

The term *Charismatic* comes from the Greek word *charisma*, meaning “gift of grace.” It refers specifically to spiritual gifts (or *charismata*) given by the Holy Spirit to believers—not earned by human effort, but freely distributed by God’s grace. These gifts are mentioned prominently in 1 Corinthians 12–14, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, and they play a vital role in the life and ministry of the Church.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.”
—1 Corinthians 12:1 (ESV)

A Brief History of the Charismatic Movement

The modern Charismatic movement traces its roots to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, USA, in 1906. This was a major spiritual awakening where believers experienced phenomena such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, prophecy, and other miraculous signs—similar to what happened in the early Church in the book of Acts.

This revival birthed the Pentecostal movement, which believed that the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was evidence of God’s active presence in the Church. These events mirrored the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as seen in:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
—*Acts 2:4 (ESV)*

For centuries after the apostolic age, many believed that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit had ceased—a view known as cessationism. But during this revival, people began to fast, pray, and ask God to reveal Himself again through the same spiritual gifts that marked the early Church. As a result, many believers experienced Spirit-baptism, spoke in tongues, and witnessed healings and miracles.

Growth and Spread into Traditional Churches

Initially, many historic churches (like the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Moravian Churches) were skeptical of

these spiritual experiences. They were deeply rooted in tradition and formal liturgy, and many viewed charismatic expressions as disorderly or even heretical.

However, by the 1960s to 1980s, the movement spread into these traditional denominations. Many Catholics, for example, began experiencing the same gifts—leading to what became known as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Similar movements emerged among Anglicans, Lutherans, and others.

While each denomination interpreted and structured the experience differently, the core emphasis remained: a return to the spiritual gifts described in Scripture.

What Defines a Charismatic Church?

A Charismatic Church is one that actively emphasizes and practices the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as:

- Speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:2)

- Prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3)
- Healing (James 5:14-15)
- Words of wisdom and knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8)

These churches believe the gifts are for today and essential for building up the Body of Christ.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

—*1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)*

A Word of Caution: Discernment Is Crucial

While the genuine work of the Holy Spirit brings transformation and power, not all spiritual manifestations are from God. In these last days, Scripture warns us to be discerning:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

—*1 John 4:1 (ESV)*

Sadly, some have corrupted the true gifts of the Spirit through emotionalism, showmanship, or false teachings. Others have used “anointed” objects like oil, salt, or water in unscriptural ways, confusing the faith of many. Some people speak in tongues on Sunday and live in unrepentant sin during the week. This raises serious questions about the source of such experiences.

“You will recognize them by their fruits.”

—*Matthew 7:16 (ESV)*

What Should Believers Do?

1. Test Everything Against Scripture

Don't accept a teaching, prophecy, or spiritual experience just because it comes from a popular or “anointed” person. Measure everything against God's Word.

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...”

—2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

2. Seek the Giver, Not Just the Gifts

Spiritual gifts should never be pursued for personal glory or entertainment. They should draw us closer to Christ and build up the Church.

3. Avoid Idolatry and False Doctrine

It is not possible to say you are filled with the Holy Spirit and yet continue in practices like praying to saints, worshiping statues, or making offerings for the dead—these are contrary to the Spirit of truth.

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

—*John 4:24 (ESV)*

Final Encouragement

We are living in spiritually dangerous times. Be rooted in the Bible, walk closely with the Holy Spirit, and beware of deception. The gifts of the Spirit are real, powerful, and needed—but they must be handled with truth, humility, and holiness.

“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”

—*1 Corinthians 14:1 (ESV)*

Shalom!

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