

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

UNIT 8: THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT — A CESSATIONIST THEOLOGY

Lesson 22

The Continuing Gifts

The Ordinary Means of Ministry

The Gifts That Build Up the Church in Every Generation

Key Texts: Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11–12; 1 Peter 4:10–11

“Having Gifts That Differ According to the Grace Given to Us, Let Each Exercise Them Accordingly”

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Series Verse

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,
He will guide you into all the truth;
for He will not speak on His own initiative,
but whatever He hears, He will speak;
and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

John 16:13, NASB 1995

Introduction

Lesson 21 established the pneumatological and exegetical framework for Unit 8: spiritual gifts are grace-given abilities sovereignly distributed by the Spirit for the common good; they must be exercised in love; and the New Testament itself distinguishes between ordinary, continuing gifts and extraordinary, sign and revelatory gifts. Lesson 22 now examines the first category in depth: the continuing gifts, those gifts that operate through the normal means of the Word, wisdom, and Spirit-empowered ministry and that remain in the church throughout its entire history, from the apostolic era to the present day and forward to the Lord's return.

The continuing gifts deserve sustained attention for a reason that is sometimes overlooked in the pneumatological debates that Unit 8 will inevitably address: the cessationist position is not primarily a theology of what the Spirit no longer does. It is primarily a theology of what the Spirit permanently and continuously does, and what He permanently and continuously does, through the ordinary gifts He has given to every generation of the church, is remarkable, sufficient, and profoundly sufficient for the church's permanent mission. The ordinary gifts are not the consolation prize for a church that has lost access to the extraordinary gifts; they are the Spirit's own permanent provision for the church's permanent needs. Teaching builds up the body in the knowledge of Christ. Evangelism extends the gospel into the world. Shepherding keeps the flock from straying. Giving sustains the work of the ministry. Mercy serves the suffering with the love of Christ. These are not lesser gifts by comparison with the spectacular gifts of the apostolic era; they are the permanent, body-building, mission-advancing gifts that the Spirit has given to the church for the duration of the church's existence.

This lesson will examine each of the primary continuing gifts with both theological precision and pastoral warmth: defining each gift from its New Testament description, distinguishing it from the natural human capacity on which it may build, identifying the specific ministry it serves in the body, and closing with the pastoral application that makes each gift personally relevant to the believer who has received it and to the community that needs it. The goal is not merely to catalog the gifts but to cultivate a vision of the Spirit-gifted community in which every ordinary gift is recognized, honored, cultivated, and deployed with the faithful stewardship that 1 Peter 4:10 commands.

I. Teaching

Faithfully Explaining and Applying the Word of God

The gift of teaching is arguably the most foundational of the ordinary continuing gifts, because it is the means by which the Spirit's primary sanctifying instrument, the Word of God (John 17:17), is explained, applied, and made accessible to the community of faith. Teaching as a spiritual gift is listed in the three primary ordinary-gift passages: Romans 12:7 ("if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching"), 1 Corinthians 12:28 ("God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers"), and Ephesians 4:11–12 (where teachers are likely paired with pastors in the compound gift of the "pastor-teacher"). The consistent listing of teaching across all three major gift passages establishes it as one of the most regularly attested and most consistently valued gifts in the New Testament's gift theology.

Teaching as a spiritual gift is distinguished from teaching as a natural human ability by the Spirit's sovereign empowerment that takes the teacher's natural capacity for explanation, organization, and communication and raises it to a level of effectiveness that produces genuine spiritual transformation rather than merely intellectual information transfer. The naturally gifted communicator who is not Spirit-gifted as a teacher may explain biblical content accurately and clearly without producing the soul-penetrating, life-directing, Christ-exalting impact that Spirit-gifted teaching produces. The Reformers and Puritans regularly observed this distinction: the difference between a sermon that is theologically accurate but pneumatologically powerless and one that carries the Spirit's own illuminating, convicting, transforming energy is the difference between natural eloquence and Spirit-gifted teaching.

Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 establishes the generational reproduction that the gift of teaching is designed to produce: "the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The teaching gift is not only for the production of understanding in the immediate hearers; it is for the reproduction of the gift itself in successive generations of teachers who will teach successive generations of hearers. The healthy church is a church in which the teaching gift is perpetually reproducing itself, in which the Spirit's gifted teachers are not merely teaching the congregation but identifying, equipping, and releasing successive generations of Spirit-gifted teachers for the perpetuation of the ministry.

The qualification of elders and pastors in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9 includes the specific requirement that they be "skillful in teaching" (*didaktikon* in 1 Timothy 3:2) and "able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). The teaching gift is not merely a pleasant addition to the elder's ministry; it is a foundational qualification for the office, because the elder's primary calling is to feed the flock with the Word of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) and to protect the flock from the false teaching that threatens it (Titus 1:9–11). The Spirit who qualifies elders for their office does so in part by giving them the teaching gift that the office requires.

II. Exhortation and Encouragement

Comforting, Admonishing, and Motivating Toward Faithfulness

The gift of exhortation (Greek: *paraklesis*, from the same root as the Paraclete, the Spirit's own self-description as the one who comes alongside to help, comfort, and advocate) is the Spirit-given ability to speak words that call believers toward greater faithfulness, comfort them in trial, admonish them in sin, and motivate them toward the Christlike obedience to which the Spirit is sanctifying them. Romans 12:8 lists the exhorter as a distinct gift-bearer: "he who exhorts, in his exhortation." The gift is closely related to teaching, both are Word-centered, Spirit-empowered ministries of speech, but they are distinct in their specific function. The teacher explains and applies; the exhorter calls and motivates. The teacher opens the meaning; the exhorter makes the meaning urgent.

The Hebrews 10:24–25 command provides the community context in which the exhortation gift is most naturally expressed: "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." The gathering of the community is the primary arena of the exhortation gift's exercise: the shared context of the body assembled for worship, prayer, and mutual ministry is the environment in which Spirit-gifted exhortation most powerfully functions. The exhorter's words are not the generic motivational rhetoric of an enthusiastic personality; they are the Spirit's own call to faithfulness, spoken through a human instrument with the Spirit's own urgency and with the specific awareness of the specific need of the specific community at the specific moment.

Barnabas, whose name literally means "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36), is the New Testament's primary embodiment of the exhortation gift in narrative form. His consistent practice of coming alongside those who needed encouragement and advocacy, advocating for the newly converted Saul when the Jerusalem church was afraid of him (Acts 9:27), going to Antioch to encourage the new Gentile believers (Acts 11:23), taking Mark on a second missionary journey when Paul had given up on him (Acts 15:39), is the practical shape of Spirit-gifted exhortation in the life of the community. The person with the gift of exhortation is the community's advocate, the one who sees the potential in those others have dismissed, the strength in those who feel weak, and the faithfulness possible in those who are wavering, and who calls all of them forward with words shaped by the Spirit's own confident hope for the community's sanctification.

III. Administration and Leadership

Organizing, Directing, and Governing with Wisdom and Integrity

The gift of administration or leadership (Greek: *kubernēseis* in 1 Corinthians 12:28, literally, "steering," the word for the helmsman's work of guiding a ship; and *proistamenos* in Romans 12:8, the one who stands before, who leads, who presides) is the Spirit-given ability to organize the community's life and mission with wisdom, clarity of vision, and integrity of character. It is among the least celebrated of the ordinary gifts, it lacks the visible intimacy of the pastoral gift,

the communicative appeal of the teaching gift, and the immediate emotional reward of the mercy gift, but it is indispensable for the community's effective functioning. A community without Spirit-gifted leadership is a community that wastes the resources of the other gifts through poor direction, poor organization, and poor stewardship of the community's human, financial, and missional resources.

The gift of leadership (proistamenos) in Romans 12:8 is accompanied by the specific manner qualifier "with diligence" (en spoudē, with earnestness, with zeal, with the focused attention that the responsibility demands). The Spirit-gifted leader is not the person who merely occupies a position of authority; he is the person who exercises the authority with the diligence that the community's welfare requires and with the integrity of character that makes the authority trustworthy. Paul's vision of leadership in Ephesians 4:11–12 is explicitly servant-leadership: the leaders' role is to equip the saints for their ministry, not to perform the ministry on the congregation's behalf. The Spirit-gifted leader creates the conditions in which other gifts can flourish; he removes the obstacles that prevent the community's gifts from being deployed; and he directs the community's collective capacity toward the purposes that the Spirit intends.

First Corinthians 12:28's kubernēseis, the helmsman's art of steering, captures the navigational character of Spirit-gifted administration. The helmsman does not generate the wind (the Spirit provides the mission's driving power); he does not build the ship (the Spirit has constituted the community through regeneration and Spirit-baptism); he does not choose the destination (Scripture and the Spirit's own direction determine the mission's goal). He keeps the ship on course toward the intended destination, making the constant, skilled, small adjustments of direction that prevent the community from drifting, from running aground, or from being blown off course by the storms of controversy, conflict, and cultural pressure that every Christian community encounters. The Spirit-gifted administrator is the church's helmsman, the person whose practical wisdom, organizational skill, and strategic clarity enable the community to actually reach the destinations to which the Spirit is leading it.

"If someone serves, in his serving; if someone teaches, in his teaching" | "He who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" | "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another"

Romans 12:7, 8; 1 Peter 4:10, NASB 1995

IV. Giving

Spirit-Prompted Generosity for the Ministry and the Saints

The gift of giving (Greek: metadidous in Romans 12:8, the one who shares, who imparts, who distributes) is the Spirit-given ability and inclination to contribute personal financial and material resources to the work of the ministry and the needs of the saints with a generosity that exceeds what natural affection for the community or natural concern for the poor would produce. Romans 12:8's manner qualifier is revealing: "he who gives, with liberality" (en haplotēti, with singleness, simplicity, generosity without secondary agenda). The Spirit-gifted giver gives without calculation of return, without the expectation of influence that often

accompanies large financial contributions to human organizations, and without the self-congratulation that natural generosity frequently produces.

The gift of giving is carefully distinguished from tithing and stewardship, which are the responsibility of every believer. Tithing and stewardship are the baseline of Christian financial faithfulness; the gift of giving describes the Spirit's specific endowment of certain believers with an extraordinary capacity for generosity, the ability to give in amounts and in ways that go significantly beyond the normal expectation of faithful stewardship. Second Corinthians 9:6–8 describes the character and the motivation of Spirit-empowered giving: "For God loves a cheerful giver" (v. 7). The Spirit-gifted giver gives cheerfully, not reluctantly, not under compulsion, not with the internal conflict of the person who gives what he feels he must while wishing he could keep more. The cheerfulness of Spirit-gifted generosity is the expression of a heart that has been genuinely transformed by the Spirit's own generosity toward the believer, a heart that gives freely because it has received freely and that understands the eternal return on the investment of resources deployed in the service of Christ's mission.

The practical fruit of the giving gift in the life of the community is the sustainability of the ministry's financial needs. The teacher needs to be free to study and teach without the distraction of financial anxiety; the evangelism mission needs financial resources; the building of the community's physical infrastructure requires sustained generosity; the care of the financially vulnerable within the community depends on the generosity of those who have received more. When the Spirit's giving gift is faithfully exercised, the community's financial needs are met with a freedom and a grace that contrasts sharply with the mechanical, obligation-driven fundraising of communities that have not cultivated a culture of Spirit-prompted generosity.

V. Mercy and Helps

Serving Practical Needs with Compassion and Cheerfulness

The gift of mercy (Greek: *eleon* in Romans 12:8, the one who shows mercy, who practices compassion) is the Spirit-given ability to serve the practical and emotional needs of the suffering, the marginalized, the sick, the grieving, and the struggling with a warmth, a patience, and a Christlike compassion that exceeds what natural sympathy produces. Romans 12:8's manner qualifier for mercy is "with cheerfulness" (*en hilarotēti*), the mercy-shower is not characterized by the grim, burdened service of one who helps because he feels he must, but by the joyful, freely given, genuinely glad-to-serve disposition of one for whom the service of the suffering is itself a delight because it is the service of Christ in the person of the needy (Matthew 25:40).

The complementary gift of helps (Greek: *antilēmpsis* in 1 Corinthians 12:28, a word that literally means "a taking hold of," "an assisting," "a coming to the aid of") describes the practical, hands-on assistance that supports the ministry of others. Where mercy is primarily relational and compassionate in its orientation, the warm presence that accompanies the suffering, helps is primarily practical and organizational in its orientation, the practical assistance that makes the ministry of others possible. Together, mercy and helps constitute the Spirit's

comprehensive provision for the community's diaconal needs: the visible, tangible, practical love that demonstrates the gospel's reality to those who receive it and to those who observe it.

The diaconal office of Acts 6:1–7 is the institutional expression of the mercy and helps gifts in the community's governance. The seven men chosen to serve tables, "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (v. 3), are Spirit-empowered servers, not merely organizational helpers; their practical service is itself a Spirit-gifted ministry. The distinction between the ministry of the Word (the apostles' primary calling) and the ministry of tables (the deacons' primary calling) is not a distinction between spiritual and non-spiritual ministry; it is a distinction between two different expressions of the Spirit's gifts in the community's life. Both are Spirit-empowered, both are essential, and both are honored in the Spirit's sovereign distribution of the gifts to meet all of the community's needs.

VI. Evangelism and Shepherding

Reaching the Lost and Caring for the Found

A. Evangelism: Proclaiming the Gospel with Clarity and Persuasion

The gift of evangelism (Greek: euangelistes, the proclaimer of good news) is listed in Ephesians 4:11 as one of the five ministry gifts given by the ascended Christ to His church. The evangelist is the person whom the Spirit specifically empowers to proclaim the gospel with the clarity, the urgency, and the Spirit-anointed persuasiveness that produces conversions and extends the church into previously unreached communities and populations. The gift of evangelism is distinguished from the universal responsibility of every believer to bear witness to the gospel (Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15), every genuine believer is called to bear witness; not every genuine believer has the Spirit's specific gift of evangelism.

Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8) is the New Testament's primary embodiment of the evangelism gift in narrative form. His ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:4–13) and his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) demonstrate the characteristic pattern of Spirit-gifted evangelism: Spirit-directed engagement with specific people in specific moments, clarity in the proclamation of Christ as the fulfillment of Scripture, and the conversion that follows the Spirit's application of the proclaimed Word. The Spirit who directed Philip to the Ethiopian's chariot (v. 29) is the Spirit who produced the Ethiopian's faith (v. 36–37), the evangelist's gift is the Spirit's own instrument for the extension of the gospel into the world.

Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5, "do the work of an evangelist", is addressed to a pastor-teacher who may not have had the evangelism gift as his primary gift, making the important distinction between the gift of evangelism (given to some, sovereignly distributed by the Spirit) and the work of evangelism (the responsibility of every Christian leader to ensure that the gospel is being proclaimed, regardless of whether the specific gift is his primary one). The gifted evangelist is the Spirit's specialist in gospel proclamation; the pastor who is not primarily gifted in evangelism is nonetheless responsible to ensure that the community's evangelistic mission is being faithfully carried out, whether through his own ministry, through

the deployment of evangelistically gifted members, or through partnerships with evangelistic ministries beyond the local congregation.

B. Shepherding: Caring for, Guiding, Feeding, and Protecting the Flock

The gift of shepherding (Greek: *poimenas*, shepherds or pastors) is listed in Ephesians 4:11 in the compound form “pastor-teacher” (*tous de poimenas kai didaskalous*, a single Greek construction suggesting that the two functions belong together in the primary teaching ministry of the congregation). The gift of shepherding is the Spirit-given ability to care for, guide, protect, nourish, and lead the people of God with the compassion, the patience, and the faithful attention of a shepherd who knows his flock and gives himself for its welfare.

Jesus’ description of the Good Shepherd in John 10:11–16 is the Christological model for the gift of shepherding: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (v. 11), knows his own sheep and they know him (v. 14), and goes after the sheep who have strayed from the flock (vv. 3–4, 27). The Spirit-gifted shepherd is the one who has internalized this pattern of self-giving, attentive, protective, personally knowing care and who expresses it in the specific relational and pastoral work of the congregation’s life. The sheep-knowing that Jesus describes is not the general awareness of a manager who knows the statistics of his organization; it is the personal, name-knowing, history-knowing, soul-knowing relationship of a shepherd who has invested himself in the individual lives of the people under his care.

First Peter 5:1–4 provides the elder-shepherd’s vocational description in its most complete New Testament form: “Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” The shepherd’s manner, voluntary, eager, exemplary rather than domineering, is as important as the shepherd’s function. And the final eschatological orientation, the Chief Shepherd’s appearing and the unfading crown of glory, grounds the shepherd’s sacrificial, example-setting, non-domineering service in the eschatological reward that the Chief Shepherd will give to faithful under-shepherds at His return.

VII. Faith, Discernment, Wisdom, and Knowledge

Non-Revelatory Gifts for Extraordinary Trust, Spiritual Perception, and Applied Understanding

Four additional ordinary gifts deserve attention in this overview: faith, discernment, wisdom, and knowledge. These gifts occupy an important position in the cessationist gift theology because they are listed in 1 Corinthians 12’s gift catalog alongside the extraordinary gifts (tongues, prophecy, miraculous healing) but are themselves non-revelatory, they do not claim access to new, extracanonical divine revelation; they operate through the Spirit’s empowered use of the existing revelation of Scripture, applied in the community’s life through the Spirit’s own sovereign illumination and direction.

The gift of faith (1 Corinthians 12:9) is distinguished from saving faith (which every genuine believer has) as the Spirit's specific endowment of certain believers with an extraordinary capacity to trust God in circumstances that would overwhelm ordinary faith, to pray with confident expectation for specific divine intervention, to undertake kingdom projects that appear humanly impossible, and to maintain unwavering trust in God's provision and power in the face of obstacles that would paralyze a person of merely ordinary faith. George Mueller's extraordinary prayer ministry, trusting God for the daily provision of thousands of orphans without ever making his needs publicly known, is a post-apostolic illustration of the faith gift in operation. The gift of faith does not bypass prayer and trust in the revealed promises of Scripture; it is the Spirit's own empowerment of an extraordinary reliance on those promises in specific, demanding circumstances.

The gift of discernment (*diakriseis pneumatōn* in 1 Corinthians 12:10, the distinguishing of spirits) is the Spirit-given ability to evaluate spiritual claims, teaching, and experiences against the standard of Scripture and the character of the Spirit's work, identifying what is genuinely from the Spirit and what is from the flesh or from the adversary. In its New Testament context, this gift was exercised partly in the evaluation of prophetic utterances (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:21) to determine whether they were genuinely from the Spirit or from a counterfeit source. In its ongoing cessationist expression, the gift of discernment is the Spirit-empowered capacity to identify false teaching, to evaluate spiritual movements and phenomena against the standard of Scripture, and to protect the community from the spiritual counterfeit that every generation of the church faces.

The gifts of wisdom (*logos sophias*, a word/message of wisdom, 1 Corinthians 12:8) and knowledge (*logos gnōseōs*, a word/message of knowledge, v. 8) are the Spirit's endowment of specific believers with the capacity to apply the wisdom of the Word to complex and difficult situations with clarity and accuracy, and with the depth of biblical and theological understanding that enables them to speak a word that illuminates the community's path when the way is unclear. In their non-revelatory expression, which cessationism affirms as their continuing expression, they are not the spontaneous reception of new divine revelation but the Spirit's own empowerment of the careful, prayerful, Scripture-saturated reasoning of a person who has immersed himself in the Word and who is able, by the Spirit's empowerment, to apply its wisdom to the specific situations that the community faces.

*“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,
let each exercise them accordingly:
if prophecy, in proportion to his faith;
if service, in his serving;
if he who teaches, in his teaching...
he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

Romans 12:6–8, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Continuing Gifts	The category of spiritual gifts that operate through the normal means of the Word, wisdom, and Spirit-empowered human capacity, gifts that continue in the church throughout its entire history, from the apostolic era to the present day. Distinguished from extraordinary gifts by their mode of operation (through ordinary, recognizable channels of human capacity sanctified by the Spirit) and their expected duration (permanent, throughout church history). The continuing gifts are the Spirit's permanent provision for the church's permanent needs: teaching for the body's growth in knowledge; evangelism for the gospel's extension; shepherding for the flock's care; giving for the ministry's financial needs; mercy for the community's compassionate service.
Teaching (Didaskalos)	The Spirit-given ability to faithfully explain and apply the Word of God in a manner that produces genuine spiritual transformation, not merely intellectual information transfer. Listed in Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and Ephesians 4:11–12, making it one of the most consistently attested gifts in the New Testament. Distinguished from the natural communicative ability of a skilled teacher by the Spirit's sovereign empowerment that produces the illuminating, convicting, and transforming impact that natural eloquence cannot achieve. Foundational qualification for elders (1 Timothy 3:2: didaktikon, able to teach; Titus 1:9). Designed to reproduce itself across generations (2 Timothy 2:2).
Paraklesis	Greek: exhortation, encouragement, comfort, from the same root as Paraclete (the Spirit's own self-description). The gift of exhortation (Romans 12:8) is the Spirit-given ability to speak words that call believers toward greater faithfulness, comfort them in trial, admonish them in sin, and motivate them toward Christlike obedience. Distinguished from teaching (which explains and applies) as the gift that calls and motivates, that makes the meaning of the Word urgent and personally compelling for specific people in specific circumstances. Barnabas ("Son of Encouragement," Acts 4:36) is the New Testament's narrative embodiment of the exhortation gift.
Kubernēseis	Greek: acts of steering, helmsman's art. The word used in 1 Corinthians 12:28 for the gift of administration: the Spirit-given ability to organize the community's life and mission with wisdom, navigational clarity, and integrity of character. The nautical metaphor of the helmsman captures the navigational character of Spirit-gifted leadership: the administrator does not generate the mission's driving power (the Spirit) or determine the destination (Scripture), but keeps the community on course by making the skilled, constant adjustments of direction that prevent drift, grounding, or

Term	Definition
	storm-driven deviation. Paired in Romans 12:8 with the proistamenos (the one who stands before, who leads).
Haplotēti	Greek: singleness, simplicity, generosity without secondary agenda. The manner qualifier for the gift of giving in Romans 12:8: “he who gives, with liberality (haplotēti).” Spirit-gifted generosity is characterized by the singleness of purpose and the freedom from calculation that distinguishes it from self-interested philanthropy. The Spirit-gifted giver gives without expectation of influence, recognition, or return, the pure, undivided, Christ-motivated generosity that flows from a heart transformed by the Spirit’s own generosity in the gospel. Related to 2 Corinthians 9:7’s “cheerful giver”: Spirit-gifted giving is given with the joy of one who has received freely and gives freely.
Eleon	Greek: mercy, compassion. The gift of mercy in Romans 12:8, accompanied by the manner qualifier “with cheerfulness” (en hilarotēti). The Spirit-given ability to serve the practical and emotional needs of the suffering, the marginalized, the sick, and the grieving with a warmth and Christlike compassion that goes beyond natural sympathy. Distinguished from antilēmpsis (helps) as more relational and compassionate in orientation (the warm presence that accompanies the suffering) while helps is more practical and organizational (the assistance that makes others’ ministry possible). Together they constitute the Spirit’s provision for the community’s diaconal ministry.
Euangelistes	Greek: evangelist, proclaimer of good news. Listed in Ephesians 4:11 as one of the five ministry gifts given by the ascended Christ to His church. The Spirit-given ability to proclaim the gospel with the clarity, urgency, and Spirit-anointed persuasiveness that produces conversions and extends the church into previously unreached communities. Distinguished from the universal witness responsibility of every believer (Acts 1:8) as the Spirit’s specific endowment for the specialist ministry of gospel proclamation. Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8; 8:4–40) is the New Testament’s narrative embodiment of the gift. Paul’s instruction to Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5) distinguishes the work of evangelism (every leader’s responsibility) from the gift of evangelism (sovereignly distributed by the Spirit).
Poimenas	Greek: shepherds, pastors. The gift of shepherding in Ephesians 4:11, typically appearing in the compound “pastor-teacher.” The Spirit-given ability to care for, guide, feed, protect, and know the people of God with the compassion, patience, and self-giving attention of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–16). Distinguished from mere organizational leadership or administrative oversight as a deeply relational, name-knowing, history-knowing, soul-knowing gift of personal care and spiritual direction. The vocational description of 1 Peter 5:1–4: voluntary (not under compulsion), eager (not for financial gain), exemplary (not domineering), and

Term	Definition
	eschatologically motivated (awaiting the unfading crown from the Chief Shepherd at His appearing).
Diakriseis Pneumatōn	Greek: distinguishing of spirits. The gift of discernment in 1 Corinthians 12:10, the Spirit-given ability to evaluate spiritual claims, teaching, and experiences against the standard of Scripture and the character of the Spirit's work, identifying what is genuinely from the Spirit and what is from the flesh or from the adversary. In the apostolic era, exercised partly in the evaluation of prophetic utterances (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). In its ongoing cessationist expression: the Spirit-empowered capacity to identify false teaching, evaluate spiritual movements and phenomena against the standard of Scripture, and protect the community from the spiritual counterfeit that every generation faces.
Pastor-Teacher	The compound ministry gift of Ephesians 4:11 (tous de poimenas kai didaskalous), widely understood as a single gift combining the shepherding and teaching functions that together constitute the primary pastoral ministry of the local congregation. The single Greek article (tous) governing both nouns (poimenas and didaskalous) suggests they describe a single office or gift-set rather than two separate roles. The pastor-teacher is the person who both feeds the flock with the Word (the teaching dimension) and knows, cares for, and protects the flock relationally (the shepherding dimension). The combination represents the New Testament's integrated vision of the pastoral calling: Word-ministry and soul-care as two expressions of the single ministry of the ordained leader.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: *What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the continuing gifts are not lesser gifts by comparison with the spectacular gifts of the apostolic era. Teaching, shepherding, evangelism, giving, mercy, administration, exhortation, faith, discernment, wisdom, these are the Spirit's own permanent, comprehensive provision for the church's permanent mission. The cessationist community that has received the extraordinary gifts' cessation must not implicitly treat the ordinary gifts as a consolation prize. Every gift in this lesson's catalog is a supernatural grace-gift from the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, sovereignly distributed for the common good, exercised with the Spirit's own empowerment, and producing outcomes that natural human capacity alone cannot achieve. The Spirit who teaches through the gifted teacher is the same Spirit who healed through the apostolic healer; the mode of operation is ordinary, but the power and the source are equally divine.

We must also believe that every member of the congregation has at least one of these continuing gifts, and that the specific gift God has given is the specific gift the community most needs in this specific member's specific ministry context. The Spirit's sovereign distribution ensures that no community is without the gifts it needs; the question is whether the gifts that have been distributed are being faithfully exercised, or whether they are lying dormant because the community culture has not cultivated the environment in which every member's contribution is genuinely welcomed, needed, and deployed.

B. For the Heart: *What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the variety of the continuing gifts produce in you both gratitude for the specific gift you have received and genuine appreciation for the gifts of others that differ from your own. The teacher should genuinely value the mercy-shower's compassionate service, which reaches people in ways that teaching alone cannot; the mercy-shower should genuinely value the teacher's faithful exposition of the Word, which gives the mercy-shower the theological grounding that makes compassionate service more than emotional sympathy. The administrator should value the exhorter's ability to call people forward with Spirit-given urgency; the exhorter should value the administrator's ability to organize the community's life so that the exhortation has a context in which to be heard. The interdependence of the gifts is itself a grace, the Spirit's design for a community in which every member genuinely needs every other member.

Desire also the manner qualifiers that Romans 12:6–8 attaches to each gift. Teach with the diligence of one who knows that the community's spiritual health depends on the faithfulness of your explanation of the Word. Lead with the diligence that the gravity of spiritual oversight demands. Give with the liberality of one who has understood that all of it belongs to God and that the portion deployed in His service is the portion most wisely invested. Show mercy with the cheerfulness of one who has received more mercy than the mercy being given. Each

manner qualifier is itself a Spirit-produced fruit, the gift is not fully expressed without the Spirit's own character shaping the manner of its exercise.

C. For the Hands: *What Must We Do?*

- Read Romans 12:3–8 in its context of humble self-assessment and then apply the assessment to yourself. Paul's instruction to "think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (v. 3) is the instruction to assess your gifts accurately, neither inflating your gifting beyond what the Spirit has actually given nor suppressing or denying the gift the Spirit has given out of false modesty. Ask three questions: (1) In what ministry contexts do I most consistently sense the Spirit's empowerment, the energy, effectiveness, and sense of divine partnership that exceeds what my natural ability alone would produce? (2) What ministries most consistently receive the community's affirmation and benefit? (3) What ministry burdens do I carry with a Spirit-given passion that exceeds mere duty? The convergence of these three is the likely location of your primary gift.
- Study Ephesians 4:7–16 and trace the full purpose-chain of the ministry gifts: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers given (v. 11) for the equipping of the saints (v. 12a) for the work of service (v. 12b) for the building up of the body (v. 12c) until we all attain the fullness of Christ (v. 13). How does your current ministry gift-exercise fit into this purpose-chain? Are you primarily a gift-receiver (being equipped), a gift-exerciser (equipping others), or both? And what would it look like for the Ephesians 4 purpose-chain to be more fully realized in your congregation, so that the equipping function is genuinely producing a congregation of active gift-exercisers rather than passive ministry-receivers?
- For each of the continuing gifts examined in this lesson, teaching, exhortation, administration, giving, mercy/helps, evangelism, shepherding, faith, discernment, wisdom, identify at least one specific person in your congregation who demonstrates that gift. Then, for each gift, consider: is this person's gift being recognized and deployed in the community's life? Is there any way in which the community's culture, structure, or leadership practice is preventing or discouraging the expression of this gift? What specific change in the community's culture or structure would better enable the faithful exercise of each identified gift?
- Apply the manner qualifiers of Romans 12:6–8 as a personal diagnostic. For your primary gift, honestly evaluate whether the manner qualifier that Paul attaches to that gift characterizes your current exercise of it. If teaching: do you teach with the diligence that the Word's weight demands? If leading: do you lead with the diligent earnestness that the community's welfare requires, or with the ease of one who occupies a position without bearing its full responsibility? If giving: is your giving characterized by *haplotēti*, the undivided, uncalculating, pure generosity that the gift requires? If mercy: is your mercy characterized by the cheerful, freely-given joy that transforms practical service into a demonstration of the gospel's grace?
- Spend time this week exercising the gift you believe the Spirit has given you with specific, intentional attention to the community member who most needs its ministry.

Not the programmatic exercise of the gift in a formal ministry setting, but the Spirit-directed, personally specific, face-to-face ministry of the gift to a specific person in a specific moment of specific need. Ask the Spirit to direct you to the person and the moment. Then bring your gift to bear on their specific need with the manner qualifier that Romans 12 attaches to it, and afterward, reflect on the experience: did you sense the Spirit's empowerment? Did the exercise of the gift seem to produce something beyond what your natural capacity would explain? The experiential recognition of the Spirit's empowerment in the exercise of the gift is one of the primary evidences that the gift is genuinely from the Spirit.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Which of the continuing gifts examined in this lesson is most visible and most actively deployed in your congregation's life? Which is least visible or most neglected? And what does the specific pattern of gift-expression and gift-neglect in your congregation reveal about the community culture, the leadership priorities, and the Spirit's own particular equipping of that specific community for its specific mission context?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read Romans 12:3–8. Note that each of the listed gifts is followed by a manner qualifier: teaching “in his teaching,” leadership “with diligence,” giving “with liberality,” mercy “with cheerfulness.” What is the theological significance of these manner qualifiers? Are they simply practical advice, or do they describe an essential dimension of the gift's spiritual character, without which the gift is not being fully exercised? And what does each manner qualifier reveal about the Spirit's own character, which the gift is designed to express through the gift-bearer?
3. Read Ephesians 4:7–16 and trace the full argument about the ministry gifts. Why does Paul ground the gift-discussion in the ascended Christ giving gifts to His church (vv. 7–8, citing Psalm 68:18)? What does the connection between Christ's ascension and the distribution of ministry gifts establish about the source and the purpose of the gifts? And what does the mature “fullness of Christ” (v. 13) toward which the gifts are working look like in practice, what would a community that has reached this maturity actually look like?
4. Read 1 Peter 5:1–4. Peter describes the shepherding ministry with four manner qualifiers: (1) not under compulsion, but voluntarily; (2) not for sordid gain, but eagerly; (3) not lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock; (4) and then awaiting the Chief Shepherd's return and the unfading crown of glory. What does each of these manner qualifiers correct, what specific failure of shepherding is each one designed to prevent? And how does the eschatological grounding of the last point (the Chief Shepherd's appearing and the crown of glory) relate to the practical manner of the shepherding described in the first three?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–8. Paul is addressing the gift of giving, and he frames it with the agricultural analogy of sowing (“he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”, v. 6). What is the theological logic of this agricultural framing for the gift of giving? And how does verse 8 (“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you

may have an abundance for every good deed”) ground the cheerful generosity of the gift-giver in the character of God rather than in the adequacy of the giver’s own resources?

6. Read Acts 8:26–40. Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch is a narrative of the Spirit-directed evangelism gift in operation. Identify the specific pneumatological elements of the encounter: the Spirit’s direction (v. 29), Philip’s willingness (v. 30), the opening provided by the Ethiopian’s question (v. 34), Philip’s proclamation of Jesus from the Isaiah text (v. 35), and the conversion and baptism (vv. 36–38). What does this narrative reveal about the relationship between the Spirit’s sovereign direction and the evangelist’s active availability, responsiveness, and willingness to engage?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

7. The lesson distinguishes the gift of teaching from natural communicative ability, arguing that Spirit-gifted teaching produces genuine spiritual transformation while natural eloquence may explain content accurately without producing transformation. Is this distinction always clear in practice? How would you distinguish the Spirit’s empowerment of teaching from exceptional natural teaching ability? And what are the practical implications of this distinction for the identification and affirmation of the teaching gift in a congregation?
8. The lesson discusses the gift of faith (1 Corinthians 12:9) as an extraordinary capacity to trust God in circumstances that would overwhelm ordinary faith. But all Christians are called to faith, and the fruit of the Spirit includes faithfulness (Galatians 5:22). How does the gift of faith (charisma) relate to the fruit of faithfulness (karpos) and to the universal call to faith in God’s promises? Is the gift of faith a quantitatively greater version of the same faith all believers exercise, or is it qualitatively different?
9. The lesson presents the gift of discernment (diakriseis pneumatōn) as the ongoing ability to evaluate spiritual claims, teaching, and experiences against the standard of Scripture. But cessationism holds that the revelatory gifts (including prophecy) have ceased, so there are no longer new prophetic utterances to be evaluated. Does the cessation of prophecy make the gift of discernment less relevant, or does the persistence of false teaching and spiritual counterfeits in every generation make it equally or more relevant? What are the specific forms of counterfeit spiritual experience and false teaching in the twenty-first century that most need the gift of discernment?
10. The lesson presents the word of wisdom (logos sophias) and the word of knowledge (logos gnōseōs) in 1 Corinthians 12:8 in their non-revelatory expression, as the Spirit’s empowerment of careful, prayerful, Scripture-saturated reasoning. The Charismatic tradition often treats these as spontaneous, revelatory gifts (spontaneous divine knowledge about situations or people not previously known). How do you evaluate the two interpretations exegetically? And how does the cessationist interpretation of these gifts relate to the broader argument about the cessation of revelatory gifts?

11. The lesson emphasizes that the continuing gifts are the Spirit's permanent and fully sufficient provision for the church's permanent mission. The Charismatic response might be that a cessationist church is demonstrably less effective in reaching the unreached, healing the sick, and transforming communities than a church that operates all of the gifts. How would the cessationist respond to this empirical argument? And is there a legitimate critique of cessationist churches that have become pneumatologically tepid, not because the gifts have ceased but because the ordinary gifts have been insufficiently cultivated and deployed?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

12. The lesson proposes a three-question gift-discernment exercise: (1) In what ministry contexts do I most consistently sense the Spirit's empowerment beyond my natural ability? (2) What ministries most consistently receive the community's affirmation and benefit? (3) What ministry burdens do I carry with Spirit-given passion beyond mere duty? Having applied these three questions, what gift or gifts do they point toward as your primary Spirit-given capacity? And how specifically is that gift currently being deployed, or not deployed, in your congregation's life?
13. The lesson applies the Romans 12 manner qualifiers as a personal diagnostic. Having applied the relevant manner qualifier to your primary gift-exercise, what specifically would change in the manner of your gift's exercise if the Spirit's own character were more fully expressed in it? Is the teaching more diligent? The giving more uncalculating? The mercy more cheerful? The leadership more earnest and less self-protective? The exhortation more consistently specific about the specific need of the specific person rather than generically motivational? Identify one specific manner change and one specific relational context in which to practice it.
14. The lesson's pastoral vision is a congregation in which every member's continuing gift is identified, cultivated, and deployed for the common good. Assess your congregation's culture against this vision: What percentage of members are actively exercising their Spirit-given gift in the congregation's life? What structural or cultural changes would increase active gift-deployment? And what is the single most important thing the leadership could do to move the congregation from a consumer model (professional minister does the ministry, congregation receives it) toward the Ephesians 4 equipping model (minister equips saints, saints do the work of service)?
15. The lesson closes with the encouragement that the ordinary gifts are fully sufficient for the church's permanent mission. Reflect honestly: has the cessationist conviction about extraordinary gifts' cessation produced in your own pneumatological expectations a sense that the Spirit's provision for the present church is lesser than His provision for the apostolic church? If so, what specific truth from this lesson most directly corrects that implicit sense of pneumatological impoverishment? And what difference would it make in your own ministry and in your congregation's culture if the ordinary gifts were

celebrated and deployed with the same seriousness and the same expectation as the extraordinary gifts were celebrated in the apostolic era?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson with a reading of Romans 12:3–8 as a corporate charter for the Spirit-gifted community, not as a doctrinal passage to be analyzed but as a pastoral vision to be received. Read it slowly, with attention to the manner qualifiers that give each gift its spiritual character: the teacher who teaches in his teaching, the leader who leads with diligence, the giver who gives with liberality, the mercy-shower who shows mercy with cheerfulness. After the reading, sit for a moment in the awareness of what the Spirit has given to the members of the gathered community: the gifts catalogued in this passage are not merely theological categories; they are the Spirit's own description of the specific capacities He has distributed to specific members of the specific community now gathered. Someone in the room has been given the teaching gift; someone has been given the mercy gift; someone has been given the gift of giving. Thank the Spirit for each.

Begin the prayer with extended, specific gratitude for the continuing gifts that are currently active in the gathered community. Name them, if possible, with the specificity that genuine gratitude demands: not “thank You for the gifts of Your Spirit” in the abstract, but “Thank You for the faithful, diligent, Word-saturated teaching of those who feed this congregation from the Scripture. Thank You for the compassionate, cheerful, practical mercy of those who serve the suffering in this community. Thank You for the generous, uncalculating, Christ-motivated giving of those whose financial stewardship sustains this ministry.” The specificity of the gratitude is the specificity that the Spirit's sovereign distribution deserves.

Pray then for the discovery and the deployment of gifts that are present in the community but not yet fully active. Ask the Spirit to surface the teaching capacity in the person who has never been given the opportunity to teach; the mercy gift in the person who has never been encouraged to serve in the community's compassionate ministries; the administration gift in the person who has been structurally excluded from the community's leadership conversations. Ask the Spirit to cultivate the community culture in which every member's gift is genuinely needed, in which the foot does not say “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body” (1 Corinthians 12:15) because the culture genuinely communicates that every part is necessary.

Close with the manner-qualifier prayer that the continuing gifts demand. Pray not merely that the gifts would be exercised but that they would be exercised in the manner that the Spirit's own character requires: with the diligence that the seriousness of the ministry demands, with the liberality that the gospel's grace inspires, with the cheerfulness that the love of Christ produces in the servant who serves others in His name. Pray that the exercise of every continuing gift in the gathered community would be so clearly marked by the Spirit's own character that the watching world would see not merely impressive human competencies but the specific, recognizable, unmistakable evidence of the Third Person's sovereign, grace-distributing, body-building work in every gift-expression of every Spirit-gifted member of this community. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

*“Whoever speaks, as one who is speaking
the utterances of God;
whoever serves, as one who is serving
by the strength which God supplies;
so that in all things God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 4:11, NASB 1995

Key Texts: Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:7–16; 1 Peter 4:10–11; 5:1–4; Acts 4:36; 8:26–40; 21:8; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:5; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; John 10:11–16; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8; Hebrews 10:24–25

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

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