

Few Christians these days are still debating whether all the New Testament spiritual gifts are valid and in use today. But what exactly are they? How can I discover and use my gifts? Dr. T. L. Lowery has provided us the dynamic guidebook that we need. When you read this book, you will have no doubt that you are *Gifted to Serve!*

—C. Peter Wagner
Fuller Theological Seminary

In his book *Gifted to Serve*, Dr. T. L. Lowery emphasizes the importance of having a strong foundation in the Lord. No matter how long you have been a Christian or where you are in your walk with Him, true holiness will only come as you walk in integrity and humility. Dr. Lowery has reminded us again that victory is not in methods, but in returning to the basics of knowing God through fasting, prayer, and the Word.

—Benny Hinn
World Outreach Center

Dr. T. L. Lowery has written one of the most profound books on the gifts of the Holy Spirit for this generation. In it he unveils how you can operate in the power of these gifts and how they will propel you into the presence of God. I believe that as you read this book, your relationship with God will be revolutionized, and you will never be the same again!

—Rod Parsley
World Harvest Church

I recommend *Gifted to Serve* for anyone who is interested in the gifts of the Spirit. Although this book is well documented, it is also highly readable. It would make an excellent gift to a friend who wishes to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

—*Dr. Vinson Synan*
Dean, School of Divinity, Regent University

In his book *Gifted to Serve*, Dr. T. L. Lowery presents both the biblical foundation and contemporary meaning of the gifts of the Spirit. In this day of stressful living and secular challenge of the Christian faith, these “enablements” of the Spirit are more important than ever. This is a book of relevant meaning for every person truly seeking to be led of the Spirit.

—*Paul L. Walker, Ph.D.*
General Overseer, Church of God

GIFTED
TO
SERVE

T.L. LOWERY



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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GIFTED TO SERVE

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CONTENTS

Foreword.....	7
Preface.....	9
1. The Holy Spirit Today.....	11
2. Spiritual Gifts in Church History.....	23
3. Baptized in the Holy Spirit.....	35
4. Gifted to Serve in Ministry.....	45
5. Manifestations of the Holy Spirit.....	53
6. Revelation Gifts.....	63
7. The Gift of Faith.....	75
8. Gifts of Healing and Working of Miracles.....	85
9. Prophecy and the Holy Spirit.....	105
10. Speaking with Tongues.....	113
11. Motivational Gifts.....	127
12. The Fruit of the Spirit.....	135
13. The Gifts of Prayer and Fasting.....	143
References.....	151

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the memory of my loving
parents who reared me in a godly environment.

Especially do I dedicate it to my wonderful daughter-in-law
Janice, and to my precious grandchildren
Aimee, Stephanie, John, and Michael,
whom I trust will carry on my vision.

FOREWORD

I appreciate Dr. T. L. Lowery's straightforward approach to the gifts of the Spirit presented in this book. It is both a helpful biblical overview of the topic for new and searching believers, and a refreshing reminder for all Christians of the real purpose for the gifts. His timely emphasis is essential for the church today; spiritual gifts are not to be used to display our own "spirituality" or to call attention to ourselves, but to fulfill God's purposes and to extend His grace to the church and to the world.

This book includes a crucial chapter on the manifestation of spiritual gifts in church history. It shows how the Holy Spirit has been active throughout the centuries since the early church by providing historical references that reveal how God has continued to pour out His Spirit in every age: from the first centuries of the church through the Reformation, the Great Awakenings, the Holiness and Deeper Life movements, Pentecostalism, the interdenominational charismatic movement, and on to today. It addresses the objections of those who feel that the gifts are no longer relevant for the church, and reminds Christians of all backgrounds of the continuity of the work of God through the Holy Spirit.

I have known Dr. Lowery for many years and appreciate him as a friend and for the powerful ministry God has given him. I pray that as you read his helpful and insightful book, you will ask God to use you to fulfill His purposes through your life, as you receive the love, power, and presence of God that He has provided through the precious gift of His Spirit.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

—Dr. Robert Whitaker, Sr.
Whitaker House

PREFACE

This book is the result of a tremendous amount of study about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is my desire to place a book in your hands that will help you understand all aspects of a life empowered by the Spirit. On the pages that follow, you will find a reservoir of scriptural information to guide you in exploring various gifts of the Spirit that will enrich your walk with the Lord.

God desires every Christian to manifest His presence. This is a book you will want to share with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow church members. It will revolutionize their understanding of God's assignment for their lives.

First, I want to thank God for inspiring me to pursue this project. I must also thank my faithful wife, Dr. Mildred Lowery, who has been at my side through all the trials and triumphs in my ministry. My son, Dr. Stephen Lowery, has worked with me diligently in the preparation of this manuscript. God has blessed me with a wonderful family who support me with their love and encouragement. Many of the staff at the National Church of God have been so helpful with their input and comments as they have read through this manuscript. I would also like to show my appreciation for my pastoral team, who labored with me in the research and editing process.

Please keep this book handy and refer to it often. I urge you not to miss one essential point. God will use you in an extraordinary way as you allow Him to manifest Himself through your life.

—*T. L. Lowery, Ph.D.*

1

THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

For many centuries, the Holy Spirit was the forgotten person of the Trinity, and Pentecost was the much-neglected feast of the church. Thankfully, we can say this is no longer the case. God is revitalizing the entire church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, manifests Himself in gatherings of every denomination. As Christian believers encounter the power of the Holy Spirit, they want to comprehend the gifts of the Spirit. This book serves as a guide to biblical principles and practical implications for the operation of spiritual gifts.

Exploring God's Gifts

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the gift of the Father (John 14:26). Everything about Christianity is a gift. Our existence is a gift. Our talents are gifts. The environment in which we live is a gift. Salvation from the penalty of sin is a gift. New life in Christ is a gift.

Jesus comes to us as our Redeemer, saving us through His death on the cross. When we trust Christ as our personal Savior and receive Him as our Lord, we are born again and become candidates for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Renewal in the Body of Christ

I grew up in a full-gospel, Pentecostal church. My father and mother were Spirit-filled ministers before I was born. My ministry and the churches to which I have ministered have consistently given honor to the Holy Spirit and recognized Him as a person. He is not just a gift, a manifestation, or a force. The Holy Spirit is God, a person of the Holy Trinity. I count myself fortunate to have been exposed to such a theological climate. I have had the privilege of sitting under and ministering to people who embrace the power of the Spirit.

God said through the Old Testament prophet Joel, “*I will pour out my Spirit on all people*” (Joel 2:28). We are seeing a fulfillment of that prophecy in the church today. I believe that we have seen the former or “*early*” rain. Now we are seeing the “*latter rain*” (James 5:7 KJV), the final great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This divine visitation encompasses people of all denominations and cultures and is preparing the church, the body of Christ, for the coming of the Lord.

The emphasis on the *Pentecostal reality* has compelled major denominations to evaluate the vitality and strength of the renewal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *Pentecostal reality* is a term coined by Presbyterian charismatic theologian J. Rodman Williams to mean “the coming of God’s Holy Spirit in power to the believing individual and community.”¹ Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan writes:

Around the world, denomination after denomination appointed study commissions to report on the charismatic movement, which now seemed to have entered into every congregation in Christendom....In general, these study reports...accepted the major premise of Pentecostalism, i.e., that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit did not cease after the apostolic age, but are even now demonstrated in the church by Spirit-filled believers.²

People are generally hungry for God's Word. Bible studies are flourishing. People desire to find biblical answers to their problems. Most Bible-believing Christians believe that the gifts of the Spirit are available for the people of God today. Many who once doubted that present-day Christians may experience certain spiritual *charisma*, or gifts, have changed their positions. The vast majority of evangelical Christians affirm that born-again believers need to be filled with the Spirit. As Peter Gillquist comments:

Jesus is the *life* [Gillquist's emphasis]. Without the life, there's no living. His Holy Spirit provides life within us, the very life of God....In fact, if the life of the Holy Spirit isn't the central focus of the gathering, we wonder if we haven't wasted our time in coming....We have lived in the mildewed atmosphere of dead orthodoxy, and now we hunger for the reality of the life-giving Spirit....What we want is something alive.³

A restored emphasis on other biblical truths has accompanied the renewal of spiritual gifts in the Christian church. This naturally affects our overall concept of faith and practice. As God's people, we yearn to follow the biblical faith "*that was once for all entrusted to the saints*" (Jude 3). In contrast to those whom the spirit of the Antichrist seduces toward judgment, true believers long to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. (See John 10:14–16.)

As we seek to please God, we realize our need for God's empowering. No one can please God in his or her own strength. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness and fast and pray until God imparts to us the fullness of His Spirit. When this happens in one's life, revival is a natural consequence. Jesus mandated that we preach and teach the Gospel to the ends of the earth and make disciples. Being filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit will enable us to carry out His divine command.

Survival in a Hostile Environment

Evidence of God's power is greatly needed today. We live in a secular age, in which the majority of people seem to have discounted the God of the Bible, and view Him as irrelevant. They deny the fundamentals of the faith and have defaulted to the teachings of agnostic and atheistic humanism.

Some have even turned to satanism and are worshipping Lucifer as god. Others have searched for truth in other religions of the world instead of in Christianity. These religious systems are incomplete and are totally unable to meet man's spiritual needs. They reach up to God but fall short each time.

Never before have the gifts of the Holy Spirit been so desperately needed in the church. The rhetoric of agnostic humanism and secularism seems feeble in the face of the grave difficulties humanity faces at the dawn of the third millennium. Only in Christianity does God reach down to humankind and offer the way to salvation. Authentic Christianity's inherent power and spiritual gifts are the answer to our generation's despair.

God's Design for Spiritual Gifts

We must always keep in mind that God did not give the gifts of the Spirit to help us impress others with how spiritual we are or for self-aggrandizement. Throughout the Scriptures, God says He will not share His glory with another. (See, for example, Isaiah 42:8.) The Lord provides the manifestations of the Holy Spirit to fulfill His purposes.

The implementation of the gifts of the Spirit edifies God's church in three ways. First, spiritual gifts enable individuals to develop in their spiritual growth. Secondly, God gives these gifts to build up the Christian community, the congregation of believers.

Thirdly, the gifts are instruments that attract outsiders to faith in Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 14:1–26.)

The Foundation of Christianity

The great apostle Paul claimed that his message and preaching rested not on “*wise and persuasive words,*” but on “*a demonstration of the Spirit’s power*” (1 Corinthians 2:4). The Christian faith is reasonable, yet it does not depend on faulty human reasoning. We have received “*the Spirit who is from God*” (v. 12) in order to understand what God has provided for us in Christ. Just as Peter’s understanding of Jesus’ identity was a revelation of the Father (Matthew 16:16–17), God continues to disclose things to His people, according to His Word.

Biblical Accounts of the Holy Spirit

When we examine any question, we should always turn to the Word of God. We find God’s pattern for Christian living in the Bible. The book of Acts is the history of the early church, and we should ask ourselves this question about the experience of the first century believers: What distinguished the community of early Christians from all the other religious groups of their day? The answer is the unique, ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures teach that the Spirit came to clothe, energize (Luke 24:49), and set up residence (1 John 2:27) in the followers of the risen Lord Jesus.

At Pentecost, God kept His promise to empower Christian believers to do His work. According to the Bible, the church is a group of people who are permeated and saturated with the Holy Spirit. This unusual proximity of God’s Spirit results in signs, wonders, and demonstrations of divine power, and helps to endorse the church’s message.

The power of the Holy Spirit is explosive. The Greek word for power is *dunamis*, from which we derive the English word *dynamite*. This power gives believers the force to win in spiritual battle and enlarge the extent of God's kingdom. "*The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

The Biblical Data

Let us now briefly survey what the Scriptures say is the role of the Holy Spirit. It is important to recognize that the Holy Spirit is not a newcomer. He is the eternal third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit did not first arrive on earth on the Day of Pentecost. In Genesis 1:2, we find God's Spirit involved in the Creation of the earth. He is not simply a force, but He is God the Spirit. In describing the person and role of the Holy Spirit, I cannot stress enough that Christians do not believe in three Gods. The Bible teaches the existence of only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Deity has revealed Himself as one God in three persons. The Scriptures instruct us that the Father is God, Jesus (the Word/Son) is God, and the Spirit is God; the Godhead consists of these three persons. The word *persons*, in this sense, does not mean personalities. In *Nelson's Introduction to the Christian Faith*, Klaas Runia writes, "One divine Personality exists in three different *personal ways*" (Runia's emphasis).⁴

The Holy Spirit is the Giver of Life. This title dates from the early centuries of the Christian church.⁵ Wherever Scripture mentions the Spirit, it depicts Him in terms of "vitality, vibrancy, and movement," coming "to the rescue of humankind."⁶

John 15:26 says that the Holy Spirit comes to testify about Jesus. The Father has also sent Him to guide and empower us. The Holy Spirit enables us to become what God intended for us to become. He comes to make His home in us and restore

our communion with our heavenly Father. Then, as the Spirit of God makes Himself visible through the manifestations, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit, others recognize God in our midst (1 Corinthians 14:24–25).

We must never lose sight of the fact that it is the Holy Spirit Himself who imparts the gifts as He wills. We should never attempt to manipulate the gifts of the Spirit. We do not control these gifts; we are Spirit-empowered believers and messengers of God, to be used by God to minister to the needs of the people (1 Corinthians 12:7).

The Spirit in the Old Covenant

Throughout the pages of the Old Testament, we find many allusions to the Spirit of God. The pharaoh of Egypt referred to the Spirit of God (Genesis 41:38). God told Moses that His Spirit had empowered a craftsman named Bezalel to make items for Israel's holy place of worship (Exodus 31:2–5; 35:30–33).

When Moses needed help with his workload, God told Moses to bring to Him seventy of the nation's elders. He would "*take of the Spirit*" (Numbers 11:17) that was on Moses and put it on them. We find the Lord's Spirit active in the period of the judges and in the emergence of the monarchy in Israel. Evidence of the working of the Spirit is clearly found in the ministry of all the prophets, including John the Baptist.

The Spirit in the New Covenant

Without question, the Spirit of God accompanied Jesus of Nazareth. The Son and the Spirit were in communion with the Father when Jesus was on earth, as they are in communion with Him now. First John 2:27 teaches that followers of Jesus

have received an anointing of the Spirit that remains. In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil as a sign that God had chosen them for specific tasks. In a similar way, God the Father gives the Holy Spirit to believers as His seal—as a guarantee of the eternal life they have already entered into (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Jesus commissioned His followers to “*make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). He said that His authority to do this originated with the Father (v. 18). As the Father had sent Him, He was now sending His apostles (John 20:21). They had an assignment to carry on the ministry of Christ. Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father*” (John 14:12).

God promised to “*put a new spirit*” (Ezekiel 11:19) in His people and to write His law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). On the Day of Pentecost, God fulfilled His promise; believers received the power of the Holy Spirit, which enabled them not only to please God but also to do His work.

The book of Acts is a historical narrative of the Spirit’s operation through God’s people. Multitudes throughout the world turned to Christ as the apostles preached the Word and the Holy Spirit confirmed the message with signs and wonders.

In Ephesians, Paul described how God gives leadership to the church to help believers develop spiritually for the mission to which He calls them. In Romans, Paul explained how the Holy Spirit motivates believers in the direction of their callings. In 1 Corinthians 12–14, the apostle invested three intensive chapters to discuss the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the implementation of these manifestations. Through His Word, God has provided us with a thorough Handbook to lead us in fulfilling His will for our lives.

Signs, Wonders, and the Expansion of Christianity

“People are either missionaries or mission fields.” This simple expression, made popular by international evangelist Tommy Lee Osborne, states the fact that all Christians have an evangelistic call on their lives. The Great Commission universally calls Christians to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). Jesus specifically linked the giving of the power of the Spirit with believers becoming His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The early church preached a simple message, and it seemed absurd to those who heard it. Without the manifestations of the Spirit’s presence, no one would have believed that the witness of the first Christians was credible. As we will discover in the next chapter, throughout the history of Christianity’s expansion, signs and wonders have played a significant role. This was true of the work of apostolic missionaries such as Patrick in Ireland and Boniface in Germany. Reports indicate that miraculous signs also confirmed the preaching of Francis of Assisi, the great evangelist of the Middle Ages.

Power for Healing a Broken World

Powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit will convince secularists that there is something beyond that which can be verified in scientific experiments. The power of God can deliver those who are lost in the occult and every other satanic force of hell. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we become the hands and mouth of Jesus to a world that is broken and hurting. To achieve the mission He has assigned to us, we must be filled with His Spirit and allow the gifts to be manifested in our lives.

In chapter three, I will discuss how you can be baptized in the Holy Spirit. But let us first see how the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit did not disappear with the early disciples but have been manifested throughout the church's history.

Notes

1. John Rodman Williams, *The Pentecostal Reality* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972), 2.

2. Vinson Synan, *In the Latter Days: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Twentieth Century*, 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1991), 123, 126.

3. Peter E. Gillquist, *Let's Quit Fighting about the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 136.

4. Klaas Runia, "The Trinity," in *Nelson's Introduction to the Christian Faith*, ed. Robin Keeley (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 116.

5. The phrase calling the Holy Spirit the "Giver of Life" can be found most notably in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, whose third article begins, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life." We popularly call this creed the Nicene Creed, although the statement of faith accepted at the Nicene Council in A.D. 325 was much shorter and only stated it believed in the Holy Spirit.

6. Clark H. Pinnock and Robert C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 51.