

LESSON 9 Discerning of Spirits, Tongues, Interpretation

We have come to the last lesson in our course. Already we have studied six of the nine gifts of the Spirit. As we moved along we saw how the Holy Spirit so wonderfully provides for building up Christ's body. We learned that the gifts of the Spirit are generally manifested to the body through Spirit-filled believers.

In this final lesson we will learn about the last three gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. We will give special attention to the gift of tongues, since it is so common in the world today.

You have seen that all of these gifts are possible through the Holy Spirit. If you have not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit, you can be today. Open your heart and invite Him in. Begin worshiping Him in faith. Yield fully to Him. You will sense Him deep within you. As He takes full control of you, you will begin speaking in a new language. You will know He has come in His fullness. That will be the beginning of your Spirit-filled life. As you stay filled with the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit will be manifested through you, as the Spirit wills.

lesson outline

Discerning of Spirits

Discerning of Spirits Defined

Discerning of Spirits Explained and Illustrated

Purpose Discerning of Spirits

The Gift of Tongues

The Gift of Tongues Defined

The Gift of Tongues Explained and Illustrated

Purpose for the Gift of Tongues

Interpretation of Tongues

Interpretation of Tongues Defined

Interpretation of Tongues Explained and Illustrated

Purpose for Interpretation of Tongues

lesson objectives

- State the purpose and function of discerning of spirits.
- Explain the function and purpose of the gift of tongues.
- State the function and purpose for interpretation of tongues.
- Explain how you might be used by the Holy Spirit to manifest this gift.

learning activities

1. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-28.
2. Make a chart in your notebook showing the three gifts of the Spirit and their definitions, using 1 Corinthians 14:2-3.
3. Study the key words before beginning the lesson.
4. Complete each test as you come to it.
5. Finish memorizing 1 Corinthians 13. Quote all thirteen verses to a friend.

key words

circumstance

counterfeit

severity

lesson development

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Objective 1. *State the purpose and function of discerning of spirits.*

Discerning of Spirits Defined

“... to another distinguishing between spirits”
(1 Corinthians 12:10). The King James Version
says, “to another discerning of spirits.”

Discerning means “looking beyond the outward to the inward, seeing right through.” The word *discerning* also carries the idea of forming a judgment on the basis of what is known.

The word *spirit* means “breath.” Yet, to believers it means more than breath. It really means “spirit-being.” As it is used here it is a reference to any one of three spirits—the spirit of man, the Spirit of God, or evil spirits. The spirit of man is the most important part of man. With his spirit, man knows God, who is a spirit. The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. And evil spirits are spirits in the evil world. They are Satan’s servants.

Discerning of spirits, then, is a special ability given by the Holy Spirit to look beyond what ordinary men see when a spirit is manifesting itself. It is the ability to know by which spirit a man is speaking or acting.

1 The three kinds of spirits which can manifest themselves through men are ,
..... ,
and

2 Through discerning of spirits the believer is able to.....
.....

Discerning of Spirits Explained and Illustrated

Satan is a great counterfeiter. That is, he tries to copy what the Holy Spirit does. He also tries to make people believe that

when he manifests himself it is the Holy Spirit. This could cause problems, because even believers can be fooled.

Then, too, men can speak out of their own spirits. They can make it appear that they are speaking by the Holy Spirit. This can also create problems for the body.

Christ, the Head of the body, has made provisions for every need of the body. This includes protection for the body against evil spirits, protection against men who allow their own spirits to hurt the body, and discerning of spirits to provide protection for believers who are truly used by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit expresses God's severity through a believer. In such cases, other believers may be tempted to say it was of an evil spirit, or it was of the man's own spirit. But, discerning of spirits enables the body to know what spirit is manifesting itself.

Some evil spirits can be recognized without the gift of discerning of spirits. Paul gave instructions to the Corinthians on this "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). What does Paul mean? He is writing about those who speak by a spirit. He means that if a man speaking by a spirit does call Jesus accursed, he is not speaking by the Holy Spirit. He is speaking by an evil spirit. He also means that no man speaking by an evil spirit is going to call Jesus, Lord.

Now, let us see how the gift of discerning of spirits worked in the life of Jesus, and in the early church. We should remind ourselves at this point that the gift of discerning of spirits is supernatural.

Discerning of Spirits in Jesus' Ministry

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit ". . . God gives the Spirit without limit" (John 3:34). Therefore Jesus was able to discern both good and evil spirits.

1. He discerned the good spirit which was in Nathanael. Before Jesus had ever talked with Nathanael, He knew the kind

of spirit he had. As Philip was bringing Nathanael to Jesus, Jesus said, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false” (John 1:47).

2. He discerned a *wrong spirit* in James and John. They wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy those who would not receive Jesus. “But Jesus turned and rebuked them” (Luke 9:55, KJV).

3. He often discerned *evil spirits*. At one time Jesus saw a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years. He recognized that her problem was caused by an evil spirit. This spirit did not speak. But it bound the poor woman. Jesus said, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity” (Luke 13:12). In that moment she was well. She did not need healing. She only needed to be free from an evil spirit.

We learn from this, that the gift of discerning of spirits can be a very useful gift in ministering to people with diseases or infirmities.

Discerning of Spirits in the Early Church

1. Peter, by the Holy Spirit, discerned a wrong spirit in Ananias and Sapphira. He discerned that they were lying to the Holy Spirit (See Acts 5:3.) If Satan cannot give men an evil spirit, he tries to give them a wrong spirit.

2. Peter, by the Spirit, also discerned a wrong spirit in Simon. (See Acts 8:23.) Was this the gift of discerning of spirits, or was it the gift of the word of knowledge? Who can say for sure? Perhaps it was both gifts. As we have seen, these gifts all flow out of the Holy Spirit. They often work together. The gifts are not as important as the purpose for which they are given. They are important only as they help the body.

3. Paul, by the gift of discerning of spirits, discerned an evil spirit in a slave girl. An ordinary believer, by his natural ability to know, might have thought the girl was a servant of God. Listen to what she said. “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved” (Acts 16:17). That sounded good, but Paul knew by the Holy Spirit

that it was an evil spirit who spoke. The Holy Spirit had spoken to Paul's spirit. That is how Paul knew. So Paul spoke to the evil spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" (Acts 16:18). Then the Bible says, "At that moment the spirit left her."

We should note that not only did Paul discern the evil spirit, he also cast it out. The supernatural power, given to the believer by the Holy Spirit, gave him the ability to cast out evil spirits in the same way. Nonbelievers do not have this power. (Read Acts 19:11-17.)

One of the things evil spirits do is to try to get believers to accept false teaching. The gift of discerning of spirits makes the believer able to recognize what is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and what is the teaching of evil spirits. "I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray... the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you" (1 John 2:26-27). We must learn to listen carefully to the Holy Spirit. He will let us know what teachers are trying to give us false teaching.

3 Complete the following statements.

- a** Counterfeit means
- b** Three kinds of spirits can manifest themselves through
.....
- c** Through discerning of spirits the body of Christ can be
.....

Purpose for Discerning of Spirits

The purpose for discerning of spirits is mainly protection of Christ's body. This gift protects the body from evil spirits who try to hinder the gospel. It also protects the body from wrong spirits which often hurt and divide the body. Beyond this, the gift of discerning of spirits protects the body from false teaching. All of this protection makes possible the building up of the body of Christ.

4 From what did the gift of discerning of spirits, which was manifested through Paul in Acts 16:16-18, protect the body?

.....
.....

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Objective 2. *Explain the function and purpose of the gift of tongues.*

The Gift of Tongues Defined

“...to another speaking in different kinds of tongues...” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Tongues means “languages.” Strange tongues would be those that are unknown. We are reminded of Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 13:1, “I may be able to speak with the languages of men and even of angels.”

We must understand that this gift is totally supernatural. The gift of tongues is the ability given to the believer, by the Holy Spirit, by which he can speak languages he has never learned. The language may be some language of earth. Or it may be a language of angels.

The gift of tongues is never a learned language. It is a language given by the Holy Spirit.

The Gift of Tongues Explained and Illustrated

The gift of tongues is one of the most common of the Spirit’s gifts. It is very important to the body of Christ. For this reason Satan tries to keep people from speaking in tongues. Therefore we want to understand all we can about it.

The Importance of Speaking in Tongues

We have said already that the gift of prophecy is perhaps the most important gift. However, in some ways speaking in tongues is equally important. Here are the reasons:

1. Tongues is a gift all can have. Paul said, “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:5).
2. Tongues is a gift you can manifest anytime, anywhere, and in any of life’s circumstances. One can speak in tongues silently or aloud (1 Corinthians 14:28).
3. Tongues is the primary gift of the nine gifts by which the believer can build himself up (1 Corinthians 14:4).
4. Tongues may function as the starter gift. I will explain. In Israel there are two kinds of candlesticks. Some of them have seven branches. Others have nine branches. On those candlesticks with nine branches, one of the branches can be removed from the other eight. It is then lighted. And with it the other eight are lit. It is the starter for the other eight.

The gift of tongues is like that. It helps us into the supernatural realm. We can say, it starts us in the supernatural. It prepares us to manifest the other eight gifts.

5. Tongues is the language of the spirit. God is a spirit. Tongues enables us to talk with God better than we ever could with our human ability.

5 Place a **T** before each TRUE statement and an **F** before each FALSE statement.

- ... **a** Tongues mean language we learn in school.
- ... **b** Some who speak in tongues speak in the language of angels.
- ... **c** Speaking in tongues is the least important of all nine gifts of the Spirit.
- ... **d** Speaking in tongues should be limited to church leaders.

The Function of Speaking In Tongues

Speaking in tongues is evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It can be safely said that *whenever* anyone is baptized in the Holy Spirit, he will speak with tongues. He may speak in several different languages unknown to him. Why do we

believe a person who is baptized in the Spirit will speak with tongues? There are several reasons.

When the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the Day of Pentecost, all who were present spoke with tongues. These were the twelve apostles, and more than one hundred other men and women. None of them had any idea of what might happen when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. They had no teaching. They had no wrong ideas. They had no pattern. However, when they were baptized in the Spirit, they all had the *same experience*. They *all* spoke with tongues.

Therefore, if we want a good idea of what to expect when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, all we need to do is look at the account of the first time people were baptized in the Spirit. There the pattern was set.

It seems that whenever people were baptized in the Holy Spirit in the early church, they spoke with tongues. Let us examine these first accounts, according to the Book of Acts.

1. *The one hundred and twenty in the upper room.* “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4).

2. *The Samaritans.* See Acts 8:14-17. The Bible does not say specifically that they spoke with tongues. However, it does not say they did not speak in tongues. When Simon saw the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he wanted to buy the power to do the same thing. What did Simon see? We believe he saw and heard the Samaritans speak in tongues.

3. *Paul’s experience.* Read Acts 9:17. Again, we are not told whether Paul did or did not speak with tongues when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, Paul did say later, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1 Corinthians 14:18). When do you suppose he began? We believe he began to speak with tongues when he was baptized in the Spirit.

4. *Cornelius and his household*. See Acts 10:44-47. “For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”

5. The *Ephesians*. Read Acts 19:1-6. Here it is clear that they spoke with tongues.

As we examine these five accounts we note that people were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and in three cases it is clear that they spoke in tongues. So we believe that *everyone* who is baptized in the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues.

6 We believe speaking in tongues is the evidence shown when a believer has been filled with the Holy Spirit because

- a) speaking in tongues is supernatural.
- b) speaking in tongues is hard to learn.
- c) everyone who was first baptized in the Spirit in the upper room experienced speaking in tongues.
- d) all who were baptized in the Spirit as recorded in Acts spoke in tongues.

Spiritually Uplifting

Speaking in tongues builds up the *believer* spiritually. “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Corinthians 14:4). The King James Version says, “He edifieth (builds up) himself.” As we have already seen, building up ourselves is a very important function of speaking in tongues. All believers need to be built up spiritually. “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). This is a great help to every Spirit-filled believer.

The Spirit puts us in direct communication with God the Father. Read the following verses:

1. *Acts 2:11*. “we hear them declaring the wonders of God.” Some feel that the speakers could have been testifying to the people about the works of God. My view is that they were worshipping and praising God. They were speaking *to God*.

2. *Acts 10:46*. “For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.” They, too, were speaking *to God*.

3. *1 Corinthians 14:14-15*. Here Paul says he prays “my spirit prays” that is, in tongues. In prayer he *spoke to God*.

4. *1 Corinthians 14:16*. “If you are praising God with your spirit . . .” Paul means “when you bless God in tongues.” Again the speaking is *to God*.

5. *1 Corinthians 14:17*. “For thou (that is, the one who speaks in tongues) verily givest thanks well . . .” The giving of thanks is *to God*.

Speaking in tongues by itself builds up the speaker, but speaking in tongues with interpretation builds up the *Body of Christ*. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:4-5.) When tongues are interpreted in the public service, the experience builds up the whole body.

How does speaking in tongues with interpretation edify the whole body? Speaking in tongues with interpretation is equivalent to prophecy. This view is based mainly on what Paul said, “He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified” (1 Corinthians 14:5).

As we have suggested elsewhere (p.83), there is sometimes overlapping between gifts. For instance, through the supernatural gift of prophecy, which is spoken to the people, the body is built up by exhortation and comfort. Also, through the supernatural gifts of tongues and interpretation, the body is built up.

Complete the following statements.

7 Speaking in tongues without interpretation builds up the
.....,
while tongues with interpretation builds up the

8 Uninterrupted speaking in tongues is always directed to
.....

Special Helps

When we pray in tongues, we are able to pray as we cannot pray in the natural. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words (that is, our own human words) cannot express” (Romans 8:26).

Speaking in tongues can be a sign to unbelievers. “Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers” (1 Corinthians 14:22). When an unbeliever hears someone speak a language which the speaker himself does not know, that unbeliever suddenly realizes God is speaking to him. God may not be speaking to him so much *by what* is being said, as *by the supernaturalness* of what is being said. In either case, what is being said is for the hearer’s benefit.

This is what happened on the Day of Pentecost. People were in Jerusalem from all the countries round about. When they came together they heard these people from Galilee “declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2:11). That made the unbelievers ready to listen to the gospel. Tongues-speaking was a sign to them.

- 9 Complete the following statements.
- a The Holy Spirit helps us pray according
- b Speaking in tongues is a help to the believer because he knows
- c When the unbeliever hears Christians speaking in tongues, he knows that

The Regulations For Tongues-Speaking

Since speaking in tongues is so common, there is need for understanding the right use of the gift. The Corinthian church had the gift of tongues, but they did not know how to make the best use of it. They needed more knowledge. So Paul gave them some guidelines. Let us look at the rules Paul gave.

1. Speaking in tongues must not be given too much importance. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:6 and 14:26.) There must be a time and place for things other than tongues in the

service—revelations, word of knowledge, prophecy, doctrine, psalms, interpretations.

2. Speaking in tongues is to be limited to two or three utterances in a service (1 Corinthians 14:27).

3. Speaking in tongues in the public service must be interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:27).

4. Those who speak in tongues in the public service are to keep silent if no one is present to interpret (1 Corinthians 14:28).

5. Those who speak in tongues in the public service are to pray that *they* may also interpret (1 Corinthians 14:13).

6. Speaking in tongues is not to be forbidden (1 Corinthians 14:39).

7. Speaking in tongues is not to create confusion (1 Corinthians 14:40).

10 That which provides a solid base for profitable manifestation of the gift of tongues is

Purpose of the Gift of Tongues

The purpose for speaking in tongues is twofold: (1) edification of the believer who speaks, and (2) edification of the body when it is interpreted.

Some have tried to use both tongues and prophecy for personal guidance. Very serious problems have arisen from this. If we understand that uninterrupted tongues are always spoken to God, we will realize that this is not the way God gives a message to man. We do not mean that God could not speak to man in a tongue unknown to the speaker. But if that did happen, it would be a miracle, and not the general function of the gift of tongues.

Regarding prophecy for personal guidance, Donald Gee said, "It can truthfully be affirmed that there is not one single instance of the Gift of Prophecy being . . . resorted to for guidance in the New Testament."

One additional thing should be remembered. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the purpose for prophecy, he said it was for edification, exhortation, and comfort. None of these words suggest that the gifts are for personal guidance.

We are safe when we manifest these gifts according to Paul’s instructions. When we do this, their purpose is fulfilled.

11 The great overall purpose for all nine gifts of the Spirit including speaking in tongues is

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

Objective 3. *State the function and purpose for interpretation of tongues.*

Objective 4. *Explain how you might be used by the Holy Spirit to manifest this gift.*

Interpretation of Tongues Defined

“. . . and to still another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:10). The King James Version says, “to another the interpretation of tongues.”

Interpretation means “explanation.” *Explanation* means “to give the meaning.” We must understand that interpretation does not mean “translation.” *Translation* means “to say the same thing in another language.”

Therefore, we understand that interpretation of tongues is “giving the meaning of what is said in another language. We must also understand that the ability to give the meaning of tongues comes only from the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation of Tongues Explained and Illustrated

Speaking in tongues in a public service is in order only when it is interpreted. “If someone is going to speak in a tongue. . . let there be two or at least three, each in turn, and let one interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:27).

Speaking in tongues in a public service, without an interpretation, violates Paul's instruction, "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12).

What if you feel an urge in your spirit to speak in tongues during a service and no one interprets what you said. Does that mean you should not have spoken? No. *It could mean that someone who was to be used by the Holy Spirit to interpret did not have faith to interpret. The same rule would apply as relates to prophecy.* "those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5).

Also, if no one interpreted what you said *it could mean that you failed to follow the Bible rule* which says, "If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God" (1 Corinthians 14:28). You should not feel badly if what you spoke, in such a case, was not interpreted. However, you should be careful not to speak again unless you know an interpreter is present.

Again if no one interpreted what you said *it could mean you should pay closer attention to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:13:* "anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he (himself) says."

There is another question about interpretation of tongues. How can I know the Holy Spirit wants to manifest the gift of interpretation through me? The answer is much the same as that we suggested concerning the other gifts. In your spirit you will feel a great urge, a sort of bubbling up, after someone has spoken in a tongue, to share the message God is giving you. Then you should speak forth clearly what the Holy Spirit gives you to say. You may have received only a few words at the beginning. As you speak out in faith, more words will come. Soon you will have given the whole meaning of the message.

12 Circle the letter of each FALSE statement below.

- a** There is no limit to the number of messages of tongues and their interpretation in any one public service.

- b** A message in tongues in a public service must always be interpreted if the purpose of tongues is to be realized, that is, if the body is to be edified.
 - c** Speaking in tongues is mainly for unbelievers.
 - d** If no one interprets a message in tongues in the service, the speaker should repeat the message more clearly.
- 13** You may know the Holy Spirit is moving upon you to give an interpretation
- a)** if you have learned the language in which the utterance is given.
 - b)** when you sense a deep moving in your spirit to speak forth something to comfort and exhort the people.
 - c)** when you feel a strong urge to speak forth some words of worship, prayer, blessing, or thanksgiving which have suddenly come to your mind.

Purpose for Interpretation of Tongues

The purpose for the gift of interpretation is to build up Christ's body by giving the meaning of what is being spoken in tongues in the public service. The edification comes to the body as the members understand what was spoken in the strange tongue. In this way they are lifted to new heights of worship, prayer, blessing, or giving of thanks to God. Often when this happens believers find their burdens lifted, their problems solved, their joys increased, and their spiritual lives enriched. The whole church is strengthened as the members unite in this Holy Spirit-inspired reaching unto God.

self-test

1 Read Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-47; 19:1-6 carefully, and circle the letter of the phrase which completes the sentence correctly. The believers, who were baptized with the Holy Spirit on these occasions, were all

- a) listening to a sermon.
- b) speaking in other languages.
- c) kneeling in prayer.

2 For the description (left column) write the number which represents the gift referred to (right column).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>... a In Acts 16:17-18, the apostle recognized in a slave girl a spirit that was not of God.</p> | <p>1) Tongues 2) Interpretation of tongues 3) Discerning of spirits</p> |
| <p>... b In Acts 2:14, a group of believers praying together began to speak in a language they had not learned.</p> | |
| <p>... c The body of believers is built up when one of the believers gives the meaning of an utterance or message in tongues.</p> | |
| <p>... d There is one gift of the Spirit which prepares us to manifest the other eight gifts.</p> | |

3 Circle the letter of each TRUE statement.

- a) When the Holy Spirit speaks through a believer in a new language, it may be a language that is not known on earth.
- b) Evil spirits can only be recognized through the gift of discerning of spirits.
- c) The gift of discerning of spirits is sometimes a useful gift in ministering to the sick and infirm.
- d) A person speaks either out of his own spirit, by a wrong spirit, or by the Holy Spirit.
- e) Not all who are baptized in the Holy Spirit speak in tongues.

4 Another word for tongues is

5 The principal purpose of discerning of spirits is

.....

6 In order for tongues to build up the body, what else is needed?

.....

7 Which of the following are rules governing the use of tongues in the church? Circle the letters of the TRUE statements.

- a** Speaking in tongues should not create confusion.
- b** Only the pastor should give an interpretation.
- c** If there is no one present in a public service to interpret a message in tongues, the one who speaks in tongues should remain silent.
- d** There is no biblical basis for one speaking in tongues to ask God to give him the interpretation also.

answers to study questions

- 1** man's spirit, the Holy Spirit, evil spirits.
- 8** God.
- 2** know which spirit is manifesting itself.
- 9** **a** to God's will.
b God is speaking through him.
c God is speaking.
- 3** **a** copy.
b people.
c protected.
- 10** knowledge.
- 4** It protected the body from an evil spirit who wanted to hinder the gospel.
- 11** edification of the body
- 5** **a** F
b T
c F
d F
- 12** **a** False.
b True.
c False.
d False.
- 6** **c**) everyone who was first baptized in the Spirit in the upper room experienced speaking in tongues.
d) all who were baptized in the Spirit, as recorded in Acts, spoke in tongues.
- 13** **c**) when you feel a strong urge to speak forth some words of worship, prayer, blessing, or thanksgiving which has suddenly come to your mind
- 7** speaker, body.

