

Episode 26. "The Gifts of the Spirit."

Tuesday, December 7, 2021. 51 Minutes Long.

A humorous but serious discussion of the amazing, miraculous, supernatural abilities called the "Gifts of the Spirit." A clear explanation of why every Christian should be expressing the gifts in daily life, since all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have the Gifts of the Spirit within themselves.

John (00:00):

John Shields opens the episode by saying:

John (00:12):

Hello, friends in Podcast Land! And welcome to Episode 26 in our biweekly series of "Saving Christianity," our podcast seeking a return to peace, healing, and hope in Christianity. We're coming to you every-other-Tuesday from Christian Family Online in America, and I'm your host, John Shields. I'm here in the studio today with my co-host, Owen Allen, and our producer, Shannon Wolfe. You will remember that in our previous two episodes – Episode 24 and 25 – we talked about the Fruit of the Spirit. And now, starting with this episode, we have two *follow-on* episodes of equal importance. The title of this first one is: "The Gifts of the Spirit." (Repeats.)

John (01:02):

Here at Christian Family Online, we've learned that Christians can't walk the Deeper Christian Walk unless we're experiencing the supernatural actions of God that we call the "Gifts of the Spirit." In other words, Christians can be *Christians*, and can go to *heaven*, without ever expressing these gifts. But they can't experience much of heaven here on *earth* without expressing them. And that fact makes the gifts very important for every Christian. So let's get started talking about them. This is a great episode. You're going to enjoy being tuned in! And let's bring in our co-host, Owen Allen. Welcome to Episode 26, Owen!

Owen (01:55):

Well, thank you, John! And welcome to all of our friends out in Podcast Land! It's a blessing to be here in the studio with you and our intrepid producer, Shannon. And to tell the truth, I pray, John, that this episode brings new understanding and new appreciation to the Gifts of the Spirit because they're so incredibly necessary for all Christians. You know John, as a matter of fact, we know that the whole of chapter 12 of our book, *Saving Christianity*, is devoted to the gifts. And I think we could honestly say that the gifts, together with the Fruit of the Spirit that we talked about previously, *are* the "Early Christian Lifestyle."

Owen (02:41):

Let's repeat that: The fruit and the gifts *are* the "Early Christian Lifestyle." You know, to use a modern term, they're the "platform" on which *Christian behavior* stands. So Christians can't live – I'm sorry to say – effective Christian lives unless they're expressing the fruit and the gifts. You mentioned it a minute ago, but that's why we say in almost every episode: "When we express the fruit and the gifts, we're keeping one foot in *heaven* and one foot on *earth*."

John (03:18):

That's right, Owen. And we want our friends to know that unless we're allowing God to express Himself through us with the fruit and the gifts, then we're not actually living Christian life to its fullest.

Owen (03:36):

I think we all should want to do that ... (Laughter). Let's be as specific as we can about this: The purpose of being a Christian is to experience a little bit of *heaven* on earth. I'm not sure that a lot of Christians realize that. And also – as we've said many times – to *role-model* that for the non-Christians around us. But let's be, again, very specific. What *is* this "little bit of heaven on earth" that we're talking about? Well in the most simple terms, it's letting God act through *us* in two different supernatural ways. First, with the supernatural *emotions* that we call the Fruit of the Spirit. We discussed those in the two previous episodes. But now, second, with the supernatural *abilities* – we need to remember that word "abilities" – called the Gifts of the Spirit. Those are our subject now in this episode.

John (04:39):

Yes, and these supernatural acts of God are so important that it's hard to know actually where to start, Owen. So why don't we just start with the bare bones *principles* of the gifts?

Owen (04:53):

Well you know, that's always a good place to start – with the basic principles in any subject. But to do that now, we're going to have to go all the way back to something that Jesus said to His disciples at their last meal together. Everybody should remember now: Here they are in this room, and He's telling them what's going to happen when *Christianity* is founded in the future. Remember, it did not exist at the time of the Last Supper. And here's what He said was going to happen in the future to Christians *after* Christianity was founded. Here's what he said:

"Whoever believes in Me, will perform the *same* miraculous deeds that I'm performing. And he or she will perform even *greater* deeds than these because I'm going to the Father."

Owen (05:54):

Now you know, that is a mind-blowing statement: "Whoever believes in Me, will perform the *same* deeds I'm performing – and even *greater* deeds – because I'm going to the Father."

John (06:07):

Yeah, and that promise amazed the disciples during that last meal as much as it amazes us today. Because after all, how could such a thing be *true*? How could future Christians have the same supernatural abilities that Jesus had in the First Century?

Owen (06:30):

It's an incredible question. But worse, imagine how the disciples felt after Jesus said this at the last meal – and a few hours later He's arrested ... He's tortured ... He's crucified ... and He's buried. And the disciples flee into *hiding* in Jerusalem. And they're completely demoralized, discouraged, and afraid.

John (06:53):

Yeah. And Owen, we know there are *still* Christians today who are demoralized, discouraged, and afraid. So, what turned the disciples around? What gave them hope?

Owen (07:07):

Well, this is stunning. But what turned them around and gave them hope was that Jesus *rose* from the dead and *joined* them in the hideout. And for the next 40 days, He taught them about what was going to happen when *Christianity* was founded a few weeks later. And here's what He told them was going to happen. And I quote:

"You will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes *in* you. And you will be *My witnesses* to the ends of the earth."

Owen (07:39):

Think about that. "You'll receive *power* from the Holy Spirit *inside* you. And it will make you witnesses to the end of the earth."

John (07:49):

So Jesus was telling the disciples that future Christians were going to have *supernatural abilities* after Christianity was founded. And future Christians would no longer need to be afraid, demoralized, and discouraged.

Owen (08:07):

Well, think about that! Absolutely, John. I mean, that's stunning. But to clearly understand that promise, we need to understand two words that Jesus used in the original Greek language in which they were written. And in that quote, the first word is "power." Jesus said that people who believe in Him will have "power." And the Greek word He used there is *dunamis* ("DO'-nuh-

miss"). And what it means in Greek – hang on! – is *the supernatural ability to perform miracles*. Now look at the second word. And this explains why that's so necessary. The second word Jesus used is "witnesses." "You will be My witnesses." The people that have this power will be witnesses. And the Greek word He used is *martyrs* ("MARR'-tooss"). And which means in the Greek – *proof of the strength and genuineness of a person's faith*. Proof that you are a Christian.

John (09:09):

So Jesus was saying that in the future, after Christianity is founded, Christians would have the *same* abilities to perform *miracles* that He had. And those abilities would be the *proof* of the strength and the genuineness of their Christianity.

Owen (09:28):

And you know, what could be more logical, John? (Laughter and agreement.) But how many of us *know* that, or *do* that? Well, what happened next? Well several weeks later, *Christianity* was indeed founded in Jerusalem. We all know it was founded on the morning of the Festival of Pentecost. We've talked about that in several previous episodes. So we won't repeat all that here. But here's an overview: As He promised, Jesus *did* go back to heaven. He *did* go to the Father. The Father *did* give Him the Holy Spirit. Think about that a second. And Jesus *did* send the Holy Spirit back to earth to keep the promises He made about Christianity. And check this out. The Holy Spirit *did* come down from heaven like a roaring tornado and a river of fire. He entered the house where the disciples were waiting. He indwelt them with the *supernatural abilities* to perform miracles. And those supernatural abilities immediately became *proof* of the strength and faithfulness of their faith. Why? Because before sunset, 3,000 strangers from the streets of Jerusalem had been so impressed with what the disciples could do that they joined the movement too, and *also* became Christians.

John (10:56):

And that's why the *Day of Pentecost* is the "Birthday of Christianity." But, the specific reason the Holy Spirit came down from heaven that day was to fulfill the promises Jesus made to the disciples – that *after* Christianity was founded, Christians would have the *same* Spiritual abilities to perform miraculous deeds that He had.

Owen (11:22):

Now, John that's true. But you just think about what we're saying and what that means. And I just wonder how many Christians today – including us here in the studio – really understand and absorb the power of that. Because God the Father's purpose in founding *Christianity* was to fulfill Jesus's promise that Christians would have supernatural abilities that later became called the "Gifts of the Spirit." And said another way, one reason Christianity was founded was to fulfill Jesus's promise that Christians would have the *potential* – now that's a tricky word there – but we *do* have that *potential* to express the same supernatural powers that He had.

John (12:13):

Yeah. You know, these are incredible principles that many Christians – I'm afraid – have never heard. And that the Gifts of the Spirit were given on the Day of Pentecost so that we Christians would have access to the *same* special abilities that Jesus had.

Owen ([12:31](#)):

Well look at it this way, John. That's why Christianity is called the "Body of Christ" in the Bible. It's because Christians are supposed to do the *same* things on earth that *Jesus* did when He was here. To say that another way: After Jesus returned to heaven, God the Father *replaced* Him on earth with Christianity. And that's why the Bible calls us the "Body of Christ."

John ([12:59](#)):

And today, those same miraculous powers that God sent down from heaven for the Body of Christ – we (now) refer to them as the "Gifts of the Spirit."

Owen ([13:09](#)):

The Gifts of the Spirit. And see, the apostle Paul is the one, John, that wrote the most about all of this. And he's the one that called them the "Gifts of the Spirit." And what's interesting ... and I love this ... what's interesting is that the word "gift" in the original Greek language in which Paul wrote, comes from a root word that means "to be happy." So the gifts are designed to make Christians *happy*. We all need to, as you say, put that on "soak cycle" for a minute. But so, let's give our friends now out in Podcast Land a full definition of a "Spiritual Gift." And here it is:

A Spiritual Gift is a miraculous, supernatural ability given to Christians by God the Father as a divine favor.

John ([14:06](#)):

Yeah, Owen. We're going to just slow down a minute. This is so overwhelming that I think we need a recap. You know, especially if you're hearing this for the first time, our heavenly Father's plan in founding Christianity was for Christians to have access to the *same* supernatural abilities that Jesus had when He walked the earth. And today we call those supernatural abilities – they are referred to and known as – *the Gifts of the Spirit*.

Owen ([14:41](#)):

Exactly. And you know what, John? To make a joke ... and it's not really funny (chuckles) ... that's the "best kept secret" in Christianity, isn't it? Because how often do we hear Christians today discussing the Spiritual Gifts in any specific way? We discuss a lot of things – the choir, and all the different things we're concerned with. But how often do we discuss the Spiritual Gifts? And more importantly, how often do we see Christians expressing them *in their daily behavior*?

John (15:19):

And that of course explains a great deal that we have talked about in previous episodes. And we'll talk more about in future (episodes). And that's why we're doing this episode! We want to give Christians a practical understanding – just to move beyond that which is "heady," right, and "intellectual" – of what the gifts really *are*. And so let's go even deeper into the details. For example, how many Gifts of the Spirit, Owen, are there?

Owen (15:49):

Good question, John. Because most Christians have been taught – and I was taught – there are *nine*. But that's not really true. Researchers say they are about 20 Gifts of the Spirit. And I say "about" 20 because nobody but God knows how many Gifts of the Spirit there really are. Some authorities think they are in the 30s. But we can see 20 listed clearly in the Bible. And so John, we have a *chart* of those 20 gifts on pages 185 through 187 of our book, *Saving Christianity*. And that chart shows where each gift is mentioned in the Bible at least once, and gives a brief definition of each one. And that's ... by the way, just to just stick this in ... that's why we hope all of our friends in Podcast Land have ordered the book *Saving Christianity* from Amazon or Barnes and Noble or one of the other quality book sites on the internet, and are reading it along with us as we discuss it.

John (16:55):

Yeah, certainly, and we realize that 20 gifts is a long list. But we also realize that many Christians have never *heard* the full list. So I think it's appropriate that ... why don't we *read* the full list of the 20 gifts to our friends listening.

Owen (17:13):

Let's do that, John. I think that's totally necessary. And you know what? I think our friends are going to be amazed too, at this wonderful list of Spiritual Gifts that God's given us. I'll read the first 10, John. And then why don't you read the second 10? And let's remember now: These are *abilities* that God gave us the day that Christianity was founded. And He did that – *why*? To empower us as Christians to have full and complete lives. So, the first 10 would include:

Spiritual dreams; Spiritual visions; serving other Christians; teaching other Christians; encouraging other Christians; giving to other Christians; protecting or guarding other Christians – by the way, that's the work of a First Century elder – mercy toward other Christians; words of wisdom for other Christians; and words of knowledge for other Christians.

Look at all this *power* that we're sharing among ourselves as the Body of Christ! But anyway, John, that was my 10. What are yours?

John (18:28):

Yeah, here we go, Owen. It just gets better and better:

Faith for ourselves and others; healing for ourselves and for others; miracles for ourselves and others; discerning evil spirits; translating public prayer languages; helping others; guiding or steering others – it's often referred to as "administration" – prophesying for others; a personal prayer language for personal devotions; and a public prayer language, which is a Spiritual message for a group.

Owen (19:06):

Absolutely. Now, if that's not amazing, John, I don't know anything that is! And my only regret is that so many Christians have never heard this list ... never been told that they have every one of these Spiritual abilities *within* themselves waiting to be expressed for the benefit of themselves and other Christians.

John (19:31):

Yeah, Owen, that's right. And you know ... I think about it ... isn't it so unfortunate that in large part many Christians, if you were to ask them – let me be a little bit negative for just a moment – the sum total of their Christian *experience* is: "I prayed a prayer at 12 years old, and I'm going to heaven." And think about that.

Owen (19:56):

End of story.

John (19:57):

Yeah, the purpose of the Spiritual Gifts is – look what we're missing! – to *strengthen, encourage, and comfort* Christians both as individuals and in small groups. And all the gifts ... this is so important ... *all* the gifts are for *all* Christians. No matter who they are, or where they are. So, you're listening to this out there in Podcast Land; you are a Christ-Follower; you are a Christian – we're talking to *you*.

Owen (20:31):

Well and John, let's remind them of something that we say in almost every episode: Our heavenly Father, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all three the *same* yesterday, today and forever. They *haven't* changed since the First Century. And they never *will* change.

John (20:53):

They're not "evolving," are they?

Owen (20:54):

Nope! (Laughter.) There's no "evolution" here, friends. And that means that today, this minute – look at your watch – *all* of the Spiritual Gifts are here for *all* Christians the same way they were on that wonderful, wonderful Day of Pentecost in the First Century.

John (21:14):

And Owen, I'm going to continue to tap the brakes here a little bit. This is so much information. So I just want to say again an overview of the Spiritual Gifts as they exist today. For example, the Spiritual Gifts are *not human talents*.

Owen (21:31):

Ah, yeah!

John (21:32):

And that's a very important piece of this. It's *not* human talents, skills, or accomplishments. And the key word here is *supernatural*. They're *supernatural* abilities that come from the indwelling Holy Spirit within us. And Owen, I don't think we can emphasize that enough.

Owen (21:56):

No! And you know what? This is one of the biggest – like you said, we don't want to be negative ever in these episodes – but that's one of the biggest mistakes or problems that we run into almost weekly. We hear Christians say that activities like *singing, writing, playing a musical instrument* are "Spiritual Gifts." Let me tell you, a lady said that to me this week, John. But they are *not*. Those are human talents, skills, and accomplishments. Not Spiritual Gifts. Because remember the key – you said it a minute ago, John – to be a gift it has to be *supernatural*. So my little rule is: If an activity that a person is doing ... whether it's painting a beautiful picture, writing a beautiful poem ... if that activity is *not* on the list of 20 that we just read, it's *not* a Spiritual Gift.

Owen (22:57):

Now, it may be an incredibly wonderful human talent – like my daughter publishes poems. But that's *not* a Spiritual Gift. That's a *human* skill that she has. So, we need to remember again – I'm repeating – the Spiritual Gifts are *supernatural*. What does that mean? They're coming down to us through the Holy Spirit from the Throne Room of Heaven. And activities like singing and writing poems and playing the piano are not coming down through the Holy Spirit through the Throne Room of Heaven. They're being produced by the genes, brains, and nerves of flesh-and-blood humans. But – and this is where people need to see it – don't miss this point: Christians who are singing, writing poems, playing the piano *can be Spirit-filled while they do it*. And they should be! But whether or not they're Spirit-filled, those activities themselves are not on the list and are not Spiritual Gifts.

John (24:07):

Right, so I want to repeat the principle: The only *source* of the gifts is the Holy Spirit. And the gifts don't come from any other person – you don't inherit them (chuckles)! – or any other source. In fact, Jesus said that if we say that the gifts come from any source but the Holy Spirit, then it's actually we're committing *blasphemy*.

Owen (24:34):

Ouch. And we don't want to do that!

John (24:36):

For sure!

Owen (24:36):

Well, a related principle here is the fact that only *Christians* can express the gifts. Think about that a second. Non-Christians *can't*. And the reason (is) that only Christians are *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit. And only the Spirit is the *source* of the gifts. So, logically, the non-Christians including ... sadly, in some ways ... the members of the non-Christian religions, cannot express the Gifts of the Spirit. They need to become *Christians* to do that.

John (25:13):

Right, so let's be even more specific. So every Christian has at least *one* full-time gift. Some Christians have *two* or more full-time gifts. But Spirit-indwelt Christians have at least *one*.

Owen (25:29):

At least one.

John (25:30):

At least one, and then the Spirit also gives Christians the other gifts *temporarily* on an as-needed basis for *ministry*.

Owen (25:41):

And you know, John. That is an incredible point. I didn't know *that* for many, many years. I'd been told in Sunday school sometimes over the years that each Christian had *one* gift. But I never realized until I became involved in Spirit-filled Christian small groups – and we'll talk about that a lot in these episodes – that *every* Christian in a group can express a gift that is not his or her prime gift. But the Holy Spirit uses them, so to speak, as a "channel of blessing" temporarily, for a minute or two, in a small group. So during fellowship and worship, *all* Christians can express *temporary* gifts. Why? To *minister* to one another. So the Holy Spirit – our little rule of the thumb could be – the Holy Spirit expresses the gifts when, where, why, and how He decides. Why? Because He's the *source*, and He gets to *distribute* them.

John (26:48):

Yeah, and that brings up a really interesting question. So as good as all this sounds, and as real as it is, *when* do Christians *receive* the Gifts of the Spirit?

Owen (27:00):

Whoa, John, that is important! That's a biggie. And the answer obviously is: They receive the gifts on the day and at the time that *they become Christians*. In other words, to use the term that we all use: On the day and the time that *they're saved*. Sometimes that could be as a small child. I've seen small children exercise gifts. Sometimes it could be as a teenager. Or an adult. Or even less frequently, but hopefully, as a person is elderly. But regardless of what age it happens, Christians receive the gifts the day they're *saved*.

John (27:43):

And that's just logical, isn't it? Because *that's* the day we are indwelt by the Spirit. And the indwelling by the Spirit *includes* the Gifts of the Spirit.

Owen (27:57):

Right!

John (27:57):

And *that's* the day people are – quote – "baptized in the Spirit" – end quote – as we discussed in previous episodes. And when the Holy Spirit takes up *residence* ... I just love to say that ... when the Holy Spirit takes up *residence*. Right? You know, when you buy a home and you meet the realtor out there and they hand you the keys. (Chuckles.) And if you take up *residency* ... the Holy Spirit, we hand *Him* the keys ... and He becomes the *resident* (chuckles) in us. He brings *all* the gifts with him. He backs that "moving van" right up and unloads *all* the gifts. It's not ... it's not divvied out in shipments over weeks and months. He unloads it *all* that day when He moves in.

Owen (28:51):

And He "decorates" it instantly into a beautiful place. (Laughter.) He's got all His "luggage" with Him. (Laughter.) That's right, that's right, John. And you know what, speaking of that now, this might be a good place to say: That the Spiritual Gifts, then, *that* makes them one of the *signs* ... one of the "signs," a very popular word in some circles ... that a person is a *Christian*. That's only logical, as you said, John. Because *non-Christians* are not indwelt by the Spirit (and) don't have the gifts. So then they don't have that *sign*, either. But so, let's repeat that: Spiritual Gifts are a *sign* that a person – *what?* Is a Christian. But hang on. Fasten your seatbelt. They're *not* the sign that a person is *Spirit-filled*.

John (29:41):

Right!

Owen (29:41):

They're *not* the sign that a person is *Spiritually mature*. Why is all that true? Because – as Paul taught us very clearly in his letters to Corinth – because infant Christians can and do. Let me repeat that: Infant Christians can and do express Spiritual Gifts. So, in other words ... this hurts ... *carnal and immature* Christians can express gifts. And as I said, the apostle Paul taught that clearly in his letters.

John (30:17):

Yeah. And Owen, you just keep being ... talking in a very logical way. (Laughter.) After all, infant Christians *are indwelt by the Spirit*.

Owen (30:29):

Right!

John (30:29):

Because that's what makes a *Christian*!

Owen (30:31):

Exactly.

John (30:31):

So they have the gifts *within* them and they can express those gifts, even though they are still *infants* in Spiritual growth.

Owen (30:44):

Yeah, and imagine! So as you say, that's just very common sense. Very logical. And Paul *taught* that in his first letter to Corinth. He told them that even though they had *all* – now he said that. He said, "You lack *no* Spiritual Gift." But then he went on writing, and he said, "*But you're still Spiritual infants*." Why? "Because you're selfish, gossipy, argumentative, and divisive."

Owen (31:17):

And so the principle again is this: The only *sign* that a Christian is Spirit-filled or is Spiritually mature is when he or she is expressing the *Fruit of the Spirit* in everyday behavior.

John (31:31):

Okay!

Owen (31:32):

And you know, John. I just want to step out a second and say this: One of the things that's been – what would you call it? – an eye sore or a problem in Christianity is gossipy, selfish, argumentative, and divisive Christians *expressing gifts*.

John (31:49):

Right!

Owen (31:49):

And that blows people's minds and *upsets* non-Christians and Christians alike. But right here, what we're explaining ... clearly taught in the Bible ... is the *reason* for that.

John (32:03):

Right, and this is (chuckles) incredibly ... this is so, so good. And such wonderful, practical, real, information to help us.

Owen (32:15):

That's right, John. And so that's a very important principle that we need to emphasize. But continuing on now: I'm going to do something that's a little bit dangerous. But I'm going to do it. I'm going to give our friends in Podcast Land a "false choice." A false choice to make ... hopefully make ... the *point* we're trying to make clear. And here's that false choice. The Fruit of the Spirit is *more* beneficial than the Gifts of the Spirit. So if you could only have *one* of them – if God would only let you have *one* – you would want to have the Fruit of the Spirit. Not the Gifts of the Spirit. Now, hold on everybody! Time out. (Laughter.) As I said, this is a *false choice* trying to make a point. Because the Early Christians had *both*. Both the fruit and the gifts. And we want *both* today – the fruit *and* the gifts today. But regardless of how beneficial, and important, and needed, and necessary, the gifts are ... it's still *more* beneficial to have the supernatural emotions of love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and kindness, and goodness, and hope, and courage, and all the rest all during the day than it is to have a supernatural ability *without* these wonderful emotions.

John (33:50):

Right. And you know, Owen. That principle confuses some Christians today, unfortunately. Because they've been taught that the gifts are paramount here. That *they're* the most important thing a Christian can have. But Paul made it clear ... *the right priorities here* ... in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians – that is tucked nicely in place for a reason – the famous "Love Chapter."

Owen (34:19):

You know, that is so true, John. And I think that's why he did it.

John (34:24):

Yeah, for sure!

Owen (34:24):

Because you know – listen to this folks and all of our dear friends – the apostle Paul, one of the most Spiritual humans who ever lived, said that he could express the Spiritual Gifts of prayer languages ... prophecy ... wisdom ... knowledge ... faith ... giving ... and all the others. But – *but* – if he *didn't* express them with the Fruit of the Spirit he would, in his words – quotes – "gain nothing." Gain nothing, as a Christian.

John (34:58):

Ah, ouch. That hurts. So all Christians, think about it: We should keep our priorities *straight* the way the Early Christians did. And their first priority was to express the *Fruit* of the Spirit. And while doing that ... complementary to ... they expressed the Gifts of the Spirit.

Owen (35:21):

You know, John. It's almost like ... it struck me here as we were speaking ... you see a child's *toy train*. You know children ... I guess they still do ... when I was growing up you had these little *electric trains*. And one was always a coal car, a little empty car. You could think of it that way: The Fruit of the Spirit would be like an electric train running around the track. And then in these empty cars would be the *gifts*: So the gifts need to be transported and administered through, by, and with, the fruit.

Owen (35:58):

And that's the priorities of the Early Christians. But there's another reason too, why the fruit's more beneficial than the gifts. And think about this now, John. That's because the fruit is meant to be *continuous*. Continuous in our daily behavior at home and on the job. But think about it. The gifts are meant to be *intermittent*. Intermittent as needed. For example ... for example, Christians are designed to have supernatural love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, all the other fruit, *all day long at home and on the job*. But they're not designed, Christians, to have dreams, and visions, and healings, and miracles, *all day long at home and on the job*. That's illogical. So that's the difference between the two: The fruit is all day, the gifts are as needed.

John (37:00):

And the reason for this priority is that today some congregations teach that the Gifts of the Spirit are the *most* important thing in Christianity. But they seldom mention the Fruit of the Spirit. And that's the *opposite* of what the Early Christians taught.

Owen (37:20):

That's true, John. And you know we don't want our friends in Podcast Land to think we're saying the gifts *are not important*. We're not saying that at all. They're desperately important. That's why we're doing two episodes about them. But we *are* saying – and just to repeat myself about the children's train – we *are* saying that the gifts should always be expressed through and with the Spiritual Fruit.

John (37:50):

Yeah. In fact, and this hurts me to say it, some Christians today don't emphasize *either* the gifts *or* the fruit.

Owen (37:59):

Ouch, wow.

John (38:00):

And that's a "crime," to use too strong a word maybe. (Chuckles.) So what we're saying is that *all* Christians should be expressing the Fruit of the Spirit first, and then the Gifts of the Spirit second, and should always have *both* in our behavior.

Owen (38:20):

That's right, that's right. You know, John, the Early Christians – and we base *everything* on what they did – they didn't ignore *either* the fruit *or* the gifts. But now let's get back. Since this episode is about the gifts, let's see some examples of what the Early Christians said about the gifts. Here's what ... here's what Paul's instructions on the gifts were to all Christians, including Christians today. Just a sampling:

First, he said earnestly desire to be Spiritual, so *use* your Spiritual Gift. He said never *neglect* or make *light* of your Spiritual Gift. He said *kindle* ... like a fire ... kindle the Spiritual Gift within you to a bright flame. And he said, *use* whatever Spiritual Gift you've received – to do *what?* To serve others.

John (39:22):

Oh, I love that. And you know, these instructions by Paul also make another point: That we Christians – and again this is another very important point – we are in full *control* of our gifts at all times. And we say so often, the Holy Spirit never *overrides* our human will power. So if we don't actively work to express our gifts, we never will.

Owen (39:50):

You know, John. I hadn't intended to say this. But the same lady I mentioned earlier said to me last week, she said, "You know, I just wonder if the Holy Spirit would make me do something I didn't want to do." And I just stared at her and disbelief, you know. (Chuckles.) But she didn't understand these basic principles that we're talking about. He never does that. And as we've said in previous episodes, *He's the Greatest Gentleman in the universe*. He never interrupts if we don't want to be interrupted, you know. But still – and this brings up a connected question. We've already touched upon it: *Why* aren't more Christians expressing Spiritual Gifts? You know, if you're around Christians a lot – and we are – we know that very *few* Christians are expressing their gifts in everyday life. So why is that?

John (40:47):

Yeah. Well Owen, you're talking to one who's teaching all the time in a congregation. And one reason is that many congregations today don't *teach* the gifts. Which, I don't even have an answer for that. (Laughter.) They never *mention* them in Sunday school or from the pulpit. And so many Christians don't even know the gifts *exist*. Uh, I think I'll lie down now. Or if they do, they don't know that *they're* supposed to be expressing them. Imagine that!

Owen (41:19):

Well, it's even worse, John. I've actually heard it said, and heard it taught publicly, that the gifts don't *exist* anymore. That they *ended* in the First Century. So if you tell a group of people (chuckles) you know:

- a) They don't exist.
- b) And even if they did, they're not good for you.

Then what would you expect? So it is I think due, John, to that *lack* of emphasis. And many congregations of Christians today have many ... at least I'll say it that way, *some* at least ... have never made a personal *decision* to express the gifts. And you know what, John? There's an old saying in management: "No decision *is* a decision." So if Christians don't make a decision *for* the gifts, then by default they're making a decision *against* the gifts.

John (42:14):

Right. When you think about it: What Christian *wouldn't* want to live with one foot in heaven while he or she is still here on earth? What Christian *wouldn't* want to have supernatural dreams, visions, healings, and miracles in their lives? And isn't that one of the things Christianity's *built* on?

Owen (42:33):

Well, I think it is. And the Early Christians thought it was. And the Bible says it is. So pretend we're in a meeting here: "*The eyes have it!*" (Laughter.) *It is!* And that leaves us with two final thoughts, John, as we wind down this episode. The first question is: "How do I *know* my gift?" And the second question is: "How do I *use* my gift?" How would you answer that, John?

John (43:02):

Well, Owen, I've found that you know our personal gift is not a "secret" or a "mystery." (Chuckles.) The Holy Spirit *wants* us to know our gift. It would make no sense that He *wouldn't*. Because it's so valuable to ourselves ... it's valuable to others. So, one clue is to think about, I think: What we can't *help* doing, as the old saying goes.

Owen (43:29):

That's a good. That's a good one. You know, and our friends need to remember ... we mentioned this at the top of the show ... that chapter 12 in our book *Saving Christianity* is dedicated to the gifts, and has charts and graphs and other explanations. But on pages 179 and 180 of that chapter, we actually have a heading, "*The Discovery of Full-Time Gifts.*" And that section gives an example of a person who discovered her gift, and we would urge our friends to read that chapter.

Owen (44:07):

Also, they can listen several times to the list we *read* a minute ago. Or they can look at that list on pages 185 through 187 of the *book*. Or they can pull up this *transcript* on the Internet and read the list. And they can ask themselves this question: "Is there a Christian activity on this list that I can't *help* doing? Is there one that seems natural, easy, and automatic to me? Is there one that I enjoy so much, I want to do it and I never get tired of doing it? If so, those are clues that, that activity is actually your Spiritual Gift and you haven't realized it.

John (44:54):

Yeah, Owen. How about let's take it a step further. Give our listeners an example.

Owen (45:00):

Well, let's see. I can give two quick examples. Here's the first one: You know, like so many congregational buildings, John, we have a big commercial *kitchen* in our building. But what's interesting is, we have a *member* of our congregation who always, without fail, volunteers to go in that kitchen and cook the meals for the Sunday school meetings, missionary conferences, Christmas parties, all the different events. And boy, she does *all* the planning, shopping, cooking, serving – and never gets tired of it. And one time I asked her *why* she did this. And she said she didn't know. She said, "I just felt like doing it. I enjoy doing it." And I think what she doesn't realize is that, *that's* her Spiritual Gift. (The Spiritual Gift of *servicing*.) And that she doesn't realize it. And of course, that doesn't matter. I don't care if she realizes it or not, as long as she and all the other Christians are being blessed by it.

John (46:03):

Yeah, that's Owen, that's a very interesting story. And I've seen that type of thing too, over, you know, over the years. And that's a good *tip* for us to recognize our Spiritual Gift. So what's your second example?

Owen (46:17):

Well, I don't like to do this, John. But I'll just be personal a moment. Talking about the second example: I'll give myself my *own* story. Some years ago, I was young, I was asked unexpectedly and off the cuff to teach a Sunday school class because the regular teacher was out of town that day. I'd never taught anything before. I had no education or training at all in teaching. But for some reason I accepted the assignment. And with very little preparation, stress, or worry, I taught the class. And to my surprise, it was *easy*. And I felt a deep *satisfaction* afterwards. And even more surprising, several members of the class came forward afterwards to thank me, and tell me how "natural" I looked at *teaching*. But sadly, it wasn't until years later that I finally realized that the Spiritual Gift of *teaching* is one of my gifts.

John (47:20):

Hmm. So no, what we're saying here then, as I listen, Owen, is that the best way to recognize our Spiritual Gifts is through *experience*.

Owen (47:28):

Experience!

John (47:28):

Yeah, by doing things in Christian groups, and seeing what activities we *enjoy*, and are in fact *fulfilling*.

Owen (47:38):

Exactly. And you know, John, nothing feels *better*. Remember, the word *gift* comes from the root "to be happy." Think about that a second. And there's nothing more exciting, and fulfilling, and pleasing, than to *use* your Spiritual Gift. And here's another tip. The Holy Spirit Himself will *reveal* and *confirm* to us what our gift is. Now, that's hard to explain in human words. But when He does it, there's an old, old saying: "You just know, that you know, that you know," what your gift *is* when the Holy Spirit has confirmed it.

John (48:16):

Yeah. And getting back to the *experience* angle, the very best place to recognize our Spiritual gifts is in an environment, a culture, of like-minded *small groups*. A small group of Spirit-filled other Christians who together are learning how to meet and worship in the Spirit.

Owen (48:42):

Absolutely. Totally cool.

John (48:43):

That's good soil (laughter). Yeah!

Owen (48:47):

And you know, John. This is a good place to tell our friends that we have an upcoming episode with the title, "*The Use of the Spiritual Gifts*." And that's going to be Episode 28. And in it, we're going to discuss all this at more length. So in addition to all of these resources, our friends are going to have another full-length episode on the gifts coming up soon. Well, bad news, John. (Chuckles.) I just looked at the big clock on the wall, and it's telling us that our time is up for this episode. And anyway, I think we probably covered enough about the incredible, amazing Gifts of the Spirit for one episode. So I tell you – let's end this episode on the gifts here. Let's let our friends think about all that we've said. Maybe read those pages in the book, *Saving Christianity* that we recommended. And then they'll be all ready for the next episode on gifts. And, as I said, that'll be Episode 28.

John (49:59):

And I want to just remind our listeners that this is Episode 26. And that a script and a recording of it – they are on our website at: www.goSCpod.com. That's G-O-S-C-P-O-D.com.

Owen (50:18):

Perfect, John, perfect. I think all of us are looking forward to the next episode. But in the meantime, this is Owen Allen ...

John (50:27):

... and this is John Shields, speaking for me and for Shannon Wolfe, our producer ...

Owen (50:32):

... and all of us are saying together: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect you, until we meet again.

Owen and John (50:57):

Owen and John end the episode.

