

Bridging the Charismatic Divide

Framework + Definitions Pack

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Purpose

This book and resource exist for **unity where there's division, clarity where there's confusion, and light where there's darkness**—especially around the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many disagreements persist because people use the same terms differently, emphasize different texts, or react emotionally instead of reading carefully.

The Framework Map

The Three Groups

1) Continuationists

Believe the “supernatural” gifts (tongues, prophecy, healing, etc.) **continue today** and can operate in the church.

2) Cessationists

Believe the “supernatural” gifts were primarily for the early church and **are no longer active** in the same way today.

3) Open-but-Unsure (the overlooked middle)

Open to the gifts in principle but not actively pursuing them—often due to confusion, fear of imbalance, or lack of clear teaching.

Key insight: Many churches contain all three groups at once, which is why clarity and charity are essential.

The Balance Framework

Word + Spirit

Scripture must govern belief and practice. The Holy Spirit must be honored as active, personal, and present.

Character + Power

Christian maturity is daily formation into Christ (fruit, obedience, humility). God may also empower believers for ministry in particular moments.

Daily filling + Moments of empowerment

Some “filling” language emphasizes the day-to-day Spirit-led life. Other “filling” language emphasizes empowerment for mission. Confusing these categories creates unnecessary conflict.

Pray with Spirit + Pray with Mind (1 Cor 14:15)

A mature Christian life includes both intellectual engagement and spiritual dependence—without turning either into an idol.

Why disagreements persist

People often assume there are only two sides, treat their own terminology as universal, and interpret unfamiliar practices through suspicion. The result is division—sometimes even between believers who largely agree on the fundamentals of the faith.

Definitions

Baptism of the Spirit

A foundational work of the Spirit connected to incorporation into Christ and His people (the Church).

Common confusion: treating Spirit baptism as a second-tier experience that proves spirituality, or making it dependent on a particular manifestation.

Better question: What does Scripture teach about when and how believers are identified with Christ and His body?

Filling of the Spirit

An ongoing reality of the Christian life. In Scripture, “filling” language can emphasize different aspects, including:

- **daily formation:** obedience, gratitude, holiness, spiritual maturity
- **empowerment:** God enabling ministry in a specific moment for a specific need

Common confusion: assuming “filled” always means the same thing in every passage, or expecting a constant experience of power.

Better question: In this passage, does “filling” emphasize character formation, empowerment for ministry, or both?

Gifts of the Spirit

Manifestations of the Spirit given for the good of others and the building up of the body.

Common confusion: treating gifts as personal status markers or as permanent “powers” owned by individuals.

Better question: How does this gift function to build up the Church and serve Christ’s mission?

In-the-Moment Gifts

A helpful lens: the “gift” is often what the Holy Spirit does **in the moment**, not a permanent capability a person owns. People are vessels; God is the giver.

Common confusion: expecting consistency, predictability, or “on-demand” results Scripture does not promise.

Better question: What is God doing right now, and how does it align with His character and His Word?

Prophecy

In the New Testament sense, prophecy often functions as **edification, encouragement, and comfort**—God’s truth applied by the Spirit to build up people.

Guardrails:

- must align with Scripture
- must not compete with Scripture or claim canonical authority
- should be humble and testable (not manipulative)

Common confusion: assuming prophecy is primarily fortune-telling or directional control (“God told me you must...”).

Better question: Does this strengthen, clarify, and build up—while remaining submitted to Scripture?

Tongues

Tongues appear in multiple biblical contexts and are debated because of different assumptions about:

- the nature of the utterance
- the audience and purpose
- interpretation requirements

Common confusion: collapsing all “tongues” references into one single model.

Better question: If Acts 2 involves understandable languages heard by listeners, why does 1 Corinthians 14 require interpretation and order? The book examines these passages carefully and proposes guardrails that preserve clarity and unity.

Misunderstanding Reducers (How to Keep the Conversation Healthy)

Replace caricatures with precision

Instead of: “All Pentecostals believe...”

Say: “Some Pentecostal/charismatic expressions emphasize...”

Instead of: “All cessationists deny miracles...”

Say: “Many cessationists affirm God’s power and miracles but interpret certain gifts differently.”

Key practice: describe the strongest version of the other side’s view before you critique it.

Conversation habits that build unity

1. Define terms before debating (baptism, filling, prophecy, tongues).
2. Ask “Which text?” and “In what context?” before conclusions.
3. Separate categories (daily formation vs empowerment) instead of mixing them.
4. Assume good faith unless proven otherwise.
5. Refuse shame tactics (“If you don’t... you’re not spiritual”) and refuse mockery (“That’s just...”).

Five safety rules (for churches and small groups)

1. Test everything by Scripture.
 2. Build up the body; do not weaponize words.
 3. If something contradicts Scripture, it is not from God.
 4. Pursue humility and clarity over emotional reaction.
 5. Unity grows when people are careful, charitable, and willing to learn.
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Quick Reference

If you only remember six lines:

1. The Church often contains **three groups, not two**: continuationist, cessationist, open-but-unsure.
2. **Word + Spirit** is not a contradiction. It's a biblical balance.
3. **Character + Power** both matter; don't idolize either one.
4. "Filling" may emphasize **daily formation** or **empowerment** depending on context.
5. Gifts are best understood as **the Spirit's work in the moment**; believers are vessels, not owners.
6. Prophecy must **build up** and remain **submitted to Scripture**.

Closing note: The goal is not to win arguments, but to help believers think clearly, read carefully, and pursue unity without compromise.

You and Your Gifts

Why this matters

Many believers want to know: "How does God tend to work through me?" This page helps you think about **calling, wiring, and service** without turning gifts into identity trophies.

Key idea

Some gifts are best understood as "**in-the-moment**" **manifestations**, while other forms of gifting may reflect a believer's **consistent ministry shape**—how you naturally build up the body over time.

A simple discernment process (practical and safe)

1. **Desire:** What forms of service do you consistently care about?
2. **Fruit:** Where do you see genuine edification and impact?
3. **Confirmation:** What do mature believers affirm in you?
4. **Humility:** Gifts are for others, not for status.
5. **Scripture:** All gifting must remain governed by the Word.

Ministry "heart gift" categories (use as a reflection tool)

Use these as a starting point for reflection—not as a rigid label:

- Teaching / explaining Scripture
- Encouragement / strengthening others

- Mercy / compassion and care
- Leadership / organization and direction
- Giving / generosity and resource support
- Service / practical helps
- Wisdom / counsel and discernment
- Evangelism / outreach and invitation to Christ
- Intercession / prayer and spiritual burden

Note: Your “shape” may include several of these, and it can change over seasons.

Interpretation Guardrail: Israel and the Ecclesia

Why this guardrail helps

Many doctrinal disagreements become more confusing when we mix categories that Scripture keeps distinct. A basic Israel/Ecclesia framework helps readers interpret texts more carefully.

Israel (in Scripture)

- A **nation** with land/borders and civil structures
- Had **civil, ceremonial, and religious laws** connected to national life
- Was a visible covenant community in a specific historical role

The Ecclesia (the Church)

- A **spiritual body** made up of believers from many nations
- Not a geopolitical nation-state
- Called to live under Christ’s lordship within many earthly governments

What this prevents

- Applying Israel’s national laws directly to the church without context
- Forcing “one-size-fits-all” readings where Scripture is doing something more specific
- Confusing covenant categories that shape interpretation and doctrine

Practical takeaway: Ask, “Is this passage addressing Israel as a nation, or the Church as the Ecclesia?” Context clarifies application.

— **Paul Myrant**

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