we pray expectantly without promising an outcome God has not disclosed?
- What practical care can our group offer after prayer?

A Prayer for Healing and Compassion

Father, we bring those who are sick before You and ask for healing in the name of Jesus. Give wisdom to those caring for them, relief where there is pain, and strength for each day. Teach us to pray with faith and speak with honesty. Keep us from blaming those who suffer. Help our church remain present in love, whatever the outcome, and let every good gift bring gratitude to You. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a whole. Then read James 5:13–16, Mark 2:1–12, Acts 3:1–16, Philippians 2:25–30, and 2 Corinthians 12:7–10 in context. Note what each passage explicitly teaches and which questions it leaves open.

The Gift of the Working of Miracles

A Bible study on God's power, signs, and faithful witness

STUDY FIVE • MIRACLES

"To another the working of miracles." — 1 Corinthians 12:10

Paul names the working of miracles among the Spirit's manifestations for the common good. This study examines the brief reference in 1 Corinthians 12 alongside accounts of extraordinary acts in the New Testament. It asks what those accounts reveal about God, how the church should respond to a claimed miracle, and why truthfulness, love, and humility matter as much as amazement.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–30	The Spirit distributes diverse gifts; Paul names the working of miracles and asks whether all work them.
Acts 3:1–16	Peter redirects attention from human power to Jesus after a man is healed.
Acts 14:8–18	Paul and Barnabas reject worship after a healing is misunderstood by a crowd.
Acts 19:11–20	Luke attributes extraordinary miracles to God and contrasts them with attempted misuse of Jesus' name.
Hebrews 2:3–4	Signs and wonders accompany testimony to the message of salvation.
1 Corinthians 13:1–3; 14:26	Love and the building up of the church govern the exercise of gifts.

1 What Does Paul Mean

The phrase in 1 Corinthians 12:10 is translated "working of miracles" or "working of powers." Paul names it but does not provide a definition, a list of eligible events, or instructions for producing one. He distinguishes it from gifts of healing in his list, although a healing may itself be experienced as miraculous. The text does not tell us that the two categories never overlap.

The surrounding passage supplies a purpose and a limit. The manifestation is given by the Spirit for the common good; different members receive different gifts. Paul's questions in 12:29–30 expect that not everyone has the same function. No person owns God's power or can summon a miracle at will.



Figure 1 Keep attention on God and the people served

2 Miracles Point Beyond the Event

In Acts 3, a man who could not walk is healed. Peter immediately rejects the idea that his own power or piety produced the result and speaks about Jesus. In Acts 14, a crowd mistakes Paul and Barnabas for gods after a healing. The apostles resist that praise and direct the people toward the living God. An extraordinary event can attract attention and also be misunderstood.

Hebrews 2:3–4 describes God bearing witness to the message of salvation through signs, wonders, and various miracles. These passages give miracles a purpose beyond spectacle. They may prompt gratitude, witness, and obedience, but they should not become a substitute for the message of Christ.

Response to an event	Question to ask
Attention	Who is receiving the credit?
Meaning	What claim is being made about God or the gospel?
Care	How are the affected people being treated?
Truth	What has actually been established?

3 What Accounts in Acts Teach

Acts 19 says that God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. The same passage recounts people attempting to use the name of Jesus without a genuine relationship to him; the narrative does not present a repeatable technique involving objects or words. We should not turn a description of an unusual event into a method or a commodity.

The book of Acts records particular moments in the spread of the gospel. It is valuable to study these accounts while distinguishing what Luke reports from what he commands every church to do. Christians differ on how frequently such works should be expected today. The difference should be discussed with Scripture, honesty, and care rather than exaggerated claims.



Figure 2 Read a miracle account in context

4 A Miracle Is Not a Measure of Worth

The presence of an extraordinary event does not establish that the speaker is above correction. Nor does the absence of one mean that a church, a sick person, or a person praying lacks faith. Paul's body image in 1 Corinthians 12 values each member and each form of service. First Corinthians 13 places love above impressive gifts.

Prayer, teaching, hospitality, generosity, and sustained care remain meaningful when no extraordinary event is visible. The church should not neglect ordinary responsibilities while waiting for a dramatic intervention.

5 Test a Claimed Miracle

When someone reports a miracle, begin by hearing the account accurately. Distinguish what was observed, what is independently known, and what is inferred about its cause. Give the person control over whether their story is shared. A report about a health condition should not be described as medically verified without appropriate confirmation.

Question	Responsible practice
What happened?	Record the sequence and the person's own description.
What is known?	Separate observation from interpretation and unverified detail.
May this be shared?	Ask permission and protect private information.
What fruit follows?	Look for gratitude, truth, love, and service rather than personal status.
Who can help assess it?	Invite appropriate leaders and relevant expertise.

Testing is not hostility toward God's work. It honors truth and protects people. If a report changes as further information arrives, correct it openly. Do not pressure someone to claim an event occurred or to abandon ordinary care.

6 Resist Spectacle and Misuse

An event should not be used to demand money, claim unquestionable authority, or manipulate a vulnerable person. Acts 14 shows how quickly observers may direct honor to the wrong people. The responsible response of the apostles was to refuse that honor.

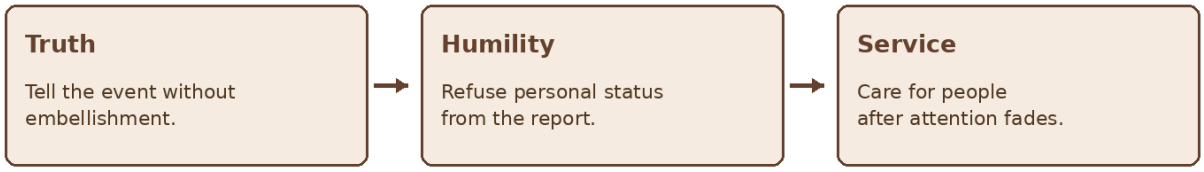


Figure 3 A healthy response to an extraordinary report

Avoid both premature certainty and a reflexive dismissal. A church can pray with hope, examine claims carefully, and leave questions open where evidence is incomplete. God's power is not diminished by accurate speech.

7 A Practical Event and Response Journal

Use these prompts when an extraordinary event is reported. Record only details you have permission to retain or share.

Prompt	Record
What was observed?	Describe events and timing without adding a cause.
Who witnessed it?	Identify firsthand and secondhand accounts separately.
What remains unknown?	List gaps, alternative explanations, and needed confirmation.

Prompt	Record
What does Scripture say?	Read relevant passages in their context.
Who has consented?	Protect identities and personal information.
What response serves people?	Pray, give thanks, offer care, and speak truthfully.
What changed later?	Update the account if further facts emerge.

Reflection and Discussion

- Why did Peter and Paul redirect attention after extraordinary events?
- How can we remain open to God's power while testing a particular report?
- What harm can come from exaggerating or publicizing a person's story without consent?
- What acts of ordinary service should continue regardless of whether a miracle occurs?

A Prayer for Humility and Truth

Father, You are powerful and good. Teach us to pray with hope and to receive Your work with gratitude. If something extraordinary happens among us, help us speak accurately, protect the people involved, and direct all honor to Jesus Christ. Guard us from pride, pressure, and spectacle. Build up Your church in truth and love. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a unit. Then read Acts 3:1–16, Acts 14:8–18, Acts 19:11–20, and Hebrews 2:1–4 in context. For each account, identify the event, the explanation given by the biblical writer, and the response of the people involved.

The Gift of Prophecy

A Bible study on speaking for the good of the church and weighing what is said

STUDY SIX • PROPHECY

"The others should weigh what is said." — 1 Corinthians 14:29

Paul names prophecy among the Spirit's gifts and gives unusually detailed instructions for its use in the gathered church. This study examines its purpose, the need to weigh a message, and the importance of love and order. Christians differ on how New Testament prophecy relates to Old Testament prophets and how this gift operates today. The course will distinguish the text from those interpretations.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–31	Prophecy is one of the varied gifts given for the common good.
1 Corinthians 13:1–13	Love is indispensable; present knowledge and prophecy are partial.
1 Corinthians 14:1–5, 24–33	Prophecy can strengthen, encourage, and console; speakers and hearers follow an orderly process.
1 Thessalonians 5:19–22	Do not despise prophecies; test everything and hold fast what is good.
Acts 11:27–30; 21:10–14	Agabus appears in two accounts involving predicted events and communal response.
1 John 4:1–3	Believers are instructed to test spiritual claims.

1 What Is Prophecy in This Study

In the New Testament, prophecy is Spirit related speech offered to others. Paul names it in 1 Corinthians 12 and discusses its use in chapter 14. The passage does not reduce prophecy to predicting future events: Paul emphasizes understandable speech that builds up, encourages, and consoles the church. Acts also records prophetic warnings about events to come.

Christians disagree about whether and how prophecy continues today, and about the authority of a contemporary prophetic message. These questions should be discussed carefully. This study treats Scripture as the authoritative standard and follows Paul's explicit instruction that what is spoken in the church be weighed.

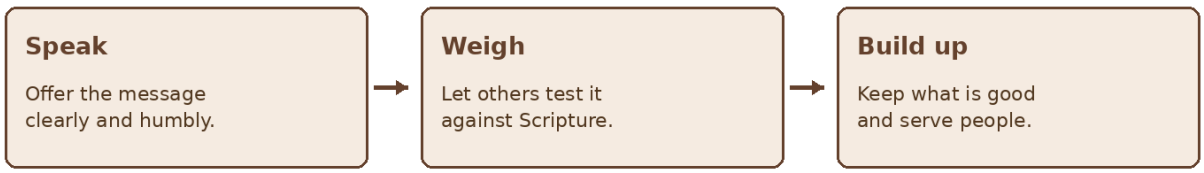


Figure 1 Prophecy in a discerning community

2 The Purpose Is to Build Up

In 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul says that the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation. His comparison with uninterpreted tongues in the gathered church stresses intelligibility and benefit to others. A message should therefore be understandable and accountable to the people it is meant to serve.

“Building up” does not mean every message will feel pleasant. A truthful warning or correction may be difficult. Its aim and manner still matter. Prophecy must not become a means of humiliation, control, or personal display. Paul begins the chapter by directing believers to pursue love.

Purpose in 1 Corinthians 14:3	Question to ask
Strengthening	Does this help people stand firm in Christ?
Encouragement	Does this call them toward faithful action?
Consolation	Does this bring truthful comfort to those in need?

3 Weigh What Is Said

Paul instructs two or three prophets to speak and others to weigh what is said (1 Corinthians 14:29). First Thessalonians 5:20–21 similarly holds together openness and testing. The church should not reject a claim simply because it needs examination; neither should it accept a claim merely because it is introduced as a word from God.

Weigh the message by Scripture and its teaching about Christ. Ask whether the speaker has separated an initial impression from an interpretation, whether factual claims can be checked, and what response is being requested. When the message affects another person’s reputation or a major decision, involve those with appropriate responsibility and protect privacy.

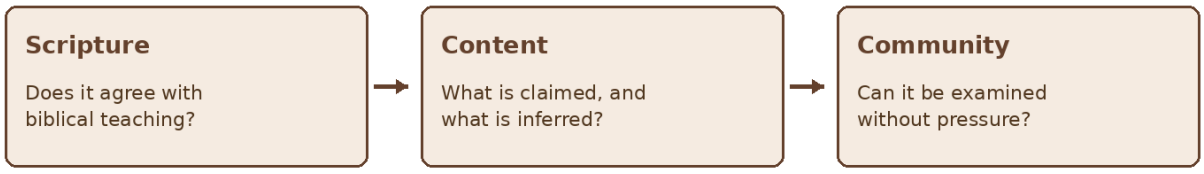


Figure 2 Three checks for a proposed prophetic message

4 Speak With Humility and Order

First Corinthians 14:26–33 places contributions to worship within an orderly gathering so that all may learn and be encouraged. A person should not use a claimed message to override responsible leadership, force immediate action, or silence questions. Paul’s instruction to weigh what is said presumes that a speaker can allow examination.

A helpful form of speech names the level of confidence honestly: “I think this may be worth praying about,” followed by the content, is different from “God has told me you must do this.” Stronger claims require stronger grounds. Where there is uncertainty, say so. If a message proves mistaken, correct it without blaming the hearer.

5 Prophecy and Prediction

Acts 11:27–30 describes Agabus predicting a famine and the disciples responding with aid. Acts 21:10–14 describes his warning about Paul's journey; those present urge Paul not to go, but Paul continues, and they finally entrust the matter to the Lord's will. These narratives show that a warning, its interpretation, and the action proposed by hearers must be considered carefully.

A future oriented claim can affect jobs, relationships, finances, or safety. Do not make another person's consequential choice for them on the strength of an untested prediction. Record the claim accurately, invite appropriate counsel, and avoid revising the original words after events occur.

Layer	Example	Question
Message	"I sense a difficult season ahead."	What exactly was communicated?
Interpretation	"This refers to your current job."	What supports that application?
Decision	"You must resign now."	Who is responsible, and what other facts matter?

6 Protect the People Involved

A prophetic claim about someone's private life, sin, or future can cause serious harm if shared carelessly. Do not announce sensitive matters publicly without a sound basis and appropriate process. Avoid using spiritual language to gain authority over another person, isolate them from counsel, or demand secrecy.



Figure 3 The manner of sharing matters

A message that contradicts Scripture or requires manipulation should be rejected. A message that cannot yet be evaluated can be held with patience. The speaker's willingness to be corrected is an important part of a healthy posture.

7 A Practical Prophecy Journal

When a message is offered, record its original wording before discussing meaning or outcome. Share personal information only with those who have a responsible reason to receive it.

Prompt	Record
What was actually said?	Write the words and date without later additions.
What is the proposed meaning?	Keep interpretation separate from the message.
What does Scripture address?	Read relevant passages in their context.
What facts can be checked?	Identify evidence and remaining uncertainty.
Who should weigh it?	Invite mature, appropriate counsel.
What action is justified now?	Choose a proportionate response without pressure.
What happened later?	Revisit the original words and correct errors honestly.

Reflection and Discussion

- How do love and the common good shape prophetic speech?
- Why does Paul tell others to weigh what is said?
- What is the difference between a message, its interpretation, and a proposed decision?
- How can a church stay open to the Spirit while protecting people from coercion?

Practice Case

During a small group meeting, a member says, “I believe our group should support a family facing a difficult month.” The member then adds, “God says each of you must give a specific amount tonight.” The group knows the family has asked for help, but it has not discussed their needs or consent to share details.

First identify the concern that may be worth receiving: a family needs support. Then separate the proposed amount and urgent demand from that concern. Ask what is known, who should speak with the family, and how the group can respond generously without pressuring members or exposing private information. Discuss how the speaker could restate the message with humility and allow it to be weighed.

Step	Group response
Receive	Listen to the concern without committing to every claim.
Weigh	Check facts, Scripture, consent, and who has responsibility.
Act	Offer appropriate help through a clear, voluntary process.

A Prayer for Truth and Love

Father, teach us to listen to Your Word and to serve one another in love. If Your Spirit prompts someone to speak, give clarity, humility, and patience. Help us weigh what is said without fear or contempt, keep what is good, and correct what is mistaken. Protect the people affected by our words and keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a unit, with particular attention to 14:1–5 and 14:26–33. Then read 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, Acts 11:27–30, and Acts 21:10–14. Compare what the passages explicitly report with the conclusions readers may draw from them.

The Gift of Discerning Spirits

A Bible study on testing spiritual claims with truth, humility, and love

STUDY SEVEN • DISCERNMENT

"To another the ability to distinguish between spirits." — 1 Corinthians 12:10

Discernment has appeared throughout this series because every gift must be received and tested responsibly. This study focuses on the particular manifestation Paul names as "distinguishing between spirits." It asks what Scripture establishes, how this gift may serve the church, and how to distinguish a genuine concern from an untested explanation. Its purpose is truth and protection in service of others, not suspicion or special status.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
1 Corinthians 12:4–11	The Spirit distributes varied manifestations for the common good, including distinguishing between spirits.
1 John 4:1–6	Believers are told to test spirits, especially claims about Jesus Christ.
1 Thessalonians 5:19–22	Do not despise prophecies; test everything and retain what is good.
1 Corinthians 14:29	Others in the gathered church weigh what prophetic speakers say.
Matthew 7:15–20	Jesus warns about false prophets and directs attention to their fruit.
Acts 16:16–18	Paul encounters a slave girl described as having a spirit of divination; the narrative requires careful reading.

1 A Gift and a Shared Responsibility

First Corinthians 12:10 lists an ability to distinguish between spirits among the Spirit's varied gifts. Paul does not give a technical definition or a complete procedure for exercising it. Many Christians understand it as Spirit enabled recognition of the spiritual source or character of a claim or influence. That is a reasonable interpretation to discuss, but we should not present its details as though Paul spelled them out.

At the same time, the whole church is told to test spiritual claims in 1 John 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21. The particular gift and the general responsibility are related without being identical. A believer need not claim this gift in order to read Scripture, ask questions, and decline an untested claim.

The shared responsibility uses Scripture, communal wisdom, and attention to fruit. The particular gift may draw attention to a spiritual claim needing closer examination. Neither requires certainty about hidden causes, and a gifted person remains accountable to the church.

2 Begin With the Claim About Christ

I John 4:1–6 addresses false prophets and focuses on confession concerning Jesus Christ. The passage does not invite believers to identify a hidden spirit behind every uncomfortable interaction. It directs testing

toward the content and source of spiritual teaching. A claim that contradicts the apostolic witness to Christ cannot be accepted merely because it is accompanied by a powerful experience.

The first questions are often clear ones: What is being taught about Jesus? Does it agree with Scripture? What conduct follows from it? A vivid impression, dramatic sign, or confident speaker cannot replace these questions.



Figure 1 Begin with the message before assigning a source

3 Distinguish Perception from Interpretation

Discernment requires us to distinguish between **what we notice, what we think it means, and what we conclude from it**. These are not the same thing.

A perception may alert us that something deserves closer attention, but it does not automatically explain why we noticed it or what caused it. We then interpret that perception using Scripture, known facts, experience, and counsel. Only after careful examination should we draw a conclusion—and some conclusions may remain uncertain.

Our interpretations can be influenced by fear, personal experience, expectations, assumptions, or incomplete information. Recognizing these influences does not mean the original concern was wrong; it means that **a genuine concern can still be given a mistaken explanation**. Honest discernment therefore remains open to examination and correction.

Layer	Example	Question to Ask
Perception	“Something about that experience concerns me.”	What specifically was said or done that raised the concern?
Interpretation	“This experience may conflict with what Scripture says about Jesus.”	What does Scripture actually teach, and does the message agree with it?
Conclusion	“A particular spirit is behind this person or experience.”	What grounds do I have for making that conclusion, and does the evidence support it?

The first step is to **notice**; the second is to **examine**; the third is to **conclude only as far as the evidence allows**.

This distinction is especially important when discerning spiritual claims. Scripture gives believers reason to test teaching and examine its fruit, but noticing that something is troubling or unbiblical does not automatically reveal its spiritual cause. A believer should therefore avoid publicly assigning a spiritual condition, motive, or influence to another person based only on a private impression.

Discernment does not require certainty where certainty has not been given. Sometimes the faithful conclusion is simply, *"This experience does not agree with Scripture,"* without making a further claim about the person or the spiritual cause behind it.

4 Discernment and Suspicion

Discernment asks for truth and remains open to correction. Suspicion often treats an uneasy feeling as proof, searches for confirming details, and closes the case before hearing the person fairly. A discerning response can set a boundary or request accountability without claiming knowledge of an unseen cause.

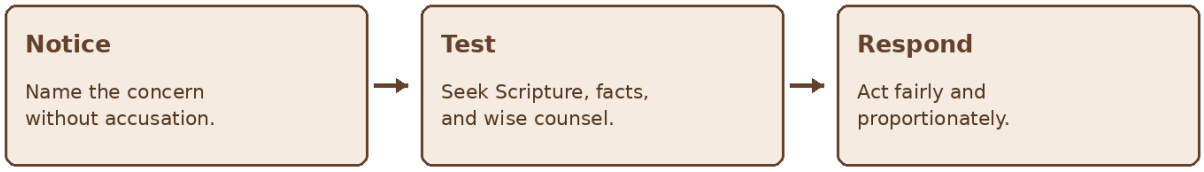


Figure 2 A measured response to a concern

Jesus' warning about false prophets in Matthew 7:15–20 directs attention to fruit. Fruit is a sustained pattern of teaching and conduct, not a shortcut for declaring what spirit is present after one awkward encounter. Where there is abuse or deception, address the observable behavior and protect affected people through appropriate processes.

The gifts describe ways the Spirit equips believers to serve; the fruit describes the character the Spirit produces in believers as they live by Him.

5 Read Narratives Carefully

Acts 16:16–18 describes Paul and a slave girl whom the text says had a spirit of divination. The account is specific and includes exploitation by her owners. It does not give every Christian a method for diagnosing a person's spiritual state. Read the whole scene before drawing an analogy to a modern experience.

Some spiritual claims require a firm rejection. Others require more information or can be set aside without an explanation. Uncertainty is not failure. A person may say, "I do not know the source of this impression, but the claim itself should be tested."

6 How the Gift May Serve

A person with a particular sensitivity may notice that a message, practice, or dynamic needs closer examination. Their contribution can help the church pause, compare the matter with Scripture, and protect people from manipulation. The person offering the concern should explain what they actually observed and welcome the judgment of others.

Helpful contribution	Responsible form
Draw attention	"This statement about Christ seems inconsistent with the passage."
Request examination	"Can we read the text together and hear another perspective?"

Helpful contribution	Responsible form
Protect people	“This behavior needs a fair and prompt response.”
Remain teachable	“I may have misunderstood; please help me test it.”

The gift is not permission to overrule leaders, isolate a person, or make an unverifiable accusation. Its purpose remains the common good, and love governs how concerns are raised.

7 A Practical Discernment Journal

Record the claim or event before interpreting it. Use this framework when something feels spiritually significant.

Prompt	Record
What happened?	Describe words and observable events.
What did I perceive?	Name the impression without asserting its source.
What am I concluding?	Separate interpretation from established facts.
What does Scripture say?	Read the relevant passage in context.
What else might explain it?	Consider ordinary and incomplete information.
Who can help weigh it?	Seek mature counsel with appropriate privacy.
What response is justified?	Choose a fair, loving, proportionate next step.
What happened later?	Revisit and correct the original interpretation.

Practice Case

A speaker tells a group, “Anyone who questions my message is resisting the Holy Spirit,” and asks members to keep it from their church leaders. One listener feels uneasy. The listener does not need to identify an unseen spirit to recognize that the claim discourages testing and accountability.

Discuss the speaker’s exact words, the relevant Scriptures, the people who could be affected, and the next responsible step. A group could pause the message, seek leadership review, and make room for questions without making unsupported claims about the speaker’s inner motives.

Reflection and Discussion

- How is the gift of distinguishing between spirits related to the duty of all believers to test claims?
- Which part of a concern is observable, and which part is interpretation?
- How does 1 John 4 keep the focus on truth about Christ?
- How can a church address harmful conduct without guessing at hidden spiritual causes?

A Prayer for Discernment

Father, give us wisdom and love as we test what we hear. Keep us attentive to Your Word and faithful to Jesus Christ. If Your Spirit draws our attention to a concern, help us describe it truthfully, seek wise counsel, and respond fairly. Guard us from fear, pride, and unsupported accusations. Let our discernment protect and build up Your people. Amen.

Further Study

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a unit. Then read 1 John 4:1–6, 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, Matthew 7:15–20, and Acts 16:16–18 in context. Note what each passage says about testing, what it says about spiritual sources, and what it leaves unexplained.

Tongues and Interpretation

A Bible study on understandable worship and the differing Presbyterian views

STUDY EIGHT • SPEAKING IN TONGUES & INTERPRETATION

“Let all things be done for building up.” — 1 Corinthians 14:26

Paul lists varieties of tongues and their interpretation separately in 1 Corinthians 12:10. He treats them together when discussing the gathered church: a public contribution must be intelligible to others if it is to build them up. This combined study examines the biblical passages without assuming that a Presbyterian reader or congregation practices these gifts today. It also identifies where Christians disagree about their nature and continuation.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the study
Acts 2:1–13	At Pentecost, people from many places hear the mighty works of God in their own languages.
Acts 10:44–48; 19:1–7	Tongues appear in two further accounts of the Spirit’s work in Acts.
1 Corinthians 12:7–11, 27–31	Paul names kinds of tongues and interpretation as distinct gifts; not all possess the same gift.
1 Corinthians 13:1–13	Love, rather than a striking gift, is indispensable.
1 Corinthians 14:1–28, 33, 39–40	Paul emphasizes understanding, interpretation, building up, and order in the assembly.

1 Why Study the Two Gifts Together

The list in 1 Corinthians 12:10 names “various kinds of tongues” and “the interpretation of tongues” separately. Yet 1 Corinthians 14 repeatedly connects their use in the assembly. Without an interpretation, the congregation cannot understand what was said or receive instruction from it. Paul tells the speaker to remain silent in the church when no interpreter is present (14:27–28).

Combining these gifts in one chapter preserves the distinction in Paul’s list while following his practical concern. His question in 1 Corinthians 12:30 expects that not everyone speaks in tongues and not everyone interprets.



Figure 1 Why Paul joins them in gathered worship

2 What Happens at Pentecost

Acts 2:1–13 describes the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost. People from many places hear the disciples declaring God’s mighty works in their own languages. The passage emphasizes that the hearers

understand across language boundaries. Peter then explains the event and proclaims Jesus Christ to the crowd.

Acts 2 is a particular event in the history of the church. It does not by itself settle every question about tongues in Corinth. Christians debate whether all New Testament examples involve identifiable human languages or whether Paul also describes speech of another kind. The texts should be compared carefully rather than treated as though every detail is identical.

Acts 2	1 Corinthians 12–14
The crowd hears in its own languages.	Paul discusses gifts and their use in a local congregation.
Peter publicly explains the event.	Paul insists that the assembly understand what is said.
The story marks a significant moment in the spread of the gospel.	The instructions address order and the common good in worship.

3 What Paul Emphasizes in Corinth

First Corinthians 14 addresses a gathering where speech that others cannot understand fails to instruct them. Paul values intelligible words in the church and says the one speaking in a tongue should pray to interpret (14:13). He does not make the experience itself the test of its usefulness to the congregation. The benefit to others matters.

Paul's instructions for the assembly limit speakers to two or at most three, one at a time, with someone to interpret. If no one can interpret, the person is to remain silent in the church and speak to themselves and to God (14:27–28). The chapter closes by calling for fitting and orderly practice. These are instructions within the Corinthian setting, not an invitation to pressure every church to reproduce the setting.

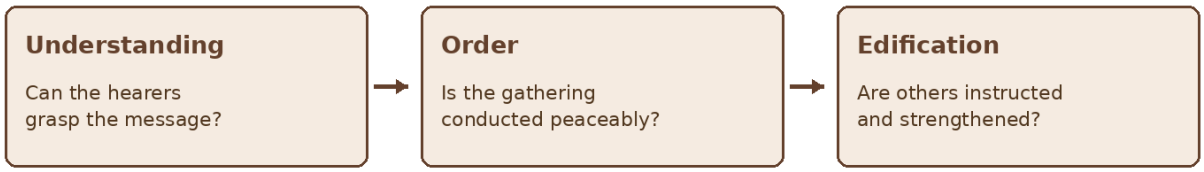


Figure 2 Paul's priorities in public worship

4 A Presbyterian and Reformed Lens

Presbyterian churches share a concern for Scripture, intelligible worship, and ordered oversight, but they do not all reach the same conclusion about contemporary tongues. Many in the historic Reformed tradition understand the extraordinary revelatory gifts as belonging to the church's foundational period. Westminster Confession of Faith 1.1 says that former ways of revealing God's will have ceased. How that statement applies to particular modern claims is discussed differently among Presbyterians.

Other Presbyterians are open to the possibility of such gifts while insisting on scriptural testing, pastoral oversight, and the good of the congregation. A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) study has discussed charismatic experiences and the need for mutual respect within the church. This chapter does not require a reader to resolve the larger debate before understanding what Paul wrote.

Question	A careful approach
What did Paul address?	Read the Corinthian text in its original argument.

Question	A careful approach
How do Presbyterians differ?	State the congregation's actual teaching rather than assuming one universal practice.
What is shared?	Keep Scripture, love, understanding, and the building up of the church central.

5 What This Study Does Not Require

A reader can study these passages without seeking a tongues experience. Paul's questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29–30 make clear that the members of the body do not all exercise the same gifts. A person should not be told that speaking in tongues is necessary evidence of conversion or spiritual maturity.

Likewise, a decision not to use these gifts in a particular congregation should be explained by that church's reading of Scripture and its worship practice, not by pretending the passages are absent. Honest study can acknowledge the texts, the history of interpretation, and the differences among faithful Christians.

6 Discernment and Public Claims

If someone reports speaking in tongues or interpreting, distinguish the experience from the claim about its meaning and use. Ask what happened, who understood it, what was said, and whether the event is being used to build others up or to assign spiritual status. Do not invent an interpretation or pressure a person to perform.

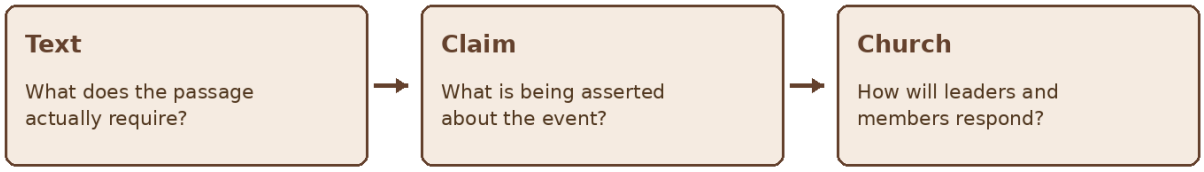


Figure 3 Weigh a claim within a church's teaching

A church's leaders are responsible for its public worship. Private experiences should not be used to bypass that responsibility. Where believers differ, they can speak respectfully and avoid treating their position as a measure of another Christian's faith.

7 A Practical Study Journal

Use these prompts to compare the passages before drawing a conclusion about current practice.

Prompt	Record
What happens in Acts 2?	Identify the speakers, hearers, and understood content.
What does Paul list?	Note the separate gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:10.
What requires interpretation?	Read 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, and 27–28.
What is the purpose?	Identify the common good and building up of the church.
What remains debated?	Separate the text from claims about continuation and language.
What does my church teach?	Consult its confession, leaders, and worship practice.

Prompt	Record
How should I respond?	Choose honesty, respect, and obedience to Christ.

Practice Case

A visitor tells a Presbyterian small group that everyone must speak in tongues to demonstrate that they have the Holy Spirit. One member points to 1 Corinthians 12:30 and asks whether Paul expected all believers to exercise this gift. The group reads chapters 12–14 together and asks its elders how its congregation approaches these passages.

Discuss which claim can be answered directly from Paul's text, which questions require further interpretation, and how the group can treat the visitor with respect while refusing pressure. The aim is to learn, not to stage an experience or dismiss a person.

Reflection and Discussion

- Why does interpretation matter for the gathered church?
- What is clear in Acts 2, and what does it leave open about Corinth?
- How does Paul's body image challenge the idea that all believers must have one gift?
- How can a Presbyterian congregation study a disputed gift honestly and peaceably?

A Prayer for Understanding

Father, thank You for giving Your Spirit to Your people. Help us read Your Word carefully and worship You with understanding, love, and peace. Where we disagree, give us humility and respect. Keep us from making one experience a measure of another believer's standing with You. Build up Your church through the gifts and service You provide, and keep our attention on Jesus Christ. Amen.

Further Study

Read Acts 2:1–41 and 1 Corinthians 12–14 in full. Compare Acts 10:44–48 and 19:1–7. Read Westminster Confession of Faith 1.1 and consult the teaching of your own congregation or denomination. Distinguish what Scripture explicitly says from later theological conclusions and modern experiences.

APPENDIX

The Fruit of the Spirit

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." — Galatians 5:22–23

The gift studies ask what the Spirit may give believers for the good of others. This appendix asks what kind of people the Spirit forms. Paul's list in Galatians 5:22–23 describes character expressed in a life led by the Spirit. A striking gift never replaces love, and the presence of a gift alone does not prove maturity. Read the list in its setting: Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit and calls believers to walk by the Spirit.

Scripture at a Glance

Passage	Contribution to the appendix
Galatians 5:13–26	Freedom serves love; the works of the flesh are contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit.
John 15:1–8	Jesus uses the vine and branches to teach dependence on him for fruitfulness.
Romans 8:5–14	Life according to the Spirit shapes the mind and conduct.
Colossians 3:12–17	Compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love are practiced in community.
1 Corinthians 12:7; 13:1–13	Gifts serve the common good, while love is indispensable.
Matthew 7:15–20	Jesus directs attention to fruit when warning about false prophets.

1 Fruit and Gifts Are Related but Distinct

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks of diverse gifts distributed among members of the body for the common good. In Galatians 5, he describes the fruit of a life shaped by the Spirit. Gifts differ from person to person; the character Paul describes is a direction of growth for believers generally. The singular word "fruit" introduces the whole list. It should not be turned into nine separate spiritual gifts.

Paul follows his discussion of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 with chapter 13 on love. Even remarkable abilities are empty when exercised without love. This is why the fruit of the Spirit belongs beside the gift studies: it helps us ask how a gift is used, how people are treated, and whether a person remains teachable.

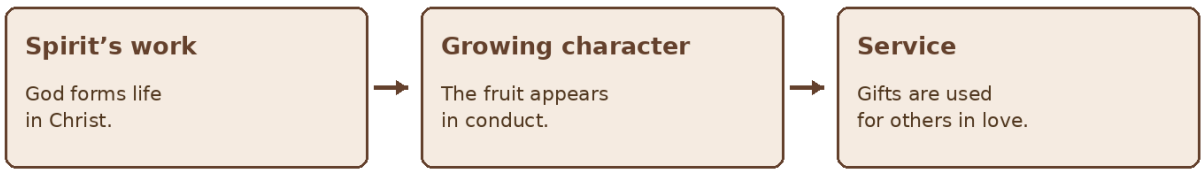


Figure 1 Character shapes the use of gifts

2 Read Galatians in Context

Galatians 5 does not present a scorecard for comparing Christians. Paul addresses freedom, the call to serve one another through love, and the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. “Flesh” in this passage describes human life turned toward desires opposed to God; it should not be reduced to the physical body itself.

The listed works of the flesh include not only sexual immorality and drunkenness but also hostility, jealousy, anger, rivalry, and division. The fruit of the Spirit therefore has a communal dimension. It can be seen in patient relationships, truthful conduct, reconciliation, and self-restraint over time.

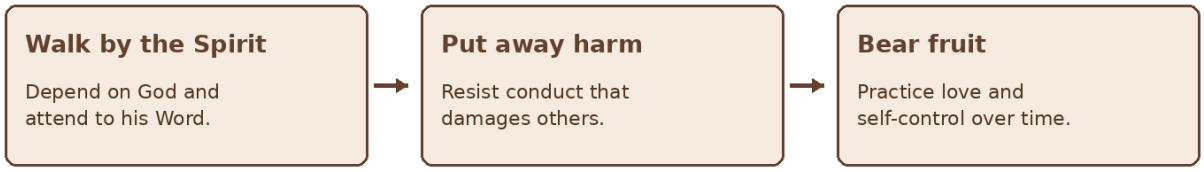


Figure 2 The direction of a Spirit led life in Galatians 5

3 The Nine Qualities

Galatians 5:22–23 is the central text for every quality below. The companion references show the same character being taught or practiced elsewhere in Scripture; they do not redefine Paul’s list.

Quality	What it can look like	Companion Scripture
Love	Seeking another person’s good with truth and sacrifice.	John 13:34–35
Joy	Rejoicing in the Lord amid changing circumstances.	Philippians 4:4
Peace	Pursuing peace within the body of Christ.	Colossians 3:15
Patience	Bearing with people instead of reacting in anger.	Ephesians 4:2
Kindness	Showing practical mercy and tenderheartedness.	Ephesians 4:32
Goodness	Choosing what is good, right, and true.	Ephesians 5:8–10
Faithfulness	Remaining trustworthy in entrusted responsibilities.	Luke 16:10
Gentleness	Responding with considerate strength.	Philippians 4:5
Self-control	Practicing restraint rather than being ruled by impulse.	2 Peter 1:5–6

These short descriptions are applications, not substitutes for reading each passage. The qualities belong together. For example, kindness without truth may fail to help; truth spoken without gentleness may wound unnecessarily.

4 How Fruit Grows

Jesus' image in John 15:1–8 places fruitfulness in relationship to him: a branch does not bear fruit by itself. The image emphasizes dependence rather than self manufacture. Prayer, Scripture, worship, repentance, and life with the church are ordinary ways believers remain attentive to Christ and learn obedience.

Romans 8:5–14 describes a mind set on the Spirit and the Spirit's help in putting sinful deeds to death. Growth involves God's work and a believer's response. It is often gradual. A single failure should be confessed and addressed, but it should not erase genuine growth; a single impressive act should not substitute for a sustained pattern.

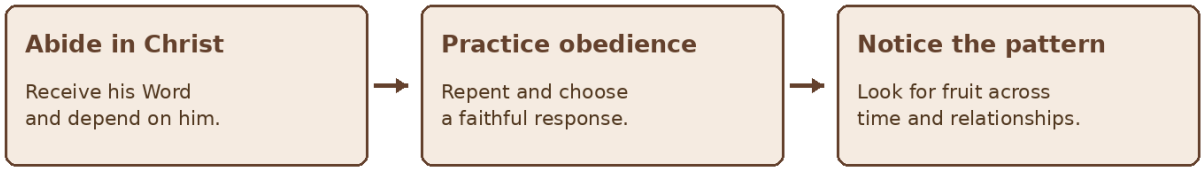


Figure 3 A simple pattern for examining growth

5 Fruit as Part of Discernment

Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:15–20 concerns false prophets and their fruit. Looking at fruit means examining a pattern of teaching and conduct, not guessing at someone's motives from one uncomfortable moment. When a person claims a gift, ask whether its use is marked by love, truth, patience, gentleness, and accountability.

Fruit is one part of discernment, not an infallible shortcut. People can appear pleasant while teaching falsely, and a faithful correction may feel uncomfortable. Compare claims with Scripture, listen to those affected, and allow time to reveal patterns. Address concrete harm directly rather than using spiritual labels in place of evidence.

Question	Why it matters
Is the message faithful to Scripture?	Character does not make false teaching true.
How are people treated?	A gift is meant for the common good.
Is correction welcomed?	Humility makes testing possible.
What pattern appears over time?	Fruit is more than one moment or mood.

6 A Personal Reflection Practice

Choose one quality for focused prayer and practice this week while remembering that the Spirit forms the whole life. Write about a real situation rather than rating yourself or others.

Prompt	Record
Which passage will I read?	Read Galatians 5:13–26 and one companion text in context.
Where was this quality needed?	Describe an actual interaction without excuses or exaggeration.
What did I do?	Name words and actions honestly.
What would faithfulness look like?	Choose a concrete, loving response.
Whom should I ask for help?	Invite prayer or appropriate accountability.

Prompt	Record
What changed with time?	Return to the entry and notice growth or needed repair.

Scripture Index

Further Reading & Sources

The following references consolidate the Scripture passages, historical materials, theological documents, and scholarly sources recommended throughout *Gifts of the Holy Spirit • Bible Study*. Repeated passages have been combined so this section can serve as a single reference guide at the end of the study.

Scripture and Biblical References

[1] 1 Corinthians 12–14. The principal New Testament discussion of spiritual gifts, the common good, love, prophecy, tongues, interpretation, testing, and orderly worship.

[2] Romans 12:1–8. Spiritual gifts, transformed thinking, sober judgment, and differing forms of service within the body of Christ.

[3] Ephesians 4:1–16. Unity, spiritual gifts, equipping the saints, maturity, and growth into Christ.

[4] 1 Peter 4:7–11. Stewardship of gifts through speaking and serving, with the purpose of glorifying God.

[5] James 1:5–8. Asking God for wisdom and the relationship between faith and doubt.

[6] James 3:13–18. Wisdom from above and its qualities, including purity, peace, gentleness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity.

[7] Proverbs 2:1–6. Seeking wisdom, understanding, and the knowledge of God.

[8] Proverbs 9:10. The fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom.

[9] Acts 15:1–21. Communal deliberation involving testimony, Scripture, discernment, and practical consequences.

[10] 1 Corinthians 1:18–31. The contrast between God's wisdom and worldly measures of status and wisdom.

[11] 1 Corinthians 2:6–16. God's wisdom, the Spirit's work, and spiritual understanding.

[12] 1 Corinthians 8:1–3. Knowledge, pride, and the necessity of love.

[13] 1 Corinthians 13:1–13. Love, the limitations of knowledge and prophecy, and the proper perspective on spiritual gifts.

[14] Colossians 1:9–10. Knowledge of God's will and knowledge that produces a worthy and fruitful life.

[15] John 4:1–42, especially 4:16–19. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman and His knowledge of her circumstances.

[16] Acts 5:1–11. Peter's confrontation of Ananias and Sapphira.

[17] 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, 27–30. The Spirit's distribution of gifts for the common good, including faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation.

[18] Mark 9:14–29. Faith, prayer, dependence upon Jesus, and the father's admission of both belief and unbelief.

[19] Hebrews 11:1–40. Faith expressed through trust and obedience amid differing earthly outcomes.

[20] James 5:13–18. Prayer for those who suffer or are sick, including the involvement of church elders.

[21] 2 Corinthians 5:7. Walking by faith rather than sight.

[22] Romans 10:17. Faith and hearing the message of Christ.

[23] Mark 1:29–34. Jesus' healing ministry and compassion.

[24] Mark 2:1–12. The healing of the paralytic and Jesus' authority to forgive sins.

[25] Acts 3:1–16. The healing of the man unable to walk and Peter's redirection of attention toward Jesus.

[26] Acts 9:32–35. The healing of Aeneas.

[27] Philippians 2:25–30. Epaphroditus' serious illness and recovery.

[28] 2 Timothy 4:20. Trophimus being left sick at Miletus.

[29] 2 Corinthians 12:7–10. Paul's affliction, prayer, and God's sufficient grace.

[30] Acts 14:8–18. The healing at Lystra and Paul and Barnabas' refusal to receive worship.

[31] Acts 19:11–20. Extraordinary miracles through Paul and the misuse of the name of Jesus.

[32] Hebrews 2:1–4. Signs, wonders, miracles, and God's testimony concerning the message of salvation.

[33] 1 Corinthians 14:1–5. Prophecy, strengthening, encouragement, consolation, and building up the church.

[34] 1 Corinthians 14:26–33. Orderly worship, building up the church, and weighing what is spoken.

[35] 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22. Not despising prophecies, testing everything, and holding fast to what is good.

[36] Acts 11:27–30. Agabus' prophecy concerning a coming famine and the church's practical response.

[37] Acts 21:10–14. Agabus' warning concerning Paul's journey and the response of the believers.

[38] 1 John 4:1–6. Testing spiritual claims and examining teaching concerning Jesus Christ.

[39] Matthew 7:15–20. Jesus' warning concerning false prophets and the importance of examining their fruit.

[40] Acts 16:16–18. Paul's encounter with the slave girl described as having a spirit of divination.

[41] Acts 2:1–41. Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and speaking in other tongues.

[42] Acts 10:44–48. The Holy Spirit coming upon Gentile believers and their speaking in tongues.

[43] Acts 19:1–7. The disciples at Ephesus receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues and prophesying.

[44] Galatians 5:13–26. Life by the Spirit, the works of the flesh, and the fruit of the Spirit.

[45] John 15:1–17. Abiding in Christ, bearing fruit, and remaining in His love.

[46] Romans 8:1–17. Life according to the Spirit and the believer's relationship to God through the Spirit.

[47] Colossians 3:12–17. Christian character, love, peace, thankfulness, and life together in Christ.

[48] Romans 12:6–8. Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy.

[49] 1 Corinthians 12:28. Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and tongues.

[50] Ephesians 4:11–16. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers and their role in equipping the church.

[51] 1 Peter 4:10–11. Speaking and serving as stewardship of God's gifts.

Historical, Theological, and Scholarly Sources

[52] Bible Hub, “1 Corinthians 12:10 Greek Text Analysis.” Greek text and lexical analysis concerning the terms *glōssōn* and *hermēneia*. biblehub.com/text/1_corinthians/12-10.htm.

[53] Mark J. Cartledge, “Glossolalia,” *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Scholarly discussion concerning the derivation and use of the term “glossolalia.” doi.org/10.1002/9780470670606.wbecc0594.

[54] Assemblies of God (USA), “History.” Historical background concerning the Assemblies of God. ag.org/About/About-the-AG/History.

[55] Assemblies of God (USA), “William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival.” Historical discussion of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival. news.ag.org/en/article-repository/news/1999/04/william-j-seymour-and-the-azusa-street-revival.

[56] University of Southern California Digital Library, original Azusa Street Mission newspapers. digitallibrary.usc.edu/asset-management/2A3BF1MG1CITP.

[57] Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “The Work of the Holy Spirit,” report to the 182nd General Assembly (1970). pcusa.org/sites/default/files/the_work_of_the_holy_spirit.pdf.

[58] Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.” pcusa.org/sites/default/files/holyspirit1_0.pdf.

[59] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.1, as published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. opc.org/WCF-WIP.html.

[60] Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “What about Prophecy and Tongues Today?” opc.org/feature.html?feature_id=62.

Primary Passages for Course-Wide Review

[61] 1 Corinthians 12:7. The common good as the purpose of the Spirit's manifestation.

[62] 1 Corinthians 13:1–13. Love as essential to the proper exercise of spiritual gifts.

[63] 1 Corinthians 14:26. Building up the church as the governing purpose of gathered contributions.

[64] 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1–6. The responsibility to test spiritual claims.

[65] Galatians 5:16–26. The Spirit's work in forming Christian character and the fruit of the Spirit.

[66] Ephesians 4:11–16. Unity, maturity, service, and growth in Christ.

Suggested Reading Order

[67] Begin with 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a complete unit.

[68] Read Romans 12:1–8, Ephesians 4:1–16, and 1 Peter 4:7–11 to compare the different New Testament discussions of spiritual gifts.

[69] Read Galatians 5:13–26 alongside 1 Corinthians 12–13 to consider the relationship between spiritual gifts, character, and love.

[70] For questions concerning prophecy and discernment, read 1 Corinthians 14:1–33, 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, and 1 John 4:1–6 together.

[71] For questions concerning tongues and interpretation, read 1 Corinthians 12–14 alongside Acts 2:1–41, Acts 10:44–48, and Acts 19:1–7.

[72] For historical and denominational questions concerning tongues and spiritual gifts, consult the Assemblies of God, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Westminster Confession of Faith, and Orthodox Presbyterian Church materials listed above.

[73] When comparing theological interpretations, distinguish the biblical text itself from later theological conclusions, denominational teaching, historical interpretation, and contemporary personal experience.

Glossary of Spiritual Gifts Terms

These definitions help readers use the course consistently. They are brief working descriptions rather than exhaustive doctrinal statements. Where Christians dispute a term, the entry names the disagreement. Scripture in context and the teaching of one's church remain more important than a glossary label.

Biblical and Theological Terms

Term	Working definition and key text
Charisma / charismata	Greek terms associated with a gracious gift or gifts. The New Testament uses them in more than one context; see Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:4.
Manifestation of the Spirit	Paul's description of what the Spirit gives for the common good in 1 Corinthians 12:7.
Spiritual gift	A grace given by the Spirit for service. Lists and functions vary across 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4.
Fruit of the Spirit	The character described in Galatians 5:22–23; distinct from the varied gift lists.
Common good	The benefit of others and the church, not a person's spiritual status (1 Corinthians 12:7).
Edification / building up	Strengthening the church in understanding, love, and maturity (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 4:12–16).

Terms Used in the Individual Studies

Term	Working definition and caution
Message of wisdom	The manifestation named in 1 Corinthians 12:8; Paul does not give a detailed technical definition.
Message of knowledge	Named beside wisdom in 1 Corinthians 12:8; the exact boundary between the two is debated.
Gift of faith	Faith named as a particular manifestation in 1 Corinthians 12:9, distinguished in discussion from the trust in Christ shared by believers.
Gifts of healing	Paul's plural expression in 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30; the significance of the plural is not explained in the passage.
Working of miracles	Named in 1 Corinthians 12:10; Paul does not prescribe a method for producing miracles.
Prophecy	Spirit related speech discussed in 1 Corinthians 12–14; Christians differ about its authority and continuation today.
Distinguishing between spirits	A manifestation named in 1 Corinthians 12:10; related to but distinct from the duty of believers to test claims (1 John 4:1).
Tongues	Speech named in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and described in Acts; its form across the passages is debated.

Term	Working definition and caution
Interpretation of tongues	Making a public tongue intelligible to the gathered church (1 Corinthians 14:26–28).

Terms for Careful Discernment

Term	Meaning in this course
Observation	What someone actually heard, saw, felt, or recorded before assigning a cause.
Interpretation	The proposed meaning of an observation or passage; it may need correction.
Claim	A statement offered to others as true, especially one asserting a spiritual source or required response.
Testing / weighing	Examining a claim by Scripture, its content, facts, love, counsel, and fruit (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 Corinthians 14:29).
Fruit	A pattern of character and conduct over time; Matthew 7:15–20 addresses false prophets, and Galatians 5:22–23 describes the Spirit's fruit.
Accountability	The speaker's willingness to submit a claim and its use to responsible examination and correction.

Historical Positions and Language

Term	Working definition
Cessationism	The view that certain foundational or revelatory gifts ceased as ordinary gifts after the apostolic era; proponents differ in details.
Continuationism	The view that Scripture does not teach the cessation of all such gifts, while modern claims remain subject to testing.
Glossolalia	A later scholarly term for speaking in tongues.
Xenolalia	Speaking an identifiable human language one has not learned; a narrower term used in historical discussion.
Confession	A church's formal doctrinal statement, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith.
Session	In Presbyterian church government, the body of elders responsible for the oversight of a local congregation.

How to Use This Glossary

A term can be useful without settling a debate. When discussing a claim, ask the speaker what they mean, read the cited passage in context, and distinguish a biblical description from a later theological label. Appendix C maps the passages; Appendix D supplies a testing framework; Appendix E explains major Presbyterian perspectives.