

**“Bearing the Fruit of the Spirit  
While Discussing the Gifts of the Spirit”:**  
*A Brotherly Conversation With Q&A*  
*Notes*

- I. Surveying the Text  
*Acts 5:12-16*
  
- II. Asking the Question  
*Are miraculous gifts for today?*
  
- III. Celebrating Our Unity  
*The Person, Work, & Vast Majority of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*
  
- IV. Articulating Our Positions  
*A Brief Case for Continuationism*  
  
*A Brief Case for Cessationism*
  
- V. Making Application  
*Discovering & Deploying Spiritual Gifts*
  
- VI. Asking & Answering Your Questions

**Next Week: Acts 5:17-42 - “We Must Obey God Rather Than Men”**

## MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of October 1st - 7th

### Getting Started

1. Within the church of Jesus Christ, some of us hold the view that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (especially tongues, prophecy, and healing) continue today. Others believe they have ceased. Still others maintain a view that might be best described as open but cautious. How about you? What's your view? If you have a position, would you say that it's informed by Scripture, reason, experience, tradition...or all four to some degree? If you wouldn't say that you have clear convictions on this issue, how come? What questions do you have? What next steps might be helpful for you in coming to know what you believe here?

### Digging Deeper

2. In the Evangelical Free Church of America, the question of the continuation of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church today is one which we will *discuss*, even *debate*, but over which we will not *divide*. In other words, we are willing to agree to *disagree*, or to disagree *agreeably*. What are the benefits to such a commitment? At the same time, what are the challenges involved?

## Open Your Bible to Acts 5:12-16...

3. Our text from this past Sunday is glorious. There's no question that whatever our particular view on the question of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit today, this passage is one over which we ought to exult, meditate, and from which we ought to draw practical encouragement. What's happening here in these five verses? What draws your attention? What themes do we encounter which we have seen already in our study of Acts? What appears fresh or a new development in the unfolding drama of the early church? If Luke was with us in the room right now, what would you ask him? What sorts of practical applications (prescriptions) ought we to take away from the narrative (descriptions) contained here?
  
4. Together we confess in Article 6 of our EFCA Statement of Faith that:

“We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement contains ten (ten!!) aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit that every member of our local church holds in common. Can you spot all ten? What do you love about this statement? Is there anything unclear to you that you might like to discuss with the group? Is this a confession that both cessationists and continuationists can affirm without crossing their fingers? Explain.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.efca.org/sof> . Accessed 9/29/23 @ 2:15pm.

5. If you have some familiarity with this discussion, what do you make of the question about the nature of the miraculous gifts in the pages of the Bible as compared with the nature of them today? Do you hold to any distinctions or differences between Old and New Testament prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:15-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:20; 1 Corinthians 14), the nature of the gift of tongues as known languages (Acts 2:1-13) or ecstatic speech (1 Corinthians 14), or any difference between the gift of healing (Acts 3:1-10) and praying for healing (James 5:13-18)? What about the office of an apostle? Are there still apostles today? What qualified one to be an apostle (Acts 1:22, 24; Matthew 10:1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:12)? Are questions such as these relevant when discussing the miraculous gifts of the Spirit? Why or why not?
  
6. It's no coincidence that the greatest, most sustained and celebrated meditation on the nature of love in the entire Bible (1 Corinthians 13) is found right in the middle of Paul's larger discussion on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12 and 14). Read carefully through 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Notice the specific connections Paul makes between the relative importance of love as a fruit of the Spirit and the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit (vv.1-3). What specific truths do we learn in those first three verses? Furthermore, what do vv.8-13 contribute to the larger discussion of the continuation of prophecy, tongues, etc beyond the time that Paul wrote this letter? Are there any conclusions we can draw here that help us to answer the question of whether the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are for today? Why or why not? Finally, take a slow walk through vv.4-7. Paul cites 15 aspects of love in these four verses. What does it look like to bear the fruit of the Spirit while discussing, discovering, and deploying the gifts of the Spirit?

### Further Resources:

\*“Are Signs and Wonders for Today?” A classic sermon from John Piper preached on 2/25/90 weighing the arguments on each side on the front end of Bethlehem Baptist Church’s exploration of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit: [www.desiringgod.org/messages/are-signs-and-wonders-for-today](http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/are-signs-and-wonders-for-today)

\*Doug Wilson (cessationist) & Michael Brown (continuationist) discuss their views with Justin Brierley on the Unbelievable podcast. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmDCI-gMJ3k>

\*Tom Pennington, *A Biblical Case for Cessationism: Why the Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit Have Ended* (2023). A recent book defending the cessationist position.

\* Sam Storms, *The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts* (2013). A defense of the continuationist position.

\**Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: 4 Views*. Richard Gaffin, Robert Saucy, Sam Storms, and Douglas Oss debate and examine the various perspectives on the miraculous gifts in the life of the church today.