

Sword of the Spirit



The Power to Tread on Serpents & Scorpions

By Dwight J. Davis

Sword of the Spirit: The Power to Tread on Serpents and Scorpions

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Introduction

Two times in the New Testament reference is made to the Christian's offensive weapon: The Sword of the Spirit.

This weapon is not carnal¹, as another verse tells us. In definition, the 'Sword of the Spirit' is clearly defined as the 'Holy Ghost'. Consider what Paul tells the Ephesian Church, the great Asia Minor revival assembly, after he describes the defensive armor of God².

"And take the...sword of the Spirit (word of God), praying always with petition and supplications, praying in the Spirit..." Ephesians 6:17-18

The 'Sword of the Spirit' is thus two edged, with the first edge consisting of the Word. This first edge consists of:

- His Written Word
- Praying in the Spirit

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that this Sword is sharper than a surgeon's knife, with the ability to discern the thoughts, motives, plans (devices), and moral understandings within people's hearts³. But before this sword can become unsheathed, a believer must receive the Holy Spirit⁴.

If this has occurred scripturally⁵ within a local Church body of two or more⁶, then the second edge of the sword can begin its work: The 'Gifts of the Spirit'.



These 'Gifts of the Spirit' combine with the 'WORD of the Spirit' to bring a sharper weapon of revival to a local Church. But unfortunately, many Churches are ignorant of their use or lack knowledge about how to bring them out of the sheath.

¹ 2 Corinthians 10:4

² Ephesians 6:13-18

³ Hebrews 4:12

⁴ Acts 19:2-6

⁵ Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6

⁶ Matthew 18:20

Gifts of the Spirit Defined

Commonly, it is thought that there are nine 'Gifts of the Spirit' identified in scripture. It is possible though that there are in fact ten. Let's begin by defining logical categories for these gifts:

- Utterance Gifts – Prophecy, Diverse Tongues, Interpretation of Diverse Tongues
- Knowing Gifts - Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom, Discernment of Spirits
- Supra Faith Gifts – Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healing, Working of Miracles
- Waiting Gift - Word of Patience



Although many have given various definitions for these gifts, allow me to do the same as I personally understand them. Please note that 'Gifts of the Spirit' should not be confused with the functions or offices of the five-fold ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11. Here is my list of the ten gifts⁷:

1. Prophecy – an utterance or message that is divinely inspired (the unction⁸), directed at the right person or group at the right time. All prophecies must be regulated or judged by those prophets with the gift of discerning of spirits. The 'Gift of Prophecy' is the best gift⁹ and we are instructed to seek this gift¹⁰ as it is best used in revealing the contents of unbeliever's hearts¹¹. When this occurs, unbelievers become convinced of God's existence and care and love for them. Further, the 'Gift of Prophecy' is essential in teaching-learning, edification-building, and comforting Spirit filled members of the Church body. Finally, the 'Gift of Prophecy' is never confusing and is not

⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Revelation 3:10

⁸ 1 John 2:20 The 'Unction of the Spirit; is a signal of knowing, a 'Word of Faith' letting a believer know that Jesus desires to have them operate their gift of the Spirit.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:1, 3

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, 17, 22

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

forced out of a person who has this gift. This gift is within the control of the Prophet's will as God never violates human will, forcing them to operate any of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'.

2. Diverse Tongues – an utterance in a tongue that may vary by language, human or angelic. This gift is first for personal edification and secondly for Church edification. When people receive the Holy Spirit, they get one unknown tongue. When the gift of diverse tongues manifests, the believer is enabled to 'speak in tongues' at will and the language will often change like moving the dial on a radio set. Only two or three utterances in sequence are permitted before one interpretation is given if this operates in a public Church gathering.
3. Interpretation of Diverse Tongues – not a translation but an interpretation in a known language of what the diverse tongue spoke in an unknown language. Regulation of diverse tongues and interpretation of diverse tongues must be regulated and judged in similar fashion as the gift of prophecy. Only one interpretation should be given after a sequence of two or three diverse tongue utterances. If a second interpretation occurs, the second interpretation is actually prophecy, not an interpretation.
4. Word of Knowledge – the divine impartation of a fact or instruction. Wise administrators of this gift know when to 'say something' versus when to 'pray something'. If a 'Word of Knowledge' is given by one believer to another, the word must be confirmed in the following ways:
 - Prayer by the believer
 - A third believer's confirming utterance
 - Dream
 - Vision
 - Voice of the Spirit recognizable by the believer
5. Word of Wisdom – the wisdom of where to go, what to do, how to do, or when to do something with a 'Word from the Spirit'. 'How we say' something is just as important as 'what we say'. Also, like the 'Word of Knowledge' given from one believer to another, the word must be confirmed.
6. Discernment of Spirits – this is the trying either of a human spirit or an angelic spirit, clean or unclean. This word or knowing is often given as a confirmation when the 'Gifts of the Spirit' are operating in an assembly. Sometimes, this word can be a divine impartation to know the temperament of the spirit that is being tried. Scripture commands us to 'try the spirits' to see if they are from God¹².
7. Gift of Faith – the divine impartation of God's faith¹³ which pushes out human doubt. The greatest use of this gift is during the 'altar working process' when seekers are asking Jesus for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In scripture, the evangelist Philip did not possess this gift of the Spirit and was sent Peter and John to help believers in Samaria receive the Holy Spirit¹⁴. In Paul's discourse to the Church at Rome, he states that the 'Gift of Faith' cooperates with the 'Word of Faith'¹⁵ that comes out of the mouth of a believer. This 'Word of Faith' coming out of the mouth is the 'speaking in tongues' phenomena.
8. Gifts of Healing – the divine impartation of a cure to a sufferer, physical or emotional, of a disease, sickness, or malady. Generally, people will carry faith for specific classes of diseases and ailments. It should be noted that 'Gifts of Healing' was always accompanied by 'Forgiveness

¹² 1 John 4:1

¹³ Hebrews 12:2

¹⁴ Acts 8:4-25

¹⁵ Romans 10:8

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of Sins' in Jesus ministry¹⁶. Power to forgive sins is given to believers¹⁷ when they administer the plan of salvation to unbelievers as defined by Peter in Acts 2:38.

9. Working of Miracles – when faith is present for a miracle, the time to speak the 'Word of Faith' becomes imperative and urgent. Miracles become 'wonders' when they are done in public and gain notoriety. Although Philip had the 'Gift of Miracles' in his ministry at Samaria¹⁸, he did not have the 'Gift of Faith' necessary to help people receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In Samaria, the miracles of Philip people witnessed were demons cast out crying loud and palsies healed. It should be noted that healings imparted occur over a span of time whereas miracles are instantaneous and beyond human processes.
10. Word of Patience – the spiritual calming of the human motivation to act without God's direction or permission. This gift keeps us from the 'hour of temptation', a destructive impulse. This 'Gift of the Spirit' is essential to the release of the 'Gifts of the Spirit' in a congregation. Jesus is not a circus animal we can command and control. We must give Jesus space and time to unction and manifest His gifts when He desires to do so. Many ministers are unaware of Jesus desire to unction His 'Gifts of the Spirit' and do not give him space, place, or time to bring them forward from the local congregation. A highly controlling minister will not give Jesus the opportunity to manifest His 'Gifts of the Spirit'. But a word of caution is necessary here. Believers who receive an unction to operate their 'Gift of the Spirit', must wait for the appropriate time and place to do so. Some may find that interruptive and impetuous operation of their gift will be declared 'out of order' by those commissioned to regulate the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. Paul instructs us to make sure that everything is done decently and in order¹⁹ when it concerns the 'Gifts of the Spirit'.

¹⁶ Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:24, Mark 2:10-11

¹⁷ John 2:23

¹⁸ Acts 8:6-8

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:40

Regulating the Gifts of the Spirit

Fortunately for us, Paul lays down the template for proper ignition and regulation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit' corporately in a congregation.

- Love (Unity)
- Control (Regulation)

Many leaders remove or over regulate the 'Gifts of the Spirit' in their assemblies out of fear. As we know from regulated economies, over regulation stymies growth. So why do leaders fear the 'Gifts of the Spirit'? My answer is as follows:

1. Korah-ites - those who want to be exalted, lifted up in the congregation, assuming authority outside the Bishop-Pastor office, by ministering their 'Gift of the Spirit'
2. Nutter-ites - the unstable believer who cannot discern an unction from the authentic voice of God.

To best illustrate the Korah-ite believer, I came across an interesting case at a Church I attended after being led there by the Lord. This Church had a young Pastor, very diplomatic yet lacking in experience on how to regulate the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. At the conclusion of one of the initial sermons, I heard a woman screaming out a 'Diverse Tongue', culminating in a crescendo of showy catharsis.

"Surely" I thought, "the young Pastor will correct her for the 'out of order' utterance."

But nothing happened. He sheepishly permitted the utterance to go unchallenged. This occurred several times in many services that followed. Later, speaking to another minister in that Church, it became apparent to me that everyone in the congregation doubted the woman's fleshly utterances. Clearly, this woman's desire for attention or her lack of instruction was causing the people to doubt the legitimacy of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'.

[If the Trumpet gives an uncertain sound, no one will prepare themselves for battle. The Spirit is subject to the Prophet. Let everything be done decently and in order.²⁰]

Later, the woman left this assembly unexpectedly, thankfully taking her catharsis utterances with her.

I suspect the young Pastor eventually got around to addressing the woman's desire for attention. Sometime later, the Lord collided me with this woman at a restaurant on a Friday evening. She avoided eye contact with me and I wondered if there was a reason for what appeared to be, 'a divine appointment'. I never found out what the intersection was all about, but I suspect the Lord was showing me the cost of weak teaching and government (regulation) of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. It is true that people perish for lack of knowledge²¹.

The Korah-ite spirit desires attention and human praise while the Nutter-ite spirit shows instability and throws the 'Gifts of the Spirit' into disrepute. Temperance oriented Regulation is needed, not

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:8, 32, 40

²¹ Hosea 4:6

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oppressive overregulation. We must do more to instruct people in confirmation, humility, and operation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. Congregations must deliberately pray for 'discerning of Spirits', the regulating gift God willingly provides for proper control and confirmation inside the body of Christ²²?

The template for operating the 'Gifts of the Spirit' is clear, if we consider the three chapters Paul gave to his new Church plant in Corinth:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Identify of the Gifts | 1 Corinthians 12 |
| 2. The Environment that initiates the Gifts | 1 Corinthians 13 |
| 3. Regulation of the Gifts | 1 Corinthians 14 |

We must not miss the obvious when we read 1 Corinthians 14:1.

"Pursue love, and earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy."

[If one is the Bishop-Pastor, know that Love precedes the 'Gifts of the Spirit', leading to the 'Gift of Prophecy.' If Prophecy is missing from an assembly, then the Testimony (evidence) of Jesus is also missing²³.]

Fortunately for us, Paul lays down the template for proper ignition of the 'Gifts of the Spirit' corporately in a congregation.

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Many leaders remove or over regulate the 'Gifts of the Spirit' in their assemblies out of fear. As we know from regulated economies, over regulation stymies growth. So why do leaders fear the 'Gifts of the Spirit'? My answer is as follows:

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²² 1 Corinthians 14:20

²³ Revelation 19:10; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11, 4:7; 2 John 1:5

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attention or her lack of instruction was causing the people to doubt the legitimacy of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'.

[If the Trumpet gives an uncertain sound, no one will prepare themselves for battle. The Spirit is subject to the Prophet. Let everything be done decently and in order.²⁴]

Later, the woman left this assembly unexpectedly, catharsis utterances and all. I suspect the young Pastor eventually got around to addressing the catharsis utterances. Sometime later, the Lord collided me with this woman at a Chinese buffet on a Friday evening. She avoided eye contact with me and I wondered if there was a reason for what appeared to be, 'a divine appointment' (Hebrew, qurrah). I never found out what the intersection was all about, but I suspect the Lord was showing me the cost of weak teaching and government (regulation) of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. It is true that people perish for lack of knowledge²⁵.

The Korah-ite spirit desires attention and human praise while the Nutter-ite spirit shows instability and throws the 'Gifts of the Spirit' into disrepute. Temperance oriented Regulation is needed, not oppressive overregulation. We must do more to instruct people in confirmation, humility, and operation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. Congregations must deliberately pray for 'discerning of Spirits', the regulating gift God willingly endues inside the body of Christ²⁶?

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In the regulation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit', teamwork is essential. The Bishop-Pastor (supervisor) of the Church sets the tone, love and appropriate teaching regarding this. This person must be careful not to quench the spirit with over regulation²⁸ while trying to quench the darts of the enemy²⁹. In addition to the Bishop-Pastor, God will eventually place something else in the Church. The 'Judging Prophet'. This

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:8, 32, 40

²⁵ Hosea 4:6

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:20

²⁷ Revelation 19:10; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11, 4:7; 2 John 1:5

²⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:19

²⁹ Ephesians 6:16

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person may also be the Bishop of the local assembly or group, but then again, the modern Church would not accept someone who demonstrates to be in the Prophet office.

It is my opinion that either the Bishop or someone in another office acquires the critical spiritual gift, 'Discernment of Spirits'. The 'Gift of Discernment of Spirits' has many purposes, but no doubt corporate regulation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit' is of highest priority. Every Bishop and Prophet should pray continually for this gift until it manifests.

[If we shy away from conflict, the Prophet's mantle is not for us. Correction and Restoration inside the Church must be cautiously administered and can make for a lonely misunderstood life. The Prophet must know when to speak versus when to pray³⁰.]

The 'fruit of RIGHTEOUSNESS' comes only by way of correction³¹. It is the Bishop's ministry in the assembly to correct the unruly, out of order saint. Correction is part of teaching. When Dr. Benjamin Spock, a leftist psychiatrist, published his book about childcare in 1946, he removed the Biblical principles of righteousness and correction. His record best seller saturated our Christian culture and removed the landmarks of disciplining children with empathy, not just love and self-worth alone. This book bred a large population of wandering narcissists, empty of Christian identity. A child must be trained up in the way that he should go³².

It's a Prophet's wisdom to communicate a corrective message privately³³ to the Bishop, if God so directs. It's imperative to get a confirmation from the Lord in such matters as people normally despise correction let alone unsolicited advice. Rarely does God call for a public rebuke or written communication to a Bishop³⁴ but it can happen. Nathan used wisdom in correcting David, but he also was under compulsion from the Lord³⁵. Paul openly rebuked Peter due to Kasrut hypocrisy in the Antioch Church³⁶. Leadership is not exempt from correction. The Prophet is God's last resort when infallibility rises through unaccountability.

³⁰ James 3:2; Proverbs 26:3

³¹ Titus 2:15; Hebrews 12:5-11,

³² Proverbs 22:6

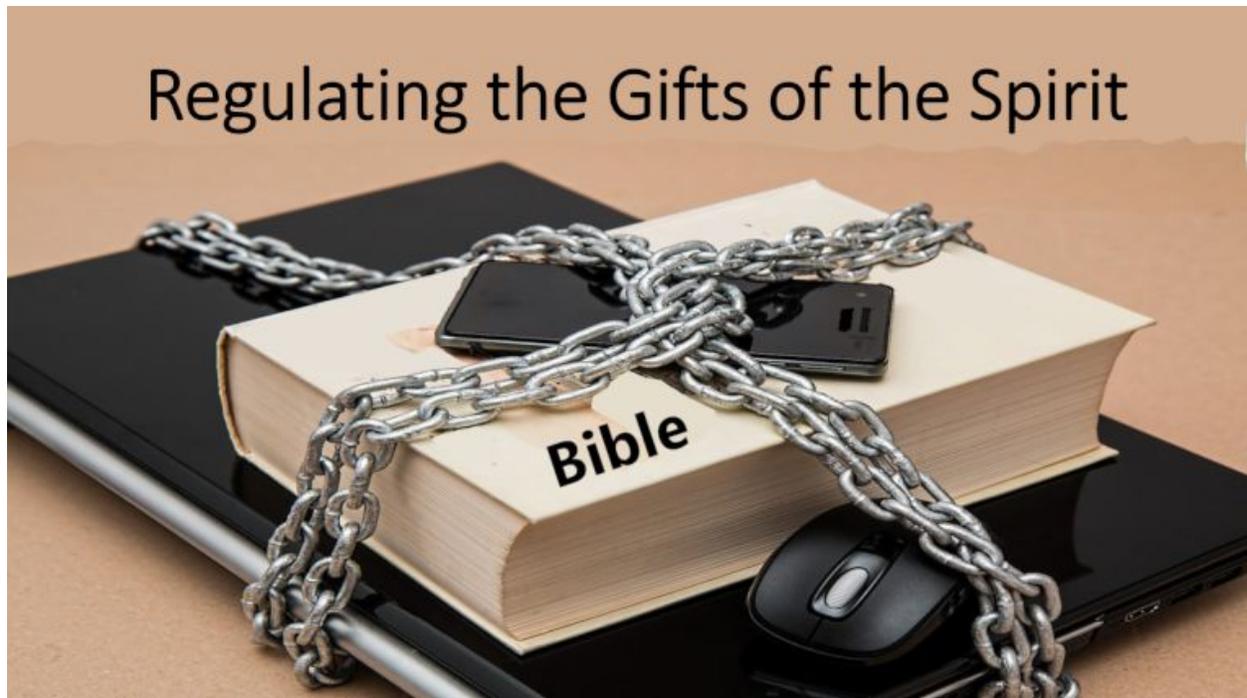
³³ Galatians 2:1-10

³⁴ Galatians 2:11-14

³⁵ 2 Samuel 12:1-14

³⁶ Galatians 2:11-14

[Warning to all Evangelists: Stay in your lane. If you rebuke or correct a Bishop at an assembly or group, you will most likely be disfellowshipped, affecting your livelihood and ministerial purpose. A Prophet is rarely invited by those ignorant of the 'Prophet's Reward'³⁷. In these situations, the Prophet is sent directly by God when dullness of hearing and wisdom is prevalent.]



In the regulation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit', teamwork is essential. The Bishop-Pastor (supervisor) of the Church sets the tone, love and appropriate teaching regarding confirmation and judging of prophecy. The leader must be careful not to quench the Spirit with over regulation³⁸ or by just not giving time or place for the gifts to operate.

To help regulate the 'Gifts of the Spirit', God will eventually place something else in the Church. The 'Judging Prophet' gifted with the 'discerning of Spirits'. Every spirit must be tried and authenticated. This 'Judging Prophet' is essential for proper regulation of the gifts.

The 'Gift of Discernment of Spirits' has many purposes, but no doubt corporate regulation of the 'Gifts of the Spirit' is of highest priority. Every Bishop and Prophet should pray continually for this gift until it manifests.

[If we shy away from conflict, the 'Gifts of the Spirit' will be misused. Correction and Restoration inside the Church must be cautiously administered and can make for a lonely misunderstood life. The 'Judging Prophet' must know when to speak versus when to pray³⁹.]

Scripture tells us that 'out of the mouth of two or three witnesses' every WORD is established. Jesus also told us that scripture itself is the first witness in many cases. But to insure safety with regard to

³⁷ Matthew 10:41

³⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:19

³⁹ James 3:2; Proverbs 26:3

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prophetic utterances, Paul instructs us to confirm ‘Gifts of the Spirit’ utterances by the ‘Judging Prophets’ equipped with the “discerning of Spirits” gift. When the ‘Gifts of the Spirit’ arise in a local assembly, so will Jesus impart the regulating ‘Gift of the Spirit’..

One more thing regarding regulating ‘Gifts of the Spirit.’ The ‘fruit of RIGHTEOUSNESS’ comes only by way of correction⁴⁰. It is the Bishop’s ministry in the assembly to correct the unruly, out of order saint. Correction is part of teaching. But it is a ‘Judging Prophet’s’ wisdom to communicate a corrective message privately⁴¹ to the Bishop, if God so directs. The ‘Judging Prophet’ can overstep his authority if he disciplines others inside the Church. This fruit is administered by the Bishop alone.

It’s imperative to get a confirmation from the Lord in matters of correcting the misuse of the ‘Gifts of the Spirit’ People normally despise correction let alone unsolicited advice. The wise Bishop insures that he alone administers correction of those who are continuously out of order with the ‘Gifts of the Spirit’. Rarely does God call for a public rebuke of a believer but it can happen as Ananias and Sapphira found out⁴².

Nathan used wisdom when he corrected and confronted David’s sin of murdering Uriah, but he also was under compulsion from the Lord⁴³. Paul openly rebuked Peter due to legalistic dietary hypocrisy among the gentiles in the Antioch Church⁴⁴. Leadership is not exempt from correction but normally God reserves this domain to Himself as Eli found out⁴⁵ after an utterance by a Prophet (note: Someone called and trained by God outside the local assembly).

[Warning to all Evangelists: Stay in your lane. If you rebuke or correct a Bishop at an assembly or group, you will most likely be disfellowshipped, affecting your livelihood and ministerial purpose. In these extreme situations, the Lord may send a Prophet when dullness of hearing and wisdom is prevalent.]

⁴⁰ Titus 2:15; Hebrews 12:5-11,

⁴¹ Galatians 2:1-10

⁴² Acts 5:1-11

⁴³ 2 Samuel 12:1-14

⁴⁴ Galatians 2:11-14

⁴⁵ 1 Samuel 2:22-36

Love: The Catalyst that Ignites the Gifts of the Spirit

Love or in the Greek, Agape, is called the more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 13 defines Agape Love this way:

1. Agape Love is Patient with God and people, waiting for promises and deliverance
2. Love is kind, considerate of others and their feelings
3. Love does not boast, brag, or self-declare greatness
4. Love is humble, not arrogant and full of self importance
5. Love is graceful, not rude in conversation with others
6. Love yields to others and does not insist in getting its own way
7. Love is good tempered, not easily annoyed, moody or irritable
8. Love does not hold onto resentments but forgives trespasses
9. Love celebrates what is right and truthful, but does not rehearse what is wrong and sinful
10. Love tolerates people and their differences
11. Love believes what is said and does not grab hold of suspicions
12. Love hopes all things will turn out and does not wish harm on others
13. Love endures hardness without becoming hard
14. Love does not quit or give up trying



In examining Paul's Agape love definition, we see the virtues and character of Jesus Christ. If Christians will permit the Holy Spirit to mature the 'Fruits of the Spirit' in their inner man, the list above can be realized.

Think of Agape Love as the catalyst that ignites the 'Gifts of the Spirit'. Agape Love is the 'first fruit of the Spirit' listed in Galatians 5:22.



About the Author

Former Pastor and now Author, Dwight Davis grew up on the prairies of central North Dakota. Now responding to the latest call of the Lord, God's path has led him to write, publish, and record various types of media to help Christians grow. He is still married to his high school sweetheart (*class of 1974*) and has two sons and two granddaughters. He currently resides in Sheboygan, Wisconsin near Lake Michigan and is a former US Navy veteran.

He teaches on various topics and he has created an online discipleship ministry at <https://153greatfish.com>. Further, he also writes fiction books under other Christian pen names. He can be reached at 153fhg@gmail.com or (920) 485-1777.