

History of the Spiritual Gifts Doctrine in the Churches of God

By Craig M. White
Version 1.1

Opening Remarks

This author has had an interest in spiritual gifts (sometimes called gifts of the spirit) and talents as taught in the Bible. After all, having a religious upbringing, it was certainly talked about around the kitchen table and here and there in the extended family.

My Methodist Mother in particular, was adamant that God has given Christians a gift and it must be used to please Him and to better others. It was not to be used for self-elevation and vanity.

I talked with Worldwide Church of God ministers and members about it on a number of occasions and couldn't get a consistent view on what it is and how it applies to Christians today. Some ministers believed that spiritual gifts applied to ministers only; others that some applied to ministers and Church staff; while others believed they all applied to true believers and that they are being used even if you do not realise it.

I attempted, with what I could ascertain from the Church back in the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, my own study on the subject. It was not straightforward due to the Church's changing positions and ministerial personal stances. At that time I thought that some gifts were granted to ministers and others to the non-ordained. But views change with further thought and research.

This article attempts to document the history of this doctrine in the Church of God extending back into the nineteenth century. It does not delve into the doctrine itself which has been researched and written about by many others over the years.

What I am attempting is to:

1. Understand how the doctrinal understanding has developed and why the various groups hold to their particular positions.
2. Ascertain where we should go from here.
3. Know how to move forward with clarity on the subject with the use of policy statements, literature, teachings, sermons/Bible studies and classes on the subject.

Finally, it would be difficult (if not dishonest) to undertake research on the history of Worldwide Church of God doctrines without reference to the Church of God (Seventh Day) given its foundational role in the former's history. The Worldwide Church of God's roots are from that Church, and this must be understood, accepted and researched.

Occurrences of the Term in Church of God (Seventh Day) Literature

The Church of God (Seventh Day) has historically affirmed the Biblical teaching on spiritual gifts.¹ These are understood as abilities bestowed by the God's spirit upon believers for the edification of the church, based primarily on 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. The Church emphasises that spiritual gifts are diverse, distributed according to God the Father's will, and operational in the church today - the "last days" leading up to Christ's return. Spiritual gifts are distinguished from the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) which are character traits of our Father; however gifts are functional abilities for service rather than traits.

Unlike Pentecostal groups, the Church of God (Seventh Day) and most Church of God groups do not emphasise charismatic expressions like supposed speaking in tongues as if they are 'in your face'. Instead, they are performed as natural extensions of the Christian, in service to God and man.

From readings, it appears that this church's teachings on the subject have remained consistent since its formal organisation in the 1860s, rooted in a restorationist view of returning to New Testament Christianity. Herbert W Armstrong inherited the spirit of restoration and took it further over the years.

In the Church's publication, *The Hope of Israel*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (10 August 1963), basic doctrines are listed. Then the author notes:

"These are in part, the principles we shall advocate; contending also that **all the gifts** and blessings that once belonged to the Church of Christ, belong to the same church in all ages. And in the maintenance of these, and other kindred principles, we solicit the hearty co-operation of all God's dear children. ENOS EASTON, Editor." [emphasis mine]

In those days, the Church's official name was *Church of Christ* while others were known as the *Church of the Firstborn* etc. They continued to discuss spiritual gifts in that publication through to 1866 and beyond.

"On the Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts

Earlier in this series of extracts from the Hope of Israel, we observed that the Brethren believed in, and exercised, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in their midst, but now (in 1866) articles were appearing in the Hope,

¹ However, due to the pressure on people to accept Ellen G. White's visions and the early Seventh-day Adventist teachings on spiritual gifts, the "opposition to Mrs. White's visions led many to hold that there were no spiritual gifts given to Christians in the present time." (Richard C. Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God* (1973), p. 36). John Kiesz refers to this in his thesis *History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)* submitted in 1965 (pp. 8-9). Nickels also discusses Ellen G White's 'spiritual gifts' in his study No. 64 *We are Sabbath-Keepers, Not Seventh-Day Adventists*).

disclaiming any gifts at the present time. And there were also articles written in defense of the gifts for the present time. It seems obvious the reason some opposed the gifts was because they were against the Visions of Mrs. E. G. White.” (John Kiesz, *History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)* a paper submitted in 1965 (p. 47)

Alex Ferguson Dugger, the father of the famous Andrew Nugent Dugger, described faithful ministers as "filled with the blessed Holy Spirit" to resist doctrinal apostasy and advance the gospel. There was a clear emphasis to avoid heresies and to grow in knowledge of God's Word at that time.

For over 150 years, the Church of God (Seventh Day)'s doctrines have been disseminated through their periodical which today is titled the *Bible Advocate* magazine and official statements. With the reorganisation and a sort of 'rebirth' or 'restoration' of the Church of God in the 1850-80s, there was clearly more of a focus on the seventh-day Sabbath, conditionalism, baptism, and prophecy, and during that time – from what can be gathered - the understanding of spiritual gifts which has been consistent: the gifts of the spirit are viewed as part of the holy spirit's indwelling and empowerment for those keeping God's commandments and walking the Christian faith. However, it was clearly noted that there can be counterfeit 'gifts' used to deceive the Christian and lead them into false doctrine.

In his *The Bible Home Instructor. A Bible Reading for the Home Fireside and The Bible Made Easy* (1919), Andrew Dugger wrote:

“The Holy Spirit, Gifts, and Manifestations

1. What did Jesus say concerning the divine power that He was going to send for His followers, and how long was it to remain with them?

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever," John 14:16.

2. Who would send this Comforter, and by what other name is it spoken of?

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," John 14:26.

3. Where does this Comforter, or Holy Spirit, from God dwell?

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" I Corinthians 3:16.

4. To whom does God give the Holy Spirit?

"And we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," Acts 5:32.

5. How willing is the Lord to give us the Holy Spirit?

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? . . . If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:11, 13.

6. Did God's children in the Old Testament times also possess the Holy Spirit?

David prayed, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me," Psalm 51:11.

7. Was there a mysterious power that lingered in the bones of faithful Elisha after he was dead?

"And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet," II Kings 13:21.

8. In order to be resurrected from the dead, is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to dwell in our bodies?

"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Romans 8:11.

9. How is it possible for any man or woman, boy or girl, to obtain this priceless virtue from above?

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened," Luke 11:9-10.

10. What did the Lord promise His disciples that would give them power and wisdom for service in the gospel work?

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1:8.

NOTE: The words Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit are used synonymously. In the Greek we find the same words, and they are identical. In each case it refers to that divine anointing power from above, which God sends into the life of every person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness and earnestly calls upon Him for this power. Notice Matthew 5:6.

11. Are there different gifts of the Holy Spirit, and what are these gifts?

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues," I Corinthians 12:7-10.

12. Will all of these gifts be manifest in the same person, or will different individuals in the church possess different gifts?

"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show unto you a more excellent way," I Corinthians 12:29-31.

13. Will the true Church of God possess all of these gifts in the last days while they await the coming of the Lord?

"That in every thing ye are enriched by Him in all utterance, and in all knowledge . . . So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," I Corinthians 1:5, 7." (pp. 499-500)

There is enough contained in the above to reveal his and the Church's position at that time on gifts – that they are available to all Christians. There is no hint of them being restricted only to the ministry.

The following quotes are from the book *A True History of the True Church* written by Andrew N. Dugger and Clarence O. Dodd (1936 edition. It is also titled *A History of the True Religion* in some editions. Published by the Bible Advocate Press, Salem, WV):

"The church set in order by Jesus with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and with proper administration of government, is symbolized by a virtuous woman in the New Testament." (p. 12)

"Many ministers throughout America and in foreign fields endorsed the action of the Battle Creek conference, and followed the advice of their supposed prophetess, not only in the change of the church name, but in other erroneous teachings which were creeping in among God's people. Although this falling away, prophesied by Paul in I Tim. 4:1 to 3, which was to take place in the "latter times," did much damage to the cause of truth, yet the work of the Lord continued to go forward. Strong men filled with the blessed Holy Spirit were not deceived. They went steadily on undaunted, carrying the true name and the true faith." (p. 96)

"At this time it seemed that the Spirit of God was moving again in the camps of Israel, and men filled with the Holy Spirit from California to the New England states, and from north to south were impressed with the improper and unscriptural organization of the church" (p. 98)

The Church's 2012 adult Bible study guide *The Fruit of the Holy Spirit* explores both the fruit of the spirit and gifts. (<https://store.cog7.org/pages/2012-adult-bible-studies-1>)

From the official (current as of December 2025) *What We Believe* available online:

"The Spirit is God's presence and power in the world and indwells believers. By the Holy Spirit, God inspired and illuminates the Scriptures; convicts and regenerates sinners; sanctifies, teaches, comforts, guides, and preserves believers; and empowers them for service. Evidences of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life are faith in Christ, obedience to God, and the spiritual fruit of love." (<https://cog7.org/what-we-believe/> Refer also to the book *This We Believe. Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day, pp. 34-35)*

The above seems to vaguely suggest the conferral of gifts to God's children.

A Bible Advocate article outlines some additional information:

“These gifts include teaching, healing, hospitality, serving, administration, prophecy, giving, exhortation, mercy, wisdom, discernment, and more. Some people may say there are only six, seven, nine, or twelve (or more!) gifts, based on lists in the Bible. However most generally agree that these biblical lists are not exhaustive and allow for several other gifts.” (“Gifted and Called to Serve”, *BAOnline*, 30 April 2025 <https://baonline.org/gifted-and-called-to-serve/>)

Occurrences of the Term in Radio/Worldwide Church of God Literature

I can recall the term used in old literature and several occurrences of the term "spiritual gifts" appear in the *Good News*, *Plain Truth*, *Tomorrow's World*, booklets, and *Ambassador College Correspondence Course Lessons* authored by various Worldwide Church of God employees.

Following is an extract from Herbert W Armstrong's Letter to Church of God leader, Andrew Dugger, 11 July 1928. On page 478 of his *Autobiography*, Vol. 1, 1973 edition he wrote:

“Here are portions of that letter: "I appreciate your kind invitation to affiliate actively with the Church of God organization. Elder Stith approached me on the subject, also. . . "However, for the immediate present, until further developments, I do not feel led to join any organization, and feel that I should not take matters into my own hands, or rush, or hurry. I believe the Lord is dealing with me, preparing me for a very active and definite calling and mission, and that until matters have developed further I should do as Jesus commanded the Apostles — tarrying until I have received full preparation and power **I feel it is absolutely necessary that we should permit ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit**, and not try to launch into something half prepared, by taking matters into our own hands before we are sure it is the will of the Lord. I do not know exactly, yet, what my mission or calling is to be, or what the method of carrying it out is to be. Unquestionably it will require organized effort, rather than attempting to carry out the mission alone and unaided." "I can say this much — I feel that it is along the line of writing rather than oral speaking or preaching. **"I believe the Lord bestows gifts and callings upon men mightily according to their natural talents and experience, giving spiritual gifts along these same lines** "My whole business experience has been along the lines of investigating, analyzing, and gaining an understanding of business problems and rectifying the situations, and in writing. Whatever natural talent I have is along those lines. I know something about public speaking, for I have studied textbooks on it, had contacts with professors of public speaking at the Universities of Illinois and Michigan, who are authors of the texts used in most colleges, and coached a brother-in-law

into winning a big oratorical contest But he had the voice, and other necessary personal attributes for public speaking. "If I am being given any of the gifts, it is that of understanding of the truth of scripture. But I am not fully prepared as yet." (pp. 478-79) [emphasis mine]

This indicates that there was indeed belief in the gifts of the spirit in the Church of God (Seventh Day) and Herbert W Armstrong at that time.

Below is a chronological list of articles/publications the earliest references that I can find in Radio/Worldwide Church of God literature. There would be more, but the below should suffice. The Church's emphasis was that these gifts were Divinely tools for the Church's benefit, not personal showmanship or disorder as found in charismatic fellowships.

Our Co-Workers' Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 5, 27 October 1944, by Herbert W Armstrong:

"The RECEIVING and continual inflowing and filling of God's Spirit is the POWER we need for His business. The GIFTS of the Spirit (I Cor. 12) are the TOOLS for accomplishing God's work. Study them. I am fasting and praying today. I do it often." (p. 4)

Herman L. Hoeh's usage focused on "spiritual gifts" as administrative offices or roles appointed by God for church government and unity, drawing from 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. Remember, the 1950s and 1960s period represented excessive focus on and control by the ministry and almost elevating them to priestly status instead of eldership. By the late 1960s and into the early 1970s Mr Armstrong began to wind this back considerably. In the late 1970s he never reversed this and other matters he authorised.

"GOVERNMENT in Our Church", *Good News*, August 1953:

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (I Cor. 12:28). The most complete list of the **gifts of spiritual administration**, however, is found in Ephesians 4:11: 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.'"
"These **gifts of spiritual administration** are for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry and for edifying the body of Christ 'till we all come in the unity of the faith... That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Eph. 4:12-14)."

"Your Part in Changing This World" *Good News*, Nov-Dec 1954 by Roderick Meredith:

"In I Corinthians 12, Paul explains that God gives to each one of us in His church different gifts and abilities, but it is God who is working through each individual and that each part of the job God is doing is as important

as any other part. **God divides spiritual gifts to each man as He wills (verse 11), but in I Cor. 14:1 we are told to desire spiritual gifts. Remember that God gives spiritual gifts according to our natural ability, so each of us must strive to increase in wisdom, knowledge, and all around ability in order to be qualified for the greater gifts. Many of you brethren will find that you should take further schooling and training — perhaps a correspondence course — which will not only prepare you to serve as a more effective 'light' to others now and for a higher position in God's kingdom — but will also result in a greater earning capacity, enabling you to live a fuller, more abundant life and also to have much more to give to the work of God.**

"Should Women Preach?" *Good News*, April 1956 by Roderick Meredith:

"The Apostle Paul was inspired to give directions for exercising **spiritual gifts** in chapters 12, 13, and 14 of First Corinthians. In chapter 14, Paul gives specific instructions as to how the various **spiritual gifts** should be used in church meetings."

"Notice that in all these instructions concerning the use of **spiritual gifts** in the church, Paul commands: 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (I Cor. 14:40). He repeatedly emphasizes that God is not the author of confusion, and that everything in the church service is to be done in an orderly manner — under proper authority."

"What the Holy Spirit Can Do For YOU!" *Plain Truth*, November 1961 by Roderick Meredith:

"The 12th chapter of I Corinthians is devoted to describing and explaining the 'gifts' or spiritual TOOLS which God gives to those in His Church to do the WORK of the body of Christ, the true Church of God. Paul states: 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal' (verse 7). In other words, **these spiritual gifts are given to each man in order to profit the whole body** — the whole Church of God. Notice these gifts that come through God's Spirit: 'For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit' (verse 8). The word 'word' in this verse comes from a Greek expression meaning utterance or forth-telling. The emphasis is on the minister in God's Church being given the ability to speak or utter WISDOM or KNOWLEDGE — as the case may be. Notice that wisdom is put FIRST. It is most important, for a great deal of knowledge without wisdom could be a very dangerous thing. Wisdom is the ability to understand all of the facts bearing on any situation and make the right DECISION as course of action should be followed. A true minister, or one in high office of authority such as the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Great Britain, needs a great deal of wisdom. And deep spiritual wisdom comes only from GOD through His Spirit!"

Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course - "Lesson 16 - You Must Be Born Again" (1969):

"In I Corinthians 12, you'll read how **God gives spiritual gifts for various administrations, or functions of service.** In Ephesians 4:11-14, Christ has given special spiritual abilities or talents to certain ones in a chain of authority under Him in the Church — and notice for what PURPOSE: 'And His [Christ's] gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ [the Church], UNTIL we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, TO MATURE MANHOOD, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (R.S.V.). In other words, TO FULL SPIRITUAL MATURITY! Now WHY should we count the troubles and problems and temptations that beset us as all JOY? Simply because we CANNOT hurdle these obstacles successfully in our own power. They drive us to seek help from God. To go to God for the wisdom to know WHAT to do, and the power to be able to do it, requires FAITH. This is a LIVING faith. It is ALIVE. It is active. When we meet such trials, we often do not know what to do. We lack the WISDOM to make the right decision. So open your Bible to the first chapter of James. Notice verse 5. If you lack wisdom, in such trials, GO TO GOD for it! But ask IN FAITH — no wavering — no doubting. Be SURE God will not fail, but will give you this wisdom. Depend upon Him for it. If you waver, you are like a wave in the ocean — tossed back and forth — going nowhere! So, instead of wavering, BE STEADFAST. And if you don't get the answer immediately from God, have PATIENCE. Don't give up. Trust Him. Now notice verses 2-3: 'Count it all JOY, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness' (Revised Standard version). These trials force you to your knees. You must have FAITH to meet them. They TEST your faith. They DEVELOP spiritual CHARACTER! In the King James version, it says the trying of your faith produces patience. It produces that kind of patience that is steadfastness. THAT IS CHARACTER! Sure, it may be unpleasant for a while. But, Paul assures us that if we suffer with Christ, we shall REIGN with Him — and the GLORY TO BE revealed in us is so incomparably greater than anything we now are, that this promised future for eternity is something to REJOICE over! Yes, count it all JOY! Even if unpleasant. It is maturing you, now, for the marriage to Christ."

"The Tongues Question", *Tomorrow's World*, February 1972 by Herbert W. Armstrong:

"**They look upon spiritual gifts as ornaments to decorate and embellish the PERSON. But the gifts of the Spirit are the TOOLS placed in our hands to DO THE LORD'S WORK.** People who desire to be SEEN of men, to be followed by MEN, have lust for POWER! These are carnal-minded people. If in the minority in a church, they cause church

friction, division. They want to GO OUT of God's Church and have a following AFTER THEM! This is not God's WAY! Many such have gone out from us — because they were not 'of us!'"

Coworker Letter, 25 February 1974, p. 3 by Herbert W Armstrong:

"In the 12th chapter of I Corinthians we read how God has conferred various spiritual GIFTS -- special ABILITIES through His Spirit, for specific and special administrations in the Work. Like the human body, all members cannot be the mouth, or the eye. Other Scriptures show that God gives us these special talents or abilities (spiritual gifts) according to our several natural abilities. And God bestows the special spiritual abilities on each one AS HE WILLS, (verse 11) not as we choose. I myself was specially prepared, with talents, abilities, and experience before called to the Work. Also, Garner Ted. Then GOD'S SPIRIT enhanced them.

This chapter concludes with, as you should know: "Now you are the (collective) body of Christ, and individually members of it. And GOD has appointed in the Church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues" (languages). Prophets can mean preachers. This word is used in two ways. In the New Testament Church, prior to the time the Bible was completely written, God a few times gave a direct special message to a prophet, who in turn relayed it to an apostle. The Bible is complete now, and God has not used any prophet in this sense."

"You Need God's Holy Spirit", *Good News*, September 1974 by Brian Knowles & John R. Schroeder:

"In addition to giving the overall gift of the Holy Spirit to every true Christian, **God also imparts special spiritual gifts or tools to the members of the body of Christ in order to perform the Work of God on earth.** Paul described these different gifts in detail to the Corinthian Church. All these spiritual tools or abilities, though they are different, are given by the same Spirit (I Cor. 12:4). Among these special gifts are wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, discerning of spirits, etc. (verses 8-10). These differing gifts of the Spirit are not given to divide the body of Christ, but to unite it in an attitude and spirit of teamwork (verses 12-27). Each member has his important part in performing the overall Work of God in this Church age. Today God is using the Worldwide Church of God to bring the good news of the Kingdom to this chaotic, sick and troubled world. Each member performs a vital function. Even if your part can only be daily prayer for God's Work and its leaders, you are performing a critical and very responsible function — perhaps the most important activity."

"Among these special gifts are wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, discerning of spirits, etc. (verses 8-10)."

"These differing gifts of the Spirit are not given to divide the body of Christ, but to unite it in an attitude and spirit of teamwork (verses 12-27)."

"Can Prophecy Fail?" *Good News*, May 1975 by Lawson C. Briggs:

"Because of misuses, abuses and vanity among the members of the first-century Corinthian church, **the apostle Paul found it necessary to devote three whole chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians to the subject of spiritual gifts.** He begins chapter 12 with the words, 'Now concerning spiritual gifts....' As he continues, he discusses the purpose and function of spiritual gifts, and distinguishes between one kind of gift and another in terms of two things: 1) which gifts are 'best' (I Cor. 12:31); and 2) what, after all, will continue to be useful in to eternity. 'In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love' (I Cor. 13:13, The New English Bible). To help develop this context the apostle made his famous statement, so often now misunderstood and taken out of context, that 'prophecies, they shall fail' (I Cor. 13:8)."

"The Sad Story of the Church at Corinth", *Good News*, August 1979 by David J. Albert:

"Paul raised up the Corinthian church (Acts 18:1) between A.D. 50, and 52 and continued to labor in the city, laying the foundation of the church. **No church in Paul's domain exceeded Corinth in terms of its spiritual gifts (I Cor. 1:4). There's a cause and effect relationship here. Paul - not just any minister, but an apostle - worked hard to make sure the church did not come behind in any gift.** With God's help and his labor, he got it off to a good start. But, in the presence of this abundance of spiritual gifts were also problems." [emphasis mine]

In the booklet *Where is the True Church?* (1984) Mr Armstrong seems to write that both ministers and non-ordained have spiritual gifts (p. 19).

"All do not have the same office. And God has given various members In His Church special TALENTS, as gifts by and through His Spirit, and aptitudes, each for his part as CHRIST has chosen, in the ORGANIZED EFFORT of carrying on Christ's WORK.

God gives these special talents, aptitudes for certain phases of administration in His Work, as HE wills, but also according to each one's natural aptitudes.

Notice the parables of the pounds and of the talents.

First, the parable of the talents. "For the kingdom of heaven [Matthew uses the term Kingdom of heaven, while Mark, Luke and John all use the term Kingdom of God. They are the same. Not a kingdom IN heaven, but

"OF" — denoting ownership] is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability" (Matt. 25:14-15).

Notice, there was something given to each. The parable pictures Jesus, of course, going to heaven to be coronated as King of kings and Lord of lords, after which He will return to RULE the earth, administering the Government of God over all nations. His own servants are His converted children of God — His Body, the Church. What He is giving them is spiritual gifts to equip each for his Individual part in GOD'S WORK.

But notice, please, He gave these additional spiritual goods, gifts, or tools, "to every man according to his several ability" — that is, according to his natural physical aptitudes or abilities. On His return as World Ruler, He called each servant to accounting as to HOW WELL each had done with what Christ had given him to do with.

By comparison of this parable with that of the pounds in Luke 19:11-27, you will see that God judges us according to how well we do in proportion to what we have to do with. These servants were to "occupy" or carry on the Work till He returns.

Special Spiritual Gifts

Now notice more about the spiritual GIFTS God gives those in His Body, doing HIS WORK, in I Corinthians 12: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

Yet most people are in total ignorance of these gifts and their meaning and uses. Continue: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (verses 4-6). It is the same God WORKING in the "Body of Christ" — the Church. HE does the Work of God, by the one Spirit of God, IN the collective Body called out of the world as His instrument doing His Work.

Notice carefully, in this Work of God, which He WORKS in us by His Spirit, there are different gifts, BECAUSE there are various and different administrations, in administering God's Work — different offices — different kinds of jobs. There are various and different OPERATIONS in carrying on the Work. These require various and different aptitudes and abilities in various and different members in the Body.

GOD Chooses Each Member's Job.

We do not all do the same job! These special spiritual gifts are given "to profit withal."

That is, to profit THE WORK — not the individual. These gifts are aptitudes, or spiritual "tools" to use in doing the Work — not ornaments to embellish the person, as some have seemed to think — bragging about the least of the gifts.

God Himself decides which gifts to give each member: "But all these [gifts] worketh that one and the self — same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as HE will" (verse 11).

Continue: "For the body [of Christ — the Church] is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" (Verses 14-15.)" (Cp. "Just What is the Church?" *Tomorrow's World*, July-August 1970, pp. 3-6, 20)

Initially, the above articles seem to put emphasis on the gifts being granted to ministers. Yet the idea that spiritual gifts were reserved only for ministers was gradually dropped but little was developed on the subject or published thereafter. It appeared as if the Church leadership did not know how to move forward with this doctrine.

Final Comments

There is far too much jealousy and the spirit of competition going on that stifles those who would like to identify and use their gifts. This undermining takes various forms, but in the end, it results in a lifeless and boring congregation and inevitably a 'revolving door' of members and attendees.

Now remember, this is not a doctrinal paper. Rather, it is an attempt to capture the history of the understanding of spiritual gifts in the Radio/Worldwide Church of God so that we can understand it and not have to guess or create 'church urban myths' about this and other beliefs. Information on how the doctrine was taught and implemented is scanty. A number of quotes have been found per the above, but not a single article, booklet, Bible study or sermon can be found on the subject.

Nevertheless, in conversations with ministers in the 1970s and 1980s, together what can be gauged from the above Worldwide Church of God quotes, it is clear that there was a shift toward an understanding that these precious gifts are provided to all Christians and not only to ministers.

As we are all part of God's family, it follows that all members are granted with a gift or gifts of the holy spirit which matches or enhances physical talents.

Further, the Church of God needs to adapt to current needs within the culture it resides within. There is no point in believing that we must go back to the 1950s in terms of policy and control excesses. This approach is resulting in even further fracturing and scattering than ever. Policy – how we work with and implement various doctrines can no longer be super strict and almost regimented as if we are from the World War 2 generation similar to the members in the 1950s. That approach just does not work in the modern world, and the fruits demonstrate that clearly.

Thankfully, some are already moving forward with revitalising and energising the Church with a balanced and sober understanding of the doctrine (compared the chaos and silliness found within charismatic and Pentecostal groups).²

² There is plenty of scope to adapt and be flexible rather than being rigid and pushing all those out of the Church one does not like, hear false rumours about or are jealous of. Jealousy of other's gifts and talents is

This includes the United Church of God. One of their senior ministers and member of the Council of Elders, Scott Ashley has undertaken considerable thought and research on the subject.

Information relating to the United Church of God's official position on this [is found here](#). All of their ministers are required to believe and teach the doctrines prior to ordination or credentialing. Not doing so is both a breach of trust and breach of contract which is hardly Christian or inspired by Christ.

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Appendix. Living Church of God article

How Can I Help?

By Roger Meyer (guest columnist) | Tuesday, November 12, 2013

Some people are helpers by nature. It is part of their personality to be caring, helpful and insightful to the needs of other people. Being a helper is an important aspect of God's nature, and one to which we should all aspire. How can we help, and why is it important?

Of course, God is the greatest helper of all. Many scriptures mentioned how God is our help in time of need: "...For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear what man can do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Jesus promised the "Helper"—the Holy Spirit—to those who had repented and been baptized. John 14-16. He sent the Holy Spirit after He ascended to heaven on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Spirit "...helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Most of us can think of one or more individuals who really helped us at some time in our life. We welcomed their help and have never forgotten it. Hopefully, we thanked them for their time, energy and expertise to help us solve our problem and fill our needs.

We do not all have the same gifts to give. "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them" (Romans 12:4-6).

We all have gifts and opportunities to help those in need. Romans 12 goes on to give some examples of different gifts and how those gifts can be used to help others. For instance, "...he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness...

abhorrent and certainly such attitudes of lying in wait to pounce on someone; prowling around and circling the members like a wolf pack; or setting them up via the use of sycophants and spies is cultic and ungodly.

distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality... Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:7–15).

Some of these may seem very low and simple. **But these simple things can have a tremendous impact on the recipient, filling the greatest need at that time in their life.**

It is hard to put a value on such things as showing empathy and simply listening to someone who needs to express their grief and concerns. Giving someone some direction, respectfully showing them steps to take, the right way to go, and “opening doors” through your contacts to assist someone may be of tremendous help. What is the value of time spent with another human being who just needs someone to be there with them, or of encouraging someone who is discouraged?

Some who have been helpers are mentioned in Romans 16. Phoebe was commended by Paul in verse 1–2: “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed **she has been a helper of many** and of myself also.” In verses 3–4, Paul mentions “Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.” In verse 6 he mentions Mary, “who labored much for us.” These followers of Christ used their gifts in service to God and His work being done through the Apostle Paul.

Using our gifts to help others is the task of every true Christian.
[emphasis mine]

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