

THE
POWER
of
SIMPLICITY
*for Christian Life
and Church Life*

Dr. David Newton

HARBOR VIEW PUBLISHING HOUSE
SANTA BARBARA ⌘ CALIFORNIA

Copyright © 2020 - David B. Newton
All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America.
Except as permitted under the United States
Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication
may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by
any means, or stored in a database or retrieval
system, without prior expressed written consent
and permission from the copyright holder.

ISBN: 978-1-7923-2942-5

Harbor View Publishing House does independent
research and literary commentary production.
The name comes from the central overview one
gets when seeing the safe haven within the port,
even as the waves and swells of the open ocean
lie just beyond the breakwater jetty. Harbor View
is committed to examining Biblical topics using a
detailed framework with contemporary application.

*The precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart.
The commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes.*

Psalm 19:8

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Foreword	6
Introduction	12
<i>SECTION I CHRISTIAN LIFE</i>	
Chapter 1 – God’s Word	20
Chapter 2 – The Holy Spirit	35
Chapter 3 – Fruit <i>of</i> The Spirit	52
Chapter 4 – Gifts <i>from</i> The Spirit	75
<i>SECTION II CHURCH LIFE</i>	
Chapter 5 – Worship	119
Chapter 6 – Teach God’s Word	141
Chapter 7 – Prayer	157
Chapter 8 – Fellowship	176
Final Encouragement	192

Acknowledgements

Thank you Pastor Tommy Schneider for your encouragement and many great ideas for how this book could become a trusted resource for everyone at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara.

Great job Zak Shellebarger in such thoughtful work as the copy-editor, with your many readings, edits, and excellent ideas. And really nice work on the dust jacket design Jenny Yarbrough.

The topics for this book came into focus as dozens of friends had discussions with me the last few years about “How can our daily Christian life and church life focus on what really matters?”

Merci beaucoup to Pastor Antoine [Tonio] Petrignani and his entire congregation at Calvary Chapel Nice [France] for kind words of encouragement as I taught through this book’s topics at their all-church retreat in October 2019. It was a blessed time to recount the *power of simplicity for Christian life and church life* to those new in their relationship with the Lord, as well as to those who have been believers for a long time.

Finally, thanks always to my family for their love and support as I continue to research, write, and teach on various important topics from God’s Word. I am truly a blessed man.

FOREWORD

Over the years there have been many people who have helped shine the light of Christ's love into my life. One of them is Dr. David Newton. I have known him for over 25 years. He has been faithful to God's Word, and faithful to always bring me back to that light that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. I am thankful that you will get the opportunity to see topic-by-topic a clear Scripturally-based foundation that brings that very same light alive in your own heart, and allows it to shine outward to others. This will be one of those books you will enjoy for years to come, keeping you anchored in God's truths. It is also a wonderful book to hand out to others so that they too might be disciplined in those things that bring out the simple yet beautiful light of Christ that shines in the lives of believers.

I know you are going to enjoy reading through this book as you understand the power of simplicity, not only for your personal walk with Jesus, but also in your church life. There is power and beauty contained in the Word of God. It is powerful and profound, yet simple in the way it speaks into, and changes, our daily lives. In this book you are going to get the chance to behold that power and learn how to reflect it in all that you say and do. It will begin with how we are to behold God's Word –

allowing it to shape and mold the way we live. Then you will see the simple truth of God's daily nearness to you, as the Holy Spirit dwells richly in you. His presence is active and available 24/7 – not limited by our weaknesses or shortcomings.

Dr. Dave will also give you sound insights into the fruit of the Holy Spirit – and gifts *from* the Holy Spirit – so you may live more closely within God's will. After the book covers the power of God's simplicity in your individual life, you will learn about how the Lord moves and works in the body of believers – His Church. Those chapters in Section-II will explore how the church worships the Lord together, hears the teaching from the Word, prays together, and enjoys the rich closeness of spiritual relationship among all believers that can only come through the supernatural fellowship [*koinonia*] of God's Spirit.

One thing I love to do is stroll down to Stearn's Wharf in Santa Barbara, and watch the sun rise. There is something profoundly special about being in the heart of our town and seeking God at the dawn of each day. I like to stand looking out toward the sunlight shimmering against the waters. As many in our church know, I love to watch the birds glide gracefully over the surface of the Pacific Ocean. In the coolness of the morning, I pray for our city. I seek God's heart for Santa Barbara – the people, businesses, and our church. I was walking up the pier one morning and the sun was just beginning to peek up and over onto the water. I watched as the rays lit up the sky and painted the horizon brilliant colors. Splashes of orange, red, and yellow sprayed across the harbor. The ocean was teeming with life. A

Foreword

seal was playing right under the dock, and seagulls were scraping their wings all along the glassy sea. God's creation was simply breathtaking – and it was no coincidence that Psalm 90 was the Scripture for my daily devotion. With the crisp morning air in my lungs and the warm sunlight on my face, I read this aloud from verse 17:

*Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us
and establish the work of our hands for us.
Yes, establish the work of our hands.*

I looked up from my Bible and gazed at our city. Scattered on the hills up above Santa Barbara were homes whose windows were reflecting the brilliant light of that sunrise. The glare of the windows beamed back at me with the same intensity of the sun. The light was beautiful and my heart welled up with awe as I saw our city respond to the warmth of the sun, by reflecting its light. I believe this is, in essence, our calling as believers – to reflect the warmth of God's goodness in all our actions. Beauty received in awe allows you to reflect God to the world. May we be those who will behold the beauty of the Gospel and respond through obedience, worship, and love. When we stand in the light of God's Word, just as the city stood in the light of the sunrise, we can't help but reflect that light in our own lives.

Jesus stated in Matthew 5:14-16, *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify*

your Father in heaven.” This is truly our calling as believers – to behold God’s glory revealed in His Word, and reflect that glory in our actions. We get the opportunity to reflect the simple, yet powerful, beauty found in Scripture in all that we do.

Every aspect of your life changes when you come in contact with the goodness of Jesus. The beauty of God and His gospel transform your heart. This is why I think this book will be a powerful tool in the life of each believer. It will take you through how you are to reflect God’s light and respond to His glory. This book shows that you too can shine like those homes on the hill – in your Christian life and church life. Remember Psalm 90:17 – so that as you look at the power of these simple Biblical principles, you will see them as God’s beauty upon you to inspire the works of your hands.

So many of us become far too calculated and rigid in the way we view obedience. We look at the Bible as a set of rules and regulations that confines us. We analyze theology and get lost in philosophy. In this, the work we do and the lives we live can become somewhat cold and boring. Your faith should be a reflection of God’s goodness – not a calculated set of habits. The life God has for us is filled with wonder and warmth. Remember that what you are about to read is not a “how-to” manual for living a good Christian life or ideal church life. It is not a set of rules or regulations to confine your actions. It is an opportunity for you to daily reflect God’s glorious sunrise.

As you read through this book and see the strong Biblical basis for these simple truths about the Christian life and

Foreword

church life, my heart and prayer for you is that God would use this to draw you closer, into a more deliberate and thoughtful daily walk with Him, and you would see these four things really come alive in your own Christian life – and you will also look out at your church life and ask the Lord to show you how these four things can become more tangible in you as you press in deeper to spiritual fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. You will have a chance to look at God’s goodness and respond to the teaching of the Word, as you rely on the Holy Spirit in worship, prayer, and church fellowship. And you can keep your own journal as you write out your thoughts to the questions at the end of each chapter. May God richly bless your time in this book, as you rest and are satisfied in the power of simplicity for your personal Christian life, and church life with others.

*- Pastor Tommy Schneider
Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara*

INTRODUCTION

This book is focused on the incredible *power* available to all Christians and all churches when they rest in the simplicity of what the Bible teaches about the Christian life and church life. Throughout the gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament, the writers use *dunamis* [δύναμις in the Greek] for *power*. This is the root word of our English term *dynamite*. But many Christians and churches today do not understand what is truly meant by *power* for the Christian and church life. They assume it's all about the much-hyped pursuit of miracles, supernatural signs, sensational healings, and dramatic prophetic utterances, as if that's what defines daily Christian living and church life for the average person in today's world. But such a viewpoint tends to look right past the truly amazing *power* available to every Christian and church in what the Lord has simply provided for all who truly follow Him.

Jesus stated that *power* was the Lord's forever and ever [Matthew 6:13]. He also told the religious leaders they did not understand the Scriptures or the *power* of God [Matthew 22:29 and Mark 12:24]. Jesus said the world will see Him in great *power* and glory at His second coming [Matthew 24:30]. And He also told His disciples that He had given them authority over the *power* of the enemy [Luke 10:19] and *power* from the Holy Spirit

to witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the most remote parts of the world [Acts 1:8], giving testimony to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead [Acts 4:33]. Many people asked Paul and Stephen by what authority they had the **power** to do miracles [Acts 3:12; 4:7; 6:8]. And Paul was glad to declare with **power** that Jesus was the Son of God, and was resurrected from the dead, according to the Spirit of Holiness [Romans 1:8].

There is great evidence throughout the Bible that God has provided spiritual **power** to Christians and the church. But this *dunamis* is most often described as Christians and churches being a strong witness about Jesus Christ to the world. The real **power** that is most important is to be a living testimony by the Holy Spirit in all we say and do. John the Baptist came to bear testimony of the Light [John 1:7]. All the prophets gave testimony that through Jesus, all who believe in Him will have their sins forgiven [Acts 10:43]. Paul gave **powerful** testimony of Jesus wherever he went [1st Corinthians 2:1; 2nd Corinthians 1:12]. The Apostles gave testimony of Jesus with **power** [Acts 4:33]. We should also not be ashamed to give our own **powerful** testimony about the Lord in our life, joining in His suffering for the gospel according to the **power** of God [2nd Timothy 1:8].

This book is designed to review the key details about what God's Word specifically teaches regarding "Christians" – people who have expressed their faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross, and the "Church" – those groups of people who share a common faith in Jesus Christ and regularly assemble [gather together] in various communities all around

the world, and how there is great *power* in the simplicity of faith and following Jesus. It's not complicated. It isn't reserved for just a few "special" individuals who are super-spiritual. The Christian life and church life have *power* in this world by simply holding fast to all the Lord provides for consistent daily living.

Luke records in Acts 11:26 that people were first referred to as "Christians" in the city of Antioch [modern day Antakya in southern Turkey] under the teaching ministry of Saul of Tarsus [the Apostle Paul] and his colleague Barnabas - his name in Hebrew means "son-of" [Bar] "encouragement" [Nabas]. To be a "Christian" was then to be a *follower-of-Christ*. "Christ" is the English form of the Greek word *Christos* [Χριστός], translated from the Hebrew word *Meshiyach* [מִשְׁיָח] – the "Anointed One".

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus told his disciples His "church" would be built on the solid rock foundation of Peter's very specific confession – that "*Jesus of Nazareth is in fact that Christos, the Son of the living God, the Meshiyach 'Anointed One' spoken of throughout the Old Testament*". The Greek word for "church" [*ekklesia* = ἐκκλησία] means a literal convocation or assembly of like-minded people [a gathering] – set apart from the world.

So then, those people who follow Jesus as the Christ are "Christians", and when they gather together they are collectively referred to as the "Church". But in contemporary society, many people call themselves "Christians", and many gatherings of people refer to their assembling as "Church". Yet, all the various encyclopedias and dictionaries tend to list as "Christian" and "Church" all who identify as Protestants, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, and Coptics, as well as Mormons

[they call themselves THE “church” of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints], Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists, Unitarians – even Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church. Since 1966, there has even been a “church” of Satan, and since 2017 there’s now the “church” of Artificial Intelligence.

Here at Calvary Chapel of Santa Barbara, it’s worth taking a closer look at what the Bible clearly teaches regarding the *power* available to all “Christians”, and what we should be doing together as a “Church”. What exactly is the Christian life, and by what *power* do we daily live this out in our world? And what is Church supposed to be about, and what *power* should be exhibited in how we spend our collective time together?

This book focuses on four truly amazing things that all Christians have for living a powerful life. Chapter One covers how we have God’s very Word to mankind, available to us with guidance for every aspect of daily living. Chapter Two covers how we have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in us at all times. Chapter Three examines the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit [that His very character can be exhibited in our lives]. And Chapter Four looks at the gifts from God’s Holy Spirit – given by Him at His discretion to accomplish His purposes.

Then there are four equally amazing things that are the simple basis for vibrant church life. Chapter Five looks at how we gather together to worship the Lord. Chapter Six covers how we are taught from God’s Word. Chapter Seven looks at how the church prays together. Finally, Chapter Eight examines this unique spiritual “fellowship” [*koinonia*, *κοινωνία* in the Greek]

that the church has by God's Holy Spirit – that supernaturally links Christians together as one.

So while many Christians and churches today have put their focus on seeking after all kinds of supernatural signs and wonders that they believe will somehow lead to more *power* in their Christian life and church life, my encouragement to you is that we already have tremendous *power* each and every day in the Biblical simplicity of what we have in Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and our times gathered together as the church.

It too often becomes commonplace to look right past the simplicity of the amazing things the Bible clearly teaches we have as believers in Jesus Christ – and not being satisfied in these, people search after and pursue all kinds of experiences they think will give them more *power*. And many churches have done the same, as services focus on supposed supernatural signs and wonders to somehow confirm that God's *power* is active in the congregation. But I desire to show from the Bible that there is tremendous *power* in the simplicity of what God has given to all believers and to His church. It is truly amazing that we have in our hands to read anytime we want, the very Word of God – and the Holy Spirit of the true and living God now dwells full-time in all believers, so we can then show in our lives fruit of His Spirit, while also being uniquely gifted *by* the same Spirit for specific ministry into which He calls us.

That is a *powerful* line-up of God's simple truths for us that should never be take for granted. Church life is also a *power* line-up of four things we should be thankful for, and fully satisfied in, because of the incredible simplicity of our spiritual

life together as the body of Christ. We should also not look past, or yearn for more, than these simple truths.

It is my desire is to take a deep look into God's Word and see how He wants to **empower** us for daily living and church life together through the simplicity of being satisfied in all that He has provided us as Christians and His church. Imagine how great it would be to have everyone in our church congregation entirely fulfilled and content in these simple truths each and every day for both Christian life and church life. It would be so nice to see ALL believers walking steadily with the Lord all throughout the week, experiencing His blessing, being filled and led by His Holy Spirit in all they say and do – with their families, friends, co-workers, students, neighbors, and others they run into during the day. That is **powerful** Christian living – to be walking by His Spirit and supernaturally equipped for ministry, always ready to be a clear testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ to anyone God may bring our way.

Paul explained to the young pastor of the newly-planted church in the city of Ephesus [1st Timothy 6:6] that “godliness is actually a means of tremendous gain when accompanied by contentment”. He also encouraged him [1st Timothy 2:2] to “lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity”. The Apostle continued [1st Timothy 6:8] that having food and a place to live provide contentment. He exhorted the Philippian church [4:11] that he himself had learned how to be content in whatever circumstances he personally encountered. Paul also told his fellow Hebrews [13:5] to be free from the love of money and to be

Introduction

content with what you have. Contentment. Being fully satisfied in the Lord. Resting in Him and His provisions for our daily lives. That is the wonderful *power* of simplicity in the gospel.

And so throughout the entire New Testament, there are dozens of verses that speak directly to the beautiful simplicity of Christian and church life. A close walk with Jesus should not be complicated. It should not vary each day due to circumstances from this world. Christians do not have to always wonder if they are somehow missing out on *power* they should be seeking after. And there is no reason to think that seeking after supposed fantastic signs and wonders will somehow make for a more complete and fulfilling Christian life or church life.

My simple prayer is this book will first be a wonderful reminder of ALL we have in Christ Jesus – His Word, His Spirit, fruit in our lives, and gifts for ministry – and the true spiritual *power* we have available to us each and every day. And it would be a trusted resource you will come back to time and again to check Biblical references, review the teachings of Jesus, Paul, James, John, Peter, and others, and to always be encouraged how God's Word clearly presents the *simplicity* of the Christian life and church life. May God richly bless you as you grow in knowing His Word and apply that daily in your life.

- Dr. Dave Newton
November 2019
Santa Barbara, California

SECTION I

Christian Life

CHAPTER ONE

God's Word

"You have magnified Your Word above Your name."
Psalm 138:2

The Bible is arguably one of the most overlooked sources of *power* for believers. God's own Word to mankind speaks to all aspects of our lives. If we want to hear the Lord speak, it's as easy as opening it up and simply reading what He has to say. But how sad it is, that for so many people, the Bible remains an unopened book sitting on a shelf, while they continue to search all over for ways they can get closer to God. To have the Bible so accessible but not regularly accessed is tragic. Timeless words for life are right there – ready, waiting, if we would simply spend time in it.

It is truly a *powerful* reminder, that Christians have direct access at any time to the very Word of God. It has been written down in easy-to-read language. We can understand it, and apply it to our own lives and any situation we encounter. God's Word is referred to as the Bible - which simply means "the

books”, from the Greek word biblos [βίβλος]. Sixty-six books were penned by forty different writers between about 1,400 BC when Moses wrote the five books of the Torah [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy], to the end of the 1st Century AD when the Apostle John authored three letters while living out his final years in the city of Ephesus. God’s Word displays a fully integrated message that is highly coordinated in its content, yet very few of the authors even knew each other or lived at the same time in history. The message is entirely consistent from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It covers the anticipation of Jesus coming to earth as Messiah to die on a Roman cross for the sins of the world. It has a detailed the record of Jesus’ life and ministry, his death, and resurrection. It chronicles the beginning and growth of the church across the Mediterranean basin. Its message shows that a loving God provided one way for sinful men and women to be reconciled to Him through the free gift of Jesus’ death as an atonement for sin.

The ministry of Calvary Chapel has always been focused on teaching the full counsel of the Bible so that people can know and understand the Father, Jesus the Son, and the person of the Holy Spirit. These are the three distinct Persons of our triune God – equal in every way, yet unique in how God has manifested Himself and how He functions in His relationship to creation in general, and mankind specifically. Knowing God’s Word has always been the basis for the ministry of Calvary Chapel churches. When people know the Bible, they understand who God is, His attributes, His love, grace, mercy, kindness, and

forgiveness, His wisdom, knowledge, and awesome *power* and might. His plan for every aspect of His incredible creation.

The Psalmist declares that the Word of God is upright (33:4) to be treasured in the heart so we would not sin against the Lord (119:11). God's Word is a lamp shining on our steps, it lights the path on which we walk [Psalm 119:105]. God cannot lie, so His Word is trustworthy and reliable [Psalm 33:4]. What He says is an anchor to our soul [Hebrews 6:17-18] that holds firm against all those forces that would try to constantly move us from one position to another. God's Word is trustworthy in all ways for our instruction, even though God's infinite knowledge is far different from - and higher than - that of the world's and man's perspectives [1st Corinthians 3:19 and Isaiah 55:8-9].

Psalm 40 reminds us God's Word is the rock upon which we stand to have sure footing – a firm foundation upon which we build, even as the loose sands of this world's teachings are constantly shifting [Matthew 7:24-27], while the waves around us are tossed about to and fro [James 1:6], and the winds have strong gusts that move things out of place [Ephesians 4:14]. Hebrews 4:12 explains clearly that God's Word is living, active, and sharp enough to divide truth from falsehood. And Peter clearly explains [2nd Peter 1:21] the Word of God was penned by men specifically inspired by the Holy Spirit, so then it was not simply their own philosophy, ideas, or thoughts about things.

The Logos

The Bible is the "Word" of God – literally the *logos* [λόγος] in the Greek. John 1:1 says in the beginning was the *logos* [noted as a person] who was with God, and was God. Then verse

14 further clarifies that Jesus is in fact that *logos* who became flesh and dwelt among us. This is confirmed in Hebrews 13:8 because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever – even as the Psalmist stated [119:89] that “forever oh Lord your Word [logos] is settled in heaven”. Isaiah 40:8 reminds us that the grass withers, the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever. Jesus said [Matthew 24:35] even heaven and earth will pass away, but His very Word will never pass away.

Paul agreed that the true knowledge of God’s mystery is Jesus Christ, and in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The three Greek words used in the Bible for knowledge are “gnosis” [γνῶσις], “suneido” [συνείδω], and “akouo” [ἀκούω]. Luke used *gnosis* to describe knowing through observation of facts that lead to conclusions – often associated with scientific knowledge. *Suneido* is all about becoming aware of something brought to your attention by others – as in “now you know”. While *akouo* simply means to hear and comprehend - the root word of “acoustic”. These three words are in the Bible over 450 times, so there is obviously a great deal that God wants us to *know*. Beyond *knowing* God’s Word, Jesus’ brother James [1:23] exhorts Christians to be *doers* of the Word and not merely hearers only who delude themselves, because *knowing* about God’s Word is not the same as practicing it in daily life. Jesus confirms this [Luke 11:28] noting that we are blessed if we hear the Word of God AND obey it – put it into practice each day.

Proverbs 2:6 clearly states that the Lord gives wisdom and from His mouth comes *true knowledge* and understanding.

The Bible says that *knowledge* will one day [in the future] be done away with [1st Corinthians 13:8], and that by comparison, love is much better than *knowledge* alone [1st Corinthians 13:2]. When we are with the Lord for eternity, there will no longer be a need to interpret the Bible because we will *know in full*. So even though now we only *know in part* [2nd Corinthians 2:14] and see in a glass dimly [1st Corinthians 13:12], the Bible does provide all we need at this time. The Word is complete, not lacking in any way, and presents God's full counsel on all we need to *know*. We all require daily food for our physical body, but Jesus reminds us [Matthew 4:4] that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by the Word that comes from the mouth of God, because God's Word is right and true [Psalm 33:4]. God's Word encourages believers to abound in every way in this life [2nd Corinthians 8].

A Reliable Source

Rather than just another book written by one person with perspectives on the nature of mankind and the meaning of life, the Bible is clearly unique from other "religious" writings around the world because it exhibits such cohesion from start to finish, as forty separate authors penned sixty-six different books that all fit into a well-integrated and consistent message. There are five baseline evidences that the Bible is in fact a reliable sourcebook for Christians. Taken together, these five areas provide strong confirmations that the content of the Bible is not made-up myths or fanciful legends about some bygone times. These evidences cannot be merely coincidence, because of the number of people who would have had to coordinate their

writing, eye witness accounts, and references of genealogical data across some 1,500 years defies statistical randomness.

First, there are literally thousands of copies of the various manuscripts dating back as old as around 250 BC [the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran], making the Bible arguably THE most critically reviewed and vetted book in the history of the world, with some 2.5 million manuscript pages comprising nearly 6,000 partial Greek New Testaments – over 65,000 total manuscripts in both page and scroll formats. And always remember, there was a complete Greek language Old Testament, dating back nearly 300 years before Jesus' ministry. The Septuagint is also noted as LXX because of the 70 scholars [Latin septuaginta literally means 70] assembled in Alexandria [285-247 BC] to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into the common tongue of Alexander's realm. Codex Sinaiticus is a complete hand written parchment New Testament dating to the 4th century [the 300s] AD. There is also the Oxyrhynchus Codex of the gospel of John [3rd century AD]. Papyrus-46 [oldest surviving New Testament] is from between 175 and 225 AD, and the Masorites meticulous preservation of the Hebrew Scriptures during the 10th and 11th centuries AD is seen today in the Aleppo and Leningrad bound [codex] book-forms.

Second, the Bible speaks about REAL people and REAL events that happened in REAL historical times. It is not stories about mythical Middle Earth, Shangri-La, or Atlantis. Whether Egyptians, Assyrians, Hittites, or Canaanites – whether kingdoms and empires of Persia, Babylon, Greece, or Rome -

whether cities and regions of Ur, Edom, Nineveh, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Judea, Samaria, Tarsus in Asia Minor, Arabia, Antioch, or Patmos – whether rivers such as the Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, and Jordan – or the personalities of Nebuchadnezzar, Pontius Pilate, Quirinius, Pharaoh Neco, Sennacherib, Cyrus the Great, Caesar Augustus, Herod the Great, or Artaxerxes – these are universally accepted as historical people and places, confirmed by multiple archaeology proofs. These are in addition to the accounts of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, James, John, Paul, and yes, even Jesus from Nazareth, as the Roman senator and historian Tacitus referred specifically to Jesus as the one crucified by Pontius Pilate and the sect of Christians that were still popular in Rome when he wrote his *Annals* in 116 AD. [See also the writings of Papias, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Josephus, and Tertullian.]

Third, there is tremendous internal consistency between the various books that comprise the Bible. The themes, doctrine, descriptions of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament typology foreshadowing the New Testament events, and the detailed plan of God to provide reconciliation to mankind as a common thread throughout the narrative, ALL are so similar in structure and descriptions. The Bible must have a supernatural origin because it reads as if all forty authors got together one day at a conference center to coordinate their writings into a consistent message from start to finish. This then exhibits a singular source and intention throughout the texts, even though the forty writers lived across some 1,500 years.

Fourth, although the Bible is not specifically a “science” textbook, its contents are consistent with scientific facts we know about the universe and stars, our sun and the other planets, earth and its seasons, as well as numerous other aspects of biological life. There is worldwide evidence of massive layering of soil with fossils of all kinds of sea creatures, confirming the earth was once completely covered with seawater – consistent with the global flood of Noah. [Today 71% of our planet is covered by water, and 96% of that is saltwater.] Psalm 102:25-26 describes a universe that is aging and winding down, consistent with the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Genesis describes the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars with having a beginning – entirely consistent with astrophysics. Psalm 8:3-8 noted “paths in the seas”, while Ecclesiastes 1:6 spoke of earth’s “wind circuits” – both of which led scientists to chart what are now well-confirmed ocean currents and patterns of the jet-stream. In astrophysicist Stephen Hawking’s 1990 book: *A Brief History Of Time*, he noted [referring to the incredible laws of nature] “the remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life”. Astronomer Fred Hoyle, in his article for the November 1981 *Engineering and Science*, plainly stated, “A common sense interpretation of the facts [about the universe] suggests a *superintellect* has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature”. [There are well referenced books, magazines, journals, published articles, conference presentations, and other

reputable sources that describe in detail hundreds of specific cases of Biblical topics that do not contradict modern science.]

Fifth [perhaps most amazing], is that the Bible has dozens of specific prophecies made between the 15th and 4th centuries BC that happened in the future exactly as stated. Isaiah spoke specifically of Cyrus over 100 years before he was alive [44:28] that Babylon's gates would be opened for him [45:1]. Jeremiah wrote more than 100 years in advance that Babylon would conquer and rule over Judah for exactly 70 years [25:11-12]. Ezekiel stated that the city of Tyre's timber and stones would be thrown into the Mediterranean Sea [26:12] – over 250 years before that actually occurred. And Daniel wrote that the Messiah would come into Jerusalem exactly 483 years [173,880 days] after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem – a directive given to Nehemiah [1:14; 2:5-6] on March 14, 445 BC from Artaxerxes Longimanus, and Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey [Zechariah 9:9] on that exact day [April 6, 32 AD] – which just happened to be the 10th day of the Jewish month Nisan, the beginning of Passover week.

Isaiah 53 notes that the Messiah would have his back whipped, be pierced with a spear, and buried in a rich man's tomb [all of these happened to Jesus]. Jesus was born in Bethlehem [400 years prior, Micah 5:2 the birthplace of Messiah], he survived Herod's murdering all the Jewish children age 2 and under [Genesis 30], so that Jesus was then also "called out of Egypt" [Hosea 11:1] after Herod's death. The literal fulfillment of over 200 prophecies about Jesus as Messiah makes a very strong case for the truthfulness and reliability of the Bible.

Sound Doctrine

Biblical doctrine refers to those key sets of concepts and beliefs that define the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. However, because men are fallible and not always reliable in how they interpret things, there is then both false doctrine and sound doctrine that come from all kinds of teachers, churches, and seminaries. Believers must be able to navigate their way to sources that have correctly commented on what the Bible says about a wide range of topics concerning God and His creation.

Paul strongly encouraged pastor Timothy and his fellow missionary Titus to always “teach sound doctrine” [1st Timothy 4:6, Titus 1:9 and 2:1]. Teaching and holding onto sound doctrine is one of the most popular topics covered for all the churches in the New Testament. Paul warned the Ephesian church to “not be tossed here and there by every wind of [false] doctrine” - noting such comes from the “trickery of man, through craftiness, and deceitful scheming” [Ephesians 4:14].

In 2nd Timothy 3:16 God’s Word is described as sufficient for [sound] doctrine, reproof and correction [of false doctrine], and timeless instruction in righteousness. It provides the basis for a vibrant Christian life and solidifies how we know and understand God’s Word with consistency. It establishes sure footing for active church life and ministry in the world, maintaining a solid reliability for how pastors, elders, and lay leaders must teach the Bible. We are charged with maintaining sound doctrine within our own church to ensure consistency in

every form of ministry, with no mixed messages among people regarding core Biblical truths that have stood the tests of time.

Pastor Chuck Smith had the same commitment as Paul - that the Gospel had to be taught with great care to ensure the consistency of sound doctrine throughout Calvary Chapel. "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" [2nd Timothy 2:2]. So too, Paul encouraged church leaders to "teach that which was taught to you". The Bible uses the Greek term *didasko* [inherently means "teach the SAME thing"]. It's understood that the heart of teaching someone is always about passing along the exact *same knowledge* received from the one who also taught you. Greek scholars note it's inferred that this is *homo-didasko* [homo means "same"]. That's why false doctrine uses the Greek words *hetero-didasko* - meaning to teach something "different" than what was taught to you.

In fact, Galatians 1:8-9 remains a timeless reminder that because of the overwhelming consistency of so many different scripture passages throughout the Bible, anything that departs from that critical mass of reliable truths should be fairly easy to recognize. Paul noted to the church in Galatia that if he or any of his fellow Apostles were to teach something different, or even if an angel came down from heaven itself teaching another gospel, they are accursed – because there is only ONE true gospel. Paul further explains [1st Timothy 4:6] this by telling believers that in pointing out these things to the brethren, "you are a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and sound doctrine you have been following".

Paul said the same thing to Titus, “hold fast the faithful Word which is in accordance with the teaching, being able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). When the church hears God’s Word in that consistent manner, it is sound doctrine. It’s reliable and people can count on it not deviating from core truths and foundational principles. Calvary Chapel has always been a place where *homo-didasko* took place, as Pastor Chuck disciplined others, teaching them timeless Biblical truths, and they went on to disciple and teach others, who did the same, and so on as that verse-by-verse expository teaching through the entire Bible [Genesis to Revelation, and then start again] became a hallmark of Calvary Chapel’s ministry. This then allows for different teachers, each teaching through various books of the Bible, to have their own unique teaching style, slides, handouts, workbooks, or study notes. And yet there is always an amazing consistency that was readily cross-referenced and confirmed, because the sound doctrine validated time and again the clear message of God’s Word [the Logos] - from Genesis to Revelation.

False doctrine is random, unpredictable, unstable - even as Jesus recognized the unseen evil forces that were behind the wind and huge waves on the Sea of Galilee when He “rebuked” that storm [Mark 4:39]. False doctrine [hetero-didasko, different teaching] is the “every wind of doctrine” that blows in and blows out again, the unstable sand under one’s feet, the waves that toss all about. But the Holy Spirit *teaches* those in whom He dwells [1st John 2:27]. The early church devoted themselves to the

Apostles' *teaching* [Acts 2:42]. Christians should be ready in season and out to reprove, rebuke, and exhort based upon *teaching* [2nd Timothy 4:2] that is sound in its content [Titus 1:9].

Pastor Chuck loved to remark that “healthy sheep will reproduce” - based on Jesus’ exhortation to Peter in John 21 to “feed my sheep” [also translated as “tend my lambs”]. Sound doctrine is a common denominator that unifies the church, so that everyone from the senior pastor and assistant pastors, to the youth pastors, elders, and deacons, as well as the Sunday school teachers, home Bible study leaders, men’s ministry, women’s ministry, and any others involved in service ministry and leadership will deliver a consistent message from God’s Word.

Pastor Chuck’s 1989 *Philosophy Of Ministry* explains that in Ephesians Chapter 4 he found that “God placed gifted men, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ; and I saw that the purpose of the church was the perfecting of the saints, making the believers strong, bringing them into maturity, feeding them, loving them, strengthening them so that they would be engaged in the work of the ministry. In changing my philosophy, I began to teach the Word of God in a consistent way designed to produce growth within the believers.” This is captured in Isaiah 55:11 as God’s Word goes out from His mouth and will not return empty, but will always accomplish what the Lord desired, achieving the purpose for which God sent it. This is also captured in Paul’s farewell to Timothy and Christians in Ephesus [Acts 20:32], as he commended them to God and to His Word.

Encouragement

Thank you Lord that we have your very Word to read, study, memorize, and pray over. Psalm 119:11 reminds us to have Your Word in our hearts so we will not sin against You. What a wonderful resource to have available each and every day as we learn more about the Lord. Many individuals today talk about how they want to have the Lord speak – they want to hear God’s voice – telling them directly what to do. However, God does speak to us and directs us when we read His Word, and we grow closer to Him. The next chapter examines how believers also have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in them at all times.



Does this chapter stir up in you some renewed interest in making more time to read God’s Word?

God's Word

What are three things from this chapter that have captured your attention to take a closer look into God's Word?

Consider how amazing it is that the very Word of God is available to you everyday - to read, study, meditate on - How powerful is that?

CHAPTER TWO

The Holy Spirit

“In one Spirit we’re all baptized into one body.”
1st Corinthians 12:13

The second amazing aspect of our Christian life is that once we come to faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we then have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in us on a full-time basis. Not a force, an aura, or energy field. It’s not some kind of higher enlightenment we ascend to. We are not awakening the God consciousness within us, or connecting to the Gaia life-stream of mother earth. The Holy Spirit is a person. He is God. He speaks, He teaches, and instructs. He shows emotion – He loves, can be grieved, and even be outraged. He also creates, guides, and empowers. The Spirit distributes *His gifts as He wills* [see Chapter 4]. Jesus clearly taught [John 16:13-14] that it is God’s Holy Spirit who guides you into truth, not speaking on His own initiative, but rather about all He hears, speaking and disclosing

about the ministry of the Son of Man, and in so doing will glorify Jesus, for He takes from Jesus and reveals it to you.

The Spirit searches our hearts and He alone knows the mind of God and intercedes for us, pleading on our behalf according to, and in harmony with God's will [Romans 8:27]. He alone knows the mind of God [1st Corinthians 2:11]. The specific masculine pronouns "He", "Him", and "His" are always used in all the Bible manuscripts. And as a person, He is complete in how He functions and interacts with mankind. He is indivisible, so it is clearly impossible to only have a portion of Him. He cannot be apportioned out [distributed] in smaller amounts less than His entirety. Believers in Jesus never have to wonder, "Do I have all of the Holy Spirit?". And there is no need to pray, "Lord give me more of your Spirit". When He comes into your life, you have all of Him [100%] always – there is no need to ask for more.

Living Water

Let me strongly recommend that all readers get a copy of Pastor Chuck Smith's 1996 book *Living Water*, in which he shows from God's Word the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in much more detail, starting with the Old Testament, and then in each of the gospels, as well as throughout the Acts of the early church, and the rest of the New Testament letters. God's Spirit is identified as "living water" that wells up from within a person as proof of the Lord living within a true believer in Jesus Christ.

Jesus had a very provocative conversation [John 4: 9-15] with a Samaritan woman in the city of Sychar, who came to draw water from the historical Jacob's well – near the parcel of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph [this original

transaction is in Genesis 48]. Jesus asked her for some water, but she wondered why a Jew would even speak to a Samaritan woman. Jesus then said that if she only knew who it was who asked for the drink, He would give her *living water*. Jesus is going to explain the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but she is only thinking about the literal water down in that well, so she asks, “From where do you get this *living water*?” Jesus explains that everyone who drinks of well water will be thirsty again in a matter of time, but whoever drinks of the water He gives will never thirst again. He’s drawing a huge distinction between H₂O that our physical bodies need, and only satisfies temporarily – compared to the Holy Spirit who will meet a deep spiritual need in men and women that satisfies forever.

The Holy Spirit is again likened to water that refreshes our spiritual life [John 7:37-39] when Jesus asks of the crowd, “Is anyone thirsty? He encourages them “come to me and drink, for whoever believes in me, from his innermost being will flow rivers of *living water*” [probably referring to Jeremiah 17]. John is quick to confirm [verse 39] “by this He spoke of the Holy Spirit, who all those who would believe in Him were soon to receive – for the Spirit of God had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified” [in His resurrection body].

This very same *living water* is also spoken of by Jesus in Revelation 21, as He will give *living water* without any cost to the one who thirsts. The prophet Zechariah [14:8-9] looked ahead prophetically to a still future day when *living water* will flow from Jerusalem – speaking both literally and conceptually about

The Holy Spirit

the Holy Spirit going forth from Messiah's ruling on David's throne. So too Isaiah prophesied [44:3] that God would in fact pour out His Spirit as water on the offspring descendants of Jacob. And Paul encouraged the church [1st Corinthians 12:13] that regardless of one's ethnic origin, all believers will all drink of the One Spirit. How amazing is it that the very Spirit of the living God can then become in every Christian true *living water* that fills, refreshes, and satisfies each day.

Always With Us

It is truly such an intriguing aspect of being a Christian that God's Holy Spirit now resides in our heart [our mind, our life] on a full-time basis. He's always with us, 24/7. When we rise each morning, as we go through our day, and when we get into bed in the evening, the Spirit of God – the One who was present at creation, who hovered over the deep [Genesis 1:2] as it was being formed from the empty void without all the final details, into the incredible final product manifesting God's design – He is present in us at all times. We don't have to wait on Him to show up. No need to call out and try to summon Him to come to us. He doesn't mysteriously arrive and then suddenly depart. We don't have to plead for His presence to appear. He is with us wherever we go, whatever we do, and with whomever we meet. This fulfills Jesus' promise for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem to be clothed with *power* from on high [Luke 24:49], and that it was good for Jesus to return to the Father so He could send them the Holy Spirit, [John 16:7], and fulfill His words to them that "Lo, *I Am with you always*" [Matthew 28:20] – the emphasis on always with us through the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

His Many Names

Christians are baptized using the distinct names of the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and *the Holy Spirit* [Matthew 28:19]. Ephesians 4:4-6 confirms there is just one God and Father over all, and *one Holy Spirit* over the body of the church. Romans 8:9 reminds us He is *the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God*. He is also *the Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead* [Romans 8:11], and the One who gives us spiritual life [John 6:63]. Jesus explained [John 14:17] that He is *the Spirit of truth*, and *we know Him because He abides in believers*. He is *the Spirit who bears witness* because the Spirit is truth [1st John 5:6]. In John 13:16, Jesus promised that when the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative, but of whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Dwelling In Believers

1st Corinthians 2:11 says that no one can truly know the thoughts of a person except that person's spirit, and so too the only One who can know the thoughts of God is *the Holy Spirit*. That is why the Holy Spirit takes up residence in those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. 1st Corinthians 3:16 explains this clearly, "Do you not know that *you are now a temple of God* and that *the Spirit of God dwells in you*?" And 1st Corinthians 6:19-20 continues, "Do you not know that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you*, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Galatians 5:22 reminds us that *by God's Spirit dwelling in us*, we will then exhibit *the fruit of His Spirit* in our

The Holy Spirit

lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

Paul explains [2nd Corinthians 6:16] that we are now the temple of the living God – even as God said this in the Old Testament, that “*I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people*” [referring to Ezekiel 37:27 and Jeremiah 32:38]. Luke recounts [Acts 6:5] how the leadership chose Stephen, a man full of faith and *of the Holy Spirit*. Romans 8:9 also encourages us that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if *indeed the Spirit of God dwells in us*; but if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. Two verses later in Romans 8:11 Paul reminds Christians, that “if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead *dwells in you*, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through *His Spirit who dwells in you*”.

Prior To The Cross

Before Jesus’ finished work of redemption on the cross at Calvary, God’s Holy Spirit did not dwell full-time in the hearts of men and women. Instead, people waited patiently for God to show an outward sign that His presence was among them. The people would wait for God to descend on Mount Sinai with fire and smoke [Exodus 19:18]. There was the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night [Exodus 13:21-22]. God’s glory cloud would descend on the tabernacle in the wilderness [Exodus 40:34] and fill the house of God to show His presence [2nd Chronicles 5:14]. These foreshadowed what Isaiah [6:4], Ezekiel [10:4], and the Apostle John [15:8] each witnessed in God’s heavenly temple.

But today, we no longer have to assemble and wait for God to show Himself. There is no need to yearn and plead for the Lord to come and be among us. The church does not have to be desperate for a tangible sign in the sanctuary that will assure us God is with his people. We should not beg the Lord to have His fire fall or His cloud rain down. During Peter's sermon on Pentecost [Acts 7:48] he stated very clearly that the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands. Paul confirms this [Acts 17:24] in his sermon to the Athenians saying, "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. It's troubling that many churches today spend a lot of time asking, yearning, inviting, and waiting for God's "presence" to come, to show His glory, to give the church a sign He's there. But the Bible clearly teaches that He is *always* present in every believer, so we no longer need smoke or fire or a cloud [or gold dust] to assure us He is present with His church. We simply need to believe His Word, that the Holy Spirit now dwells in the hearts of Christians who have become God's temple.

The Old Testament also has dozens of accounts where the Spirit of the living God came upon a person for a time to accomplish a specific task or purpose, but He did not take up full-time residence in the person's heart and mind. That's why we can read in Psalm 51:11 of David's concern that God not cast him away from His presence, and not take away the Holy Spirit. King Saul was filled with God's Spirit and was able to prophesy [1st Samuel 19:23-24] such that people said of him "Is Saul to be

counted among the prophets?” But after the prophet Samuel was dead, God’s Spirit departed from Saul, leaving him without any counsel or comfort – to the point he visited a spirit medium to try and reconnect directly with God through the prophet Samuel who had already died and gone to Sheol [1st Samuel 28:7].

Pharaoh could see that God’s Spirit was upon Joseph [Genesis 31:48]. Joshua was filled with the Spirit to assume from Moses the key leadership role [Deuteronomy 34:9]. In Daniel 4:8 Nebuchadnezzar perceived the Spirit of the Holy God was upon Daniel, similar to how the Queen of Babylon saw the same thing [Daniel 5:11], as did the satraps [Daniel 6:3] who later plotted to kill Daniel because he had an extraordinary Spirit.

In 2nd Chronicles 15:1 the Holy Spirit came upon Azariah the son of Obed to tell Asa that the Lord would be with him when he would seek after Him – and Israel then found itself for many days without the true God, a teaching priest, or the law. In Exodus 31:3 and 35:31 we see how God specifically came upon Bezal-El, the son of Uri, to give him wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and the skills of expert craftsmanship to design gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood for building of the tabernacle. Balaam lifted up his eyes to see the camp of Israel and the Spirit of God came upon him [Numbers 24:2]. And Nehemiah 9:20 tells how God gave His Spirit in the wilderness to instruct His people, along with manna to feed them, and water for their thirst.

After The Cross

After Jesus completed His work on the cross He declared *tetelestai* [ΤΕΤΕΛΕΣΤΑΙ in Greek] “it is finished”. Providing the perfect sacrifice for sin, Paul declared [Colossian 2:15] that Jesus

had disarmed spiritual rulers and authorities, making a public display of them having *triumphed over them* through His death. Hebrews 10:1-8 makes it clear that there would no longer be any need for sacrifices in the Temple, that were only symbolic and never actually took away sin. The next significant change was God would now dwell in the hearts of those who believe and put their trust in what Jesus finished at Calvary. Paul clearly stated [1st Corinthians 3:16] “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

We saw earlier in this chapter how Jesus promised that after He returned to the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit. This would change forever the way men and women relate to and commune with God. No longer through a priest, or ritual sacrifice in a temple – but God’s Holy Spirit would now take up residence in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus. This fulfills Ezekiel’s prophecy [37:27] that God will make His dwelling place with us, and He will be our God and we shall be His people – confirmed again in Revelation 21:3, the tabernacle of God is now among men, and He shall dwell among them, they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.

On the evening after Jesus was raised from the dead, He appeared to his disciples [John 20:19-22] and breathed on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” as He prepared them for what was still to come at the Feast of Pentecost in about seven weeks, when the Holy Spirit would be given to ALL believers. It’s very provocative that the word used for the Spirit is *pneuma* [πνεῦμα] – literally “breath”. This is consistent with how God breathed

The Holy Spirit

[*pneuma*] into Adam [Genesis 2:7] and he became a living being, how Jesus breathed [*pneuma*] on the disciples and they received His Spirit, and the Bible is also God-breathed [2nd Timothy 3:16].

Our Helper

Believers now have the Holy Spirit just as Jesus promised, and He has become our Advocate [John 14:26], referred to as the *parakletos* [παράκλητος in the Greek] - most literally translated “Helper” – our Counselor [Advisor] who can fill our hearts and minds with His attributes, and whose voice we can hear deep inside us all throughout the day as He witnesses to our hearts and minds of truth, comfort, peace, knowing right from wrong, wisdom, discernment, understanding, and love. Jesus clearly told his disciples [John 14:26] that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Jesus also told His disciples [John 16:7] that He *must* ascend to the Father, in fact it was to their advantage that He take His place in the heavenly realm so that the Helper – the Holy Spirit – would then be sent to them just as He had promised. Paul confirms that the Holy Spirit in us testifies Himself that we are now the children of God [Romans 8:16].

God's Down Payment

We read in 2nd Corinthians 1:21-22 that the Holy Spirit is in fact God's ‘pledge’ made on those who believe. The old English term in the King James version is *the earnest* – meaning the *down payment* made on a purchase that would be redeemed in full at a later date. So too, God has already given us the Holy Spirit as His down payment on our redemption through the

finished work of Jesus on the cross. And if a down payment has been made, He will certainly come later to redeem what is His. Ephesians 1:13-14 confirms this transaction by stating that after hearing the gospel and believing, God sealed us with *the Holy Spirit of promise*, given as the *down payment* [pledge] on our inheritance, as we look to a future date to be redeemed as God's very own possession. Peter explains that this same inheritance of ours is imperishable and undefiled [it is eternal], it will not fade away, and is reserved in heaven for believers [1st Peter 1:4-7]. That is why 2nd Timothy 1:14 tells us to “guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the *treasure* [eternal inheritance] which has been entrusted to you”.

Ephesians 4:11-14 further explains that Christians have obtained this inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were *sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is given as a ‘pledge’ of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. And Paul reminds believers [Ephesians 1:13] that in Jesus, all of us after listening and responding to the message of truth, the gospel of salvation, and then having believed, are then *sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise* – literally the Lord's formal recognition of us as truly belonging to Him, and being one with Him. This is exactly what Jesus meant when He said [John 10:30]

that He and the Father are One, so now we as believers in Him may also be one with Him [John 17:21] and the world will believe that Jesus was sent by the Father – because we are one with Him.

Personal Actions

The Holy Spirit speaks directly to people – telling Philip to run up and join the Ethiopian in his chariot [Acts 8:29], Peter to go to the house of Cornelius [Acts 10:19-20], Samuel exactly what he was to say to certain men [2nd Samuel 23:2], leaders in Antioch to set apart Bar-Nabas and Saul for special ministry He had decided for them, the seven churches of Asia Minor both admonition and encouragement [Revelation 2], Agabus how the Jews would bind Paul and then deliver him over to the Gentiles [Acts 21:11], and of the hardness of Israel's hearts toward God [Hebrews 3:7-11]. In Acts 6:5, Luke recounts how “the statement found approval with the whole congregation and they chose Stephen, *a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit*”. In Romans 15:30 Paul urges all believers to join him in prayer by the Lord Jesus Christ and *the love of the Spirit*. Galatians 5:22 reminds us that by God's Spirit dwelling in us, we will then exhibit the fruit of His Spirit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. And the Holy Spirit is rational, with wisdom and the ability of communication, as Paul noted [Ephesians 1:17] that God may give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

It is very interesting to see how the Holy Spirit *directed* Ananias [living in the city of Damascus], to go over to the house on Straight Street, and deliver specific directions from the Holy Spirit to Saul of Tarsus [Acts 9:10-17]. This is very similar to how

Paul and Silas were originally *sent out by the Holy Spirit* [Acts 13:4] to Seleucia and on to Cyprus – and were also constantly *directed* [led] in their ministry by the Holy Spirit [Acts 16:7-10]. When a decision was reached about sending Judas and Silas with the words of the Apostles regarding some false teachings [Acts 15:28] it was noted that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit that they not lay upon the Gentiles a burden greater than they could bear. And the same direction [leading] by the Holy Spirit was evident in the life of Jesus [Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:2]. These are entirely consistent with Paul's encouragement to every believer who is counted as a true son of God [Romans 8:14], that we are *all being led by the Holy Spirit*. Because when we are indeed led by the Holy Spirit, we are no longer under the law [Galatians 5:18].

But the Holy Spirit can also be grieved [Ephesians 4:30 and Isaiah 63:10] by the disobedience of men and women – but He will never leave us because of that. In fact, Acts 5:3 describes how Ananias and his wife Sapphira actually lied to the Holy Spirit – as these two put the Holy Spirit to the test with their deception [Acts 5:9]. The people of Israel rebelled against God and this vexed [grieved] His Holy Spirit [Isaiah 63:10]. As a person, the Holy Spirit can also be resisted by “stiff-necked” men and women [Acts 7:51]. During Stephen's defense in response to the accusations of the Sanhedrin [Acts 7:51] he stated they were stiff-necked and figuratively uncircumcised in their hearts and ears, stating they always resist the Holy Spirit, even as Israel did throughout its history.

The Holy Spirit can also be insulted [outraged] by the actions of men [Hebrews 10:29]. This is consistent with how the Lord warns those who regard as unclean the blood of His covenant, as this is an insult to the Holy Spirit [Hebrews 10:29]. It's important to remember that God's Spirit is with us at all times, so we can either have wonderful daily communion with Him, hearing His voice all through the day – or we can have little if any awareness of Him, and He can be saddened by our actions, our words, where we go, and how we spend our time. How wonderful it is to know that the very Spirit of the living God is now with us at all times, providing guidance, leading, direction to our daily lives – and that He is not just a force, or a feeling, or an energy field, or some sort of good vibrations with the cosmos. But He is in fact a person – the third person of the Triune God, equal with the Father and the Son – and He interacts with us in a very personable manner, and always with intention and purpose consistent with knowing, understanding, reasoning, and having our best interests in mind as He leads, guides, and directs our lives. There is a classic summary statement about the person of the Holy Spirit: “God's Spirit is not a person because He does things typically attributed to a personality – rather, He does the actions consistent with a personality because He is a person”.

Wonderful Counselor

For many people who have been Christians for quite a long time, it is very hard to imagine what life would have been like over the last several years [even decades] without the Holy Spirit dwelling inside. He has been a trusted daily guide in a very personal way through countless situations and decisions

that were made. The Bible's consistent message about the Person of the Holy Spirit is that, to believers, He remains a trusted advisor and counselor - One on whom we can depend for clear guidance and direction. So while Romans 11:34 reminds us that no one has ever been God's counselor [He has no need for such], men and women do in fact need tangible assistance with daily living. How then does the Holy Spirit provide counsel?

It is very important to be clear that Christians should not be focused on trying to somehow literally hear audible voices, or see literal appearances of Jesus, God the Father, heaven, or even angels, in order to "hear" from the Lord or to "see" His direction. Over the last thirty years, many people have asked me straight up, "Does God speak to you?" And I love to reply with a very enthusiastic "Yes, all the time". But while a lot of these people are hoping to hear about spectacular instances of me hearing an audible voice during prayer, or waking me up in the middle of the night, my simple clarification is that every time I read God's Word, the Lord speaks to me. The Holy Spirit speaks through the sermons and other Bible teachings I listen to. And when I pray, the Holy Spirit brings my will in line with the Father's will, as he teaches and counsels my heart with understanding. Jesus said [John 14:26] that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will teach you all things. Jesus also said [Matthew 10:19-20 Mark 13:11 Luke 12:12] that when it comes time for me to give a defense for the hope that is in me, I don't have to worry about what I'll say, because the Holy Spirit will give me right then in that very hour exactly what I'm to say, for it isn't me that's speaking, but it's the

The Holy Spirit

Spirit of the Father speaking in me. So also [1st John 2:27] this anointing from God's Holy Spirit who abides in us, teaches us about all things – it is true and not a lie.

Encouragement

So then, we have God's very Word – complete in every way for all aspects of our life – and we also have His Holy Spirit dwelling in us at all times, such that we are truly never alone. He abides in us and will never leave us or forsake us – confirming Jesus' promise to all believers that He will be with us even to the end of the age. We can hear from God through His Word, and the Holy Spirit in us teaches and gives understanding of the Word. That is quite a *powerful* basis for the Christian life. But there's even more that's been give to us. The next chapter looks at the fruit *of* God's Holy Spirit in our lives.



In what ways did this chapter encourage you about giving more attention to the Holy Spirit in your daily life?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER THREE

Fruit of The Spirit

“And the greatest of these is love.”
1st Corinthians 13:13

The third amazing facet of the Christian life is that because the Person of the Holy Spirit is dwelling richly in us, we can have the fruit of God’s Spirit exhibited in our lives each day. We are able to reflect the inherent character of God in how we function in this earthly life. God is without sin and pure in all His thoughts, intentions, and actions. In everything He does He demonstrates unconditional love, with patience and kindness. He is compassionate and longsuffering [2nd Peter 3:9] not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. The Spirit of God was readily evident in the life of Jesus Christ, as He exhibited wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, as well as knowledge and the fear of the Lord [Isaiah 11:2]. This provides Christians with a *powerful* testimony about the new life that is in us because of our new relationship with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior – that others would literally see Jesus in us.

God's Character

God is inherently “good” in everything He says and does. However, apart from the Holy Spirit in our lives, none of us can be “good” on our own. In fact, Romans 3:10-12 explains there is no one righteous [good], not even one person, and that no one inherently seeks after God, but everyone turns aside and no one does good. God is by His very nature faithful [1st Corinthians 1:9], He is completely reliable without ever disappointing or not coming through on His promises. God is patient [2nd Peter 3:9] with mankind. He shows lovingkindness [Psalm 63:3], is always gentle in dealing with us [Matthew 11:29], and slow to anger [Psalm 145:8]. So then, because God’s Spirit dwells within all believers, the very same inherent character of God can now be shown in each of us. John 15:1-17 is the basis for understanding how we can only exhibit His fruit as we [branches] are abiding in Him [the vine]. It is then His life that is flowing through us, and His character is exhibited in our lives by His Spirit. This will be touched on a few more times in detail in this chapter. .

One great starting point to understand the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian is 1st Corinthians 4:4-8, as it explains that showing the love of the Lord is clearly the baseline character of God demonstrated in a person’s life. Similar to Ephesians 5, we see that love is patient, love is kind, and love does not show envy. Love does not boast, is not proud, and does not dishonor others. Godly love is never self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and keeps no records of wrongs. True love will never delight in evil but will always rejoice in truth. Love always

Fruit of the Spirit

protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes and endures all things. The perfect love of God never fails.

But that is certainly not who we are apart from having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Men and women are, in and of themselves, sinful by nature – so we do not demonstrate any of those attributes of God in our lives. We are born into our sin nature, passed down to us from Adam’s initial disobedience to God’s Word, and we are by that inherent nature, children of wrath [Ephesians 3:2]. Paul clearly lays out the description of our sin nature [Galatians 5:19-21] as “the deeds of the flesh” – the various ways our sin nature manifests itself in our daily lives. So we cannot be “good”, we have no “righteousness” of our own [Philippians 3:9] that would earn any merit with God. In fact, we are from our birth, sinners and separated from God by our sin. But thanks be to God that with His Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we can now show forth tangible fruit that is clearly evident in our daily lives. Ephesians 5: 22-23 explains the way His fruit shows up, as believers in Jesus can now have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Evidence of Love

The only way we can truly show love to one another is by the Holy Spirit’s **power** in our lives. The New Testament notes three types of love: 1) brotherly love [*phileo* in Greek, the root word of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love]; 2) common affection between those related in a family [*storge*, parents and children, uncles and nephews, cousins, grandchildren for their grandparents]; and 3) Godly unconditional love [*agape*]. The Greeks also used a separate word for romantic love [*eros*, the

root wood for erotic], but that does not show up in the Biblical narratives. We might on our own have a “*phileo*” bond with a colleague or friend, or a “*storge*” closeness with family members. But only by God’s Holy Spirit can we have true selfless “*agape*” love that is entirely unconditional [expects nothing in return].

Evidence of Joy

The Biblical word for joy is “*xara*” – notable because this is what God’s Spirit gives a believer deep inside, no matter what is going on in our current situation of life. Pastor Chuck always taught that being happy is all about our circumstances [things go well and we are happy, things don’t go well and we are no longer happy] – while the fruit of joy is irrespective of circumstances. James 1:2-3 says that we are to consider it joy when we encounter various trials in this earthly life. John 15:11 notes that Jesus wants us to have His joy in us, so that our joy would be made full. The disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit [Acts 13:52]. John wrote [3rd John 1:4] that he had no greater joy than to hear of believers walking in truth. So no matter what you encounter each day [financial, health, work, family, neighbors], may you always know deep inside, by His Holy Spirit in you, the same as Nehemiah [1:8], “the joy of the Lord is my strength”.

Evidence of Peace

Romans 5:1 explains that since we have been justified through faith, we now have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is that ***powerful*** *peace* that surpasses all human comprehension [Philippians 4:7]. It means that no matter what

Fruit of the Spirit

our circumstances are in this life, we can have a lasting *peace* that is irrespective of any trials or difficulties happening in our life. Without the Spirit dwelling in us, we are anxious about each day and situation we encounter. Jesus said it best [John 14:27], that He personally gives us this *peace* – a *peace* the world cannot give, so our hearts need not be troubled. When the world looks at you and how you handle any kind of adversity or difficult situations in this life, they will either see someone who [like them], gets very anxious and nervous, full of worry and concern, and begins to question “why me God?” – or they will see a person who trusts fully in the Lord and, in spite of whatever is going on, remains at *peace* and confident that everything happening has already been known by the Lord before it even occurred. This kind of *peace* is truly fruit of God’s Spirit dwelling in the believer, because it is impossible to not be anxious apart from knowing this supernatural *peace* from His presence in us.

Romans 12:18 reminds us that to the degree as it depends on you, live at *peace* with all men. And Romans 15:13 states that the God of hope fills us with all joy and *peace* as we trust in Him, so that we may overflow with hope by the *power* of the Holy Spirit. That is the reality of the supernatural *power* available to Christians – that we can live out each day demonstrating God’s Spirit alive in us. This is then the *power* we have in us each day as we interact with others, not in our sinful ways, but in the very character of God exhibited in us. That is truly a *powerful* way to start each day – with fruit of His Spirit alive in us.

Evidence of Patience

In and of ourselves, we tend to be impatient with all kinds of deadlines and having to wait on things in our daily lives.

We tend to get anxious over small matters whenever we do not know how some situations will ultimately turn out. James [1:3-4] followed up having joy in spite of trials, with the encouragement that such testing of our faith produces “patience” [also translated “endurance”] – and we are to let “patience” have its perfect result in us, that we would be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Paul concurs [Romans 5:3-4] we should glory in [embrace] any tribulations, knowing that these produce patience, and patience produces true Godly character, and that produces lasting hope.

Evidence of Kindness

True kindness [compassion toward others] can only come from God’s Spirit dwelling in us. Micah 6:8 famously notes that what is good [also fruit of His Spirit] and what the Lord requires of us – namely to be just, to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. To those of us who are believers [Colossians 3:12] – the holy and beloved, we should have a heart of compassion and of kindness, along with humility, gentleness, and patience. That is why we should put aside [1st Peter 2:1] malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander – for we have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Evidence of Goodness

As was stated earlier in this chapter, only God is good. It is foundational to His character. His thoughts and ideas are all good. His intentions are always for good. His actions will always result in what is good. When Jesus was called “good teacher” by the rich young ruler, He quickly reminded him that no one is good except God alone [Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19]. The earth is full

Fruit of the Spirit

of God's goodness [Psalm 33:5]. Paul notes [Romans 2:4] that it is the Lord's goodness that leads us to repentance. Our attempts at being good on our own are like filthy rags [Isaiah 64:6] when compared to the inherent good character of God. Apart from His Holy Spirit, we are unable to be good or to do good. God's laws are good. They reflect how he always does the right thing at all times. Paul stated clearly [Romans 7:18] that the good he wished to do he was not able to [trying to keep God's laws] – and so his inherently sinful nature is not able to be or do good. The good he wanted to do he was unable to do, but he instead practiced the very evil he did not want to do [verse 19]. We are now in His Spirit and no longer in the flesh [Romans 8:9], so we can do good and be seen as good by Him through Jesus Christ.

Evidence of Gentleness

Paul explains [Philippians 4:5-7] that we are to let our *gentleness* in the Holy Spirit be known to everyone, because the Lord is at hand – it is Him we represent in the world. And then by prayer and making our requests known to the Lord, the *peace* of God that surpasses all human comprehension will guard our hearts and out minds in Christ Jesus. God's character is to show *gentleness* in how He deals with us. Jesus stated [Matthew 11:29] that He is *gentle* and humble in heart, and that we are to learn from Him in these, as we take His yoke upon us, which is not heavy or burdensome – but inherently *gentle*. Even as we share our faith with others [1st Peter 3:15], we are to do so with all *gentleness* and respect, never intense, pushy, or with arrogance. God looks for a *gentle* spirit to be evident in women [1st Peter 3:4]. Paul also exhorted Christians to be clothed with humility and

gentleness [Colossians 3:12], even as a *gentle* word turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger [Proverbs 15:1].

Paul encouraged all believers [Ephesians 4:2] to be humble and *gentle*, as well as patient – bearing with one another in love. The spiritual fruit of *gentleness* is evident in how we treat one another – and not just in favorable circumstances, but when times get tough and people are not as easy to deal with, it is then that being *gentle* in our words and actions can only come from the Spirit of God within us. In 2nd Corinthians 10:1, Paul made a strong statement to beseech himself by the humility [meekness] and *gentleness* of Jesus Christ, not wanting to speak from his own perspective or anger with certain people in the church, but to be truly Christ-like in how he would deal with those who need some spiritual correction spoken into their lives.

In 1st Thessalonians 2:7, Paul reminds the people in that Greek city that he never sought after admiration or personal glory from them when he ministered among that church, but he was *gentle* among them, even as a nurse is with her children. He also reminded Timothy of the same principle, that the servant of the Lord never has to strive for recognition among men, but is to be gentle, apt to teach, patient with others [2nd Timothy 2:24]. He also encouraged fellow missionary Titus, that the hallmark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is to be gentle and not speak evil of any man, showing instead humility [meekness] – rather than be prone to argue or even brawl with others [Titus 3:2].

Fruit of the Spirit

Evidence of Faithfulness

It is very difficult to remain consistently faithful to others, even as difficult circumstances affect us and challenge our ability to believe the best, and maintain unwavering support for others. Psalm 36:5 reminds us that the Lord's faithfulness reaches to the skies [meaning, it has no end]. We declare His lovingkindness in the morning [at the start of our situations], and His faithfulness by night [when we get to the end]. Remaining faithful to God, and to others, regardless of the circumstances being presented, can only happen by the Holy Spirit dwelling richly in us. Apart from the Lord in our lives, men and women cannot demonstrate true faithfulness – to maintain belief and have the assurance of things hoped for, and a deep heartfelt conviction of things not yet seen [Hebrews 11:1]. This only comes from God's Spirit in us, even as His Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirits [Romans 8:16] that we can rest in His faithfulness, for we are His children.

Evidence of Self-Control

It is impossible to exercise self-control apart from God's Holy Spirit living in us. Our sin nature in the flesh does not have the ability to self-regulate. Instead, it seeks after its own pleasure and desire for taking care of self first. But believers should be the ones who are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for this reflects the character of God dwelling in them [James 1:19]. The Christian life is likened to an athlete who trains hard for an event [1st Corinthians 9:25] – which requires self-control to stay on course toward the targeted end result. Proverbs reminds us that our tongues have the power of life and death [18:21], and for those who love it, they end up eating its

fruit [this means you will have to live with what has been said once it has been said]. This reminds me of today's social media platforms, where someone without self-control can so quickly [and probably without even thinking too much about it] post a comment that will be hurtful to others – but it is too late to reel it back in once it has been seen and read by everyone. Overseers in the church must be men who exhibit self-control [Titus 1:8]. For God has not given us a Spirit of timidity, but of *power* for self-discipline [2nd Timothy 1:7]. This self-control comes from having greater knowledge of the Lord [2nd Peter 1:5-7], and self-control results in perseverance, which then results in Godliness, which then shows mutual affection [*phileo*], and that will result in you having a true Biblical *agape* love for others.

Slow to Anger

Jesus' brother [James 1:19] exhorted believers to be quick to listen, but slow to speak, and slow to become angry. In and of ourselves, we are not able to do this. The deeds of the flesh [Galatians 5:19-21] note that “outbursts of anger” are part of our inherent sinful nature. And that makes sense, because getting really upset ultimately comes down to only thinking about oneself, rather than others as more important than our needs and wants. The fool is quick to show himself upset, but the wise man ignores an insult [Proverbs 12:16]. Paul reminds believers that God is the one who responds on our behalf [Romans 12:19], because “vengeance is mine, says the Lord” [he is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35]. Anger is the opposite of having a servant's heart of gentleness, humility, and being at peace within. On the

Fruit of the Spirit

other hand, a man or woman filled with the Holy Spirit is able to show God's character. rather than act out in sinful anger.

Paul exhorts believers to have all bitterness and anger be put away, along with malice, and instead be tender-hearted and forgiving toward others, in the same way that God has done so for us [Ephesians 4:26-27] – because, as James states [1:20] “The anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God”. There is a “righteous anger” found throughout the Bible. The Lord was sorry He had created mankind, who had dropped into such wickedness that He used a global flood to wipe out all but eight individuals [Genesis 6:6]. David is rightfully angry with wicked men who mock God [Psalm 139:19-22]. God was angry with Moses for not obeying Him in telling Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt [Exodus 4:14]. He was also angered by the grumblings of the people against Him [Numbers 11] and their turning to false idols [Judges 2:13-14, Deuteronomy 6:14-15, Ezra 8:22, Exodus 32:10]. Jesus was rightfully angry with how the moneychangers had desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem with greed and deception [Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-48]. Jesus also showed rightful anger with the hard hearts of the hypocrisy displayed by the Pharisees and religious leaders [Mark 3:15].

However, our interactions with one another should not be [1st Peter 3:9] paying back evil with evil, cursing with cursing - but instead always respond to others with a blessing, because that is what God promised. This is certainly not something that people are capable of doing on their own. But the very character of God is all about being loving in every situation – and that shows up as kindness, compassion, goodness, patience, peace,

gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, joy, tenderheartedness, and purity in every thought, word, and deed.

Remember, we as Christians are to be humble, gentle, and patient [Ephesians 4:2], showing our love by being tolerant with each another – as well as kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven us through Christ [Ephesians 4:32]. In Romans 12:10 Paul reminds all Christians to love one another warmly, being eager to show respect to one another. Remember that classic Calvary Chapel worship song taken right from 1st Peter 5:6 - “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up”. That is the very mindset of Jesus, as He took upon Himself the form of mankind, and humbled Himself in obedience – even to the place where He submitted Himself to die on our behalf [Philippians 2:8].

Fruit in How We Speak

The fruit of God’s Spirit dwelling in us will also keep our words to one another pure, reflecting His true character in us. It is how Paul admonished Christians [Ephesians 5:3-13] to not have any immorality, impurity, or greed even mentioned among us in the ways we relate to others. He also included that we not have any filthiness in our speech, or coarse jesting [mocking another], which are not good for believers – but instead, give thanks. This gets right to the matter of whether a believer in Jesus, who is filled with the Holy Spirit, can use profanity [cursing] and be into dirty jokes with unbelieving friends, while also being on good behavior with believers. In verses 7-8 Paul admonishes us to “not be partakers with them, because we were

Fruit of the Spirit

formerly in such darkness, but now we are in the light of the Lord”. Verses 9-10 confirm the fruit of the Light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth – as we learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Finally, the key matter is shown in verses 11-13, that we as believers are not to participate in these *UN-fruitful* deeds of darkness. In fact, we are instead supposed to expose them, for it is disgraceful to even speak of the things that are done by others in [supposed] secret. Because all things will become visible when they are in the Light.

God wants us to have consistent *fruit* of His Spirit in our lives each day. We cannot have one way of living, speaking, and acting when we are with a group of people who are not filled with God’s Spirit – and then have a façade of holiness we put on when we’re at church. I have counseled many man over the last 30 years who struggled with using profanity, telling dirty jokes, and being crude in their words when they are with others at their job site, or in the office, or traveling on business. My simple advice was that the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit does not get turned on and off like a light switch. Instead, it should be always “ON” – as we daily give Him first place in our hearts and minds.

Think of the believer in Jesus who would be negatively impacted by hearing someone, who is supposedly a Christian, using profanity, or telling and laughing at crude dirty jokes, or walking out of a strip club or adult bookstore. Fruit of the Spirit is not a form of religion a person puts on to be seen so as to fit in at church. Rather, it should be a consistency of God’s character in all we say and do – not by our own ability, but simply the Spirit living, dwelling, abiding, and ruling in our lives. This always reminds me of a song by the 1970s musician Keith Green

that had the Lord saying, “To obey is better than sacrifice, I want more than Sundays and Wednesday nights”. May all we say and do always exhibit true *fruit* of God’s Holy Spirit.

Power for Each Day

Colossians 1:11 explains that we should be strengthened with all *power* according to His glorious might, so that we may have great endurance and patience. Again, this references fruit of the Holy Spirit being shown in our daily lives, that strengthens Christians with the ability to deal with all that the world brings our way. Jesus stated that in this world we will in fact have troubles [John 16:33] but take heart, because He has overcome the world. If His Spirit is alive in us, we then also have *power* to overcome the difficulties we face in the world.

Jesus’ brother James begins his letter of encouragement to Christians with “Consider it all joy my brethren, when you encounter various trials” [James 1:2]. He continues that line of thinking with “knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let this endurance have its perfect result in you, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”. That is such a strong statement to believers. Faith [faithfulness] is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not something we have on our own apart from God in our lives. That is true *power* for daily living – having a consistent and steady faith that rests entirely on the Lord and His Word. That shows the *power of God* unto salvation [Romans 1:16] in our daily lives – that we have been saved from the sin that so easily entangles us [Hebrews 12:1]. Paul could

Fruit of the Spirit

then encourage the church [2nd Corinthians 5:7] with this very same principle, that we walk each day by faith, and not by sight.

More Evidence of Fruit

An expanded list of fruit of God's Spirit is found in Paul's encouragement [2nd Corinthians 6:6-7] to "continue in the same fruit", being those who exhibit purity, understanding, patience, and kindness in the Holy Spirit with sincere love, truthful speech, and in the *power* of God as we hold on to the weapons of righteousness in our right hand and our left. James provides additional evidence of fruit [James 3:17] when he says that the wisdom from above [from God's Spirit] is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and *good fruit*, unwavering and without hypocrisy. These attributes, plus those previously noted in 2nd Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5, represent outward words and actions of an inward Godly character.

This is precisely how God would do things, how He would reply, how He would act in any situation. Remember that the word "fruit" is singular in this context of the Spirit of God in our lives [not plural kinds of fruits]. This speaks to the fruit being that ONE character of who God is – completely holy in every way, with no variation, no shadow of turning [James 1:17] in who He is. This singular fruit manifests itself in multiple ways or actions, so we end up with many descriptions of how that fruit looks in relating to others. That is *powerful* for Christians to know we also can have that same Godly character evident in our lives because God's Spirit dwells in us.

Fruit in Leadership

Paul clarified that the fruit of the Spirit must be evident in the lives of any of those men who serve as overseers-elders in

the church [Titus 1:8-9], being “hospitable, loving what is good, just, devout, sensible, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful Word”. These should be clearly seen by everyone as the hallmark of the leader’s character, representing the Lord in word and deed. This is entirely consistent with Jesus’ admonition to be the light of the world, that city set on a hill which cannot be hidden, the lamp that is not under a basket, but is out on a stand to give light to the entire house [Matthew 5:14-16]. All would hear of the man’s faith in Jesus and the love he shows to all the saints [Colossians 1:4-5].

In Acts 6:1-6, the church chose seven men to oversee the needs of the widows and the daily serving of food in the church congregation, so that the twelve in leadership could devote themselves to the ministry of teaching God’s Word. This is where Stephen is first named specifically as “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”. The key requirement for all seven was that they be men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Even in the Old Testament times, before the Holy Spirit had been given to believers, Moses needed to select leaders to assist him in overseeing God’s people. They chose seventy elders who were already recognized in leadership roles, and then God “put the Holy Spirit on them” so they would share the leadership burden alongside Moses [Numbers 11:16-17]. And Jesus’ model of leadership [Matthew 20:28] is clearly about being filled with the Holy Spirit so as to serve others, rather than seeking to be served.

Fruit of the Spirit

Verses 9-14 of the first chapter in Colossians state that “since the day we first heard of you we have not stopped praying for you, continually asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all wisdom and understanding given by the Holy Spirit, so you will live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way, *bearing fruit* in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, giving joyful thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His people in the kingdom of light”. Romans 8:14 solidifies these qualifications for all who are being led by the Holy Spirit – those who are truly the sons of God. That’s why Paul can write directly to the elders and deacons in Philippi [1:1-11], that these men be filled with the *fruit of all righteousness* that comes through Jesus Christ. The key is that true believers in Jesus Christ should have a very apparent character that displays *fruit* of God’s Holy Spirit. It should be the first thing people recognize in their speech and actions.

Fruit Confirms

A strong summary of the fruit of God’s Spirit in the lives of Christians is this: Jesus stated [Matthew 7:15-20] that it is easy to know who is a false prophet, because you see it in their *fruit*. Grapes aren’t gathered from bushes, and figs don’t come from thistles. Every good tree bears *good fruit*, and each bad tree bears its bad fruit – which is inconsistent with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Good trees [true believers] cannot bear bad fruit, nor can bad trees [false teachers] bear any good fruit. And every bad tree that bears bad fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. That makes it very clear. You will know true believers by their *fruit*. We are to love one another [1st John 4:7-8] because

love is from God and everyone that is able to show love is born of God and knows Him. Whoever does not show love is not of God because God is [by His nature] love. This is similar to how James 3:11 distinguishes evidence of what is inside a person will be shown in the outward for all to see. Even as a spring cannot bring forth both fresh water and bitter water, so too there is one source inside a person, from which flows either the fruit of the Spirit [the character of God] or the deeds of the flesh.

Remember that love is a fruit of the Spirit. 1st John 4:19 reminds us that we love Him because He first loved us. Apart from the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are not able to truly love. So then [John 13:35] clarifies this even further, that ALL men will know you are my disciples if you *demonstrate true love* for one another. 1st Peter 4:8 notes this same truth, that above all, we are to love one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Jesus made it clear, He had a new [and simple] command that we love one another even as He has loved us. And he stated His commandment again [John 15:12] for us to love one another, just as He has loved us. Wow! That's a true unconditional love from God that we do not have on our own. We can only have that kind of love by God's *fruit* exhibited in our lives. Paul perhaps sums it up best with [Ephesians 5:9] for the fruit of the light consists in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Tending His Fruit

Several times in the New Testament, God is described as the owner of a vineyard. In Matthew 20, those who labor in the His vineyard are each compensated the same wages, irrespective

Fruit of the Spirit

of how long they worked in the fields. A vineyard is again used in Matthew 21 to present the truth about how those charged with overseeing the land continuously disobeyed the words of the landowner, even killing His own son. But then in John 15, Jesus goes further with the vineyard analogy, stating that He is THE vine, the Father is the vinedresser, and believers are branches connected to that vine. In verse 2 He says very clearly that each branch [person] that does not bear *fruit*, the Father takes away [cuts it off] – while every branch that bears good fruit, the Father artfully prunes and shapes that branch so that it will bear even more fruit. Verses 4 and 5 remind us that if we abide in Him, we will show *fruit*. But verse 6 says that if we do NOT abide in Him, we bear no fruit, and that dried-up branch is then cut away and burned with all the other dead branches. That's sobering!

This is a powerful lesson about fruit in our lives. First, we cannot have any fruit unless we are truly abiding in Jesus. He is the living vine, the source of our spiritual life. Second, when a branch is fruitful, the vinedresser [Father] is pleased and does some skillful pruning so the branch will produce even more fruit. This means God will use various trials [James 1] to correct, mold, and shape us to be conformed into the image of His Son [Romans 8:29]. But third, it is quite sobering to hear that when He finds a branch without any fruit [no longer abiding in the true vine], it's dried-up [dead] and is taken away to be burned. This is such an encouragement to simply ABIDE IN HIM, and He will abide in us [John 15:4]. This is how we can [and should] always have His fruit evident in our daily lives.

Encouragement

Christians have God's Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. We can then exhibit the wonderful fruit of His Spirit throughout our daily lives, and this is the best evidence that we are truly born again. However, it is a sobering reminder that actions and attitudes such as *love* for others, true *joy* in all circumstances, *peace* of heart and mind, enduring *patience* in difficult situations, showing *kindness* to others, doing what's *good* and right, having a *gentleness* in how we speak and conduct ourselves, remaining *faithful* [reliable] no matter what may come our way, and always demonstrating *self-control* [being slow to anger] – these are ALL fruit of God's Spirit. None of these can happen apart from the Lord filling us inwardly.

The Christian life is not about trying hard to do these, or figuring out techniques that help us remember to be like this or like that. The Law of Moses was given to show what being holy is all about – and that only God is always loving, good, patient, kind, gentle, and faithful. It is truly an amazing display of God's *power* in our life when we who are by nature sinful, can show forth the very character of the Almighty in our daily life. This is an incredible display of the Lord's *power* living and moving in us. Acts 17: 28 confirms this – that He gives us the *power* to live and to move and exist, for we are His children. The next chapter looks at the gifts *from* the Holy Spirit – that He gives to men and women, as He wills, to equip us for His purposes.



Fruit of the Spirit

What are some of the ways you can move forward and desire to see more of God's fruit in your daily life?

What are two areas where you would like to see fruit of the Spirit really change and improve your actions with others?

How can God's character and His attributes be made most clear in your daily interactions with family and friends?

How does the fruit of the Holy Spirit reflect the character you see in Jesus? And how can that affect and impact your character?

Fruit of the Spirit

What are some of the ways the fruit of the Holy Spirit has changed your view of yourself, others, and your calling?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gifts from The Spirit

“Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,
I do not want you to be unaware.”
1st Corinthians 12:1

The previous chapter examined Biblical truths about how ALL believers should exhibit the *fruit* of God’s Holy Spirit in their lives – as the tangible evidence that we are truly born again and that His Spirit now resides in us full-time. The Holy Spirit also has *gifts* that He desires to give to believers, and these are quite different from the fruit of the Spirit. I have for many years distinguished these by referring to the fruit OF the Spirit and the gifts FROM the Spirit. Every Christian should exhibit God’s character in their daily lives – God’s *fruit* in us. But the Holy Spirit gives specific *gifts* to men and women that are unique for each situation and ministry opportunity. The Bible is very clear that He does not give the exact same gifts in the same way to everyone. The Spirit gives these gifts as HE wills, for HIS own purposes [1st Corinthians 12:11]. So then, the *fruit* of God’s

Gifts from the Spirit

Spirit should be evident in ALL believers, while the *gifts* from His Spirit will be different in each person.

The Spirit Decides

It's important to understand the two words "spiritual gift" [the Greek words *pneumatikos charisma*]. Back in Chapter 2, the *pneuma* [breath] described the Spirit of God [God's Word as the very breath of God]. The other term *charis* means "grace" – something freely given. *Charisma* is then the operation of freely giving. Pastor Chuck always used to remind us that mercy is not getting what we deserve, while grace is getting what we do not deserve. That's what makes it a gift! The giver [the Holy Spirit] chooses it and bestows it on the recipient. The Spirit not only decides which gifts to give, but also provides the enabling [*empowering*] of the gift for specific ministry as He wills, for His purposes. Jesus explained to His disciples [Luke 11:13] that if fathers who are evil know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will *the heavenly Father give gifts* to those who ask Him. James 1:17 confirms that every perfect gift originates from above, coming down to men and women from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow [God is unchanging]. It is very important to understand that gifting is not something we develop on our own – it's a gift!

Paul wanted all believers [1st Corinthians 12] to not be uninformed about the gifts. He explains [verse-3] that no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Spirit, and then describes different kinds of gifting that ALL are from the very same Spirit [verse-4]. There are various kinds of *service*, but ALL from the same Lord [verse-5]. There are many kinds of *workings* by the Holy Spirit, yet always the same God at work [verse-6]. He then

says that the Spirit gives different kinds of gifts, but it is always the same Spirit who distributes these.

Several passages in the Bible describe the supernatural gifts from the Spirit for the purpose of ministering to others. Spend some time carefully reading in 1st Corinthians 12: 8-10 and verse 28, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 3:6-8, 4:11, and 1st Peter 4:9-11. A summary of these passages provides this list [in alphabetical order] of various gifts *from* God's Holy Spirit:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| - <i>Administrations</i> | - <i>Discernment</i> |
| - <i>Distinguishing spirits</i> | - <i>Evangelism</i> |
| - <i>Exhortation</i> | - <i>Faith</i> |
| - <i>Giving</i> | - <i>Grace</i> |
| - <i>Healings</i> | - <i>Helps</i> |
| - <i>Hospitality</i> | - <i>Leadership</i> |
| - <i>Mercy</i> | - <i>Miracles</i> |
| - <i>Prophecy</i> | - <i>Serving Others</i> |
| - <i>Teaching</i> | - <i>Tongues & Interpretation</i> |
| - <i>Word of Knowledge</i> | - <i>Word of Wisdom</i> |

The following pages provide a clear Biblical definition for each of these twenty named gifts from God's Holy Spirit to believers.

Administrations

The Holy Spirit can equip a person with a supernatural ability to plan, organize, manage, and coordinate all types of tasks, projects, assignments, and deadlines. So while a person may be well educated and possess managerial skills, that does

Gifts from the Spirit

not necessarily mean he or she is specifically gifted by the Holy Spirit. What distinguishes this as true gifting is the ability to enact [execute] a wide range of administrative dealings with the decidedly servant's heart toward those being managed. The Greek word for administration *kuber-nesis* describes the ship's captain [Acts 27:11 and Revelation 18:17]. The one who navigates and steers the vessel – and keeps it on course. Church and other ministry administration are not about political infighting or rigid hardline negotiations for a personal agenda. Rather, they are about guidance, steadiness, and approachability – all while being subject to the Holy Spirit's direction.

Peter, John, and Jesus' brother James were elders in the Jerusalem church [1st Peter 5:1, 2nd John 1, 3rd John 1, Acts 12:17] and extended the hand of administration to Paul [Galatians 2:9]. Titus 1:5 explains how these had the authority to establish men for administration in new churches that were started throughout the Mediterranean basin. The account in Acts 6:1-15 is another example of setting apart individuals to oversee administrative matters. This gift will be confirmed in the Godly respect others have for HOW the administrator carries things out.

Discernment

The Holy Spirit can equip a person with the supernatural ability to discern difficult situations that may arise for a church, ministry, or Christian service organization. It can also be given to help in the home or with a marriage, co-workers, employees, or when out in a public place. When all the facts, innuendo, expectations, and concerns are laid out on an issue, it is spiritual discernment from God's Spirit that sifts through all the information to make sense of it all. Ephesians 6:12 reminds

us that our struggle is not only with what we see in the physical realm, but there is a spiritual dimension that impacts our lives – principalities, powers, rulers of darkness in this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. In fact, 2nd Corinthians 11 notes that Satan is able to disguise himself as an angel of light. Tough situations and the people involved may not always be simply what is viewed at face value. There can be significant spiritual issues going on just below the surface. In such cases, Godly discernment is needed to “see” what’s at the source, and to know how best to move forward with God’s clear insights on the matter. This is so important relative to Matthew 24:24 and Mark 13:22 where Jesus notes that spiritual deception will be so close to the truth that even believers in Jesus will be deceived.

This gift of discernment will always be confirmed in the way truth from the Lord readily exposes error – similar to the way in which Aquila and Priscilla pulled aside the Alexandrian named Apollos, who seemed to be strong in his teachings at the synagogue in Ephesus. Yet spiritual discernment was needed to show him “more accurately” the truth of the gospel message. This gift will be confirmed by others in seeing HOW the final results make good sense with a Biblical, Godly perspective.

Distinguishing Spirits

The Apostle John takes great care [1st John 4:3] in pointing out that we must not believe every spirit, because not all spirits are true and from God. False prophets will have the outward appearance of “spirituality” or “being spiritual”, but what they teach is not truth, even though it might appear

Gifts from the Spirit

interesting. Revelation 22:18-19 reminds us that no one should add or take anything away from the Bible – it is complete in its content and message-intent. Galatians 1:8 notes that even if an angel from heaven came down with a different message than the complete gospel, he is accursed. Jesus' brother Jude [verse 3] found it quite necessary to write his letter, appealing to believers to contend for the faith that was once-for-all delivered to us. God's Holy Spirit can equip a person to supernaturally distinguish falsehood from clear Biblical truth and sound doctrine. In fact, God's Word [see Chapter 1] is an excellent means by which the Spirit enables this gift to distinguish spirits, as a steady and reliable source of truth.

In 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 we are reminded that all Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit, so He would never say anything through a person that contradicts His own Word on any matter. The Bible is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness so believers will be equipped for every good work. Two examples of this come from my former pastors. Chuck Smith would say, regarding someone standing up suddenly and unannounced during his sermon with a supposed word from the Lord shouted to the congregation, "Why would the Holy Spirit interrupt Himself?" [if that was truly from the Spirit]. And Pastor Ricky Ryan replied to those who would corner him saying God gave them a special word of instruction for him, "Let me pray about that and seek the Lord through His Word to see if He will confirm what you've told me".

This gift is especially needed when such false teaching, words, and doctrine seem at face value to look just like Biblical truth. The ability to separate the subtle lie from truth can only

come through the Holy Spirit's gifting a person to distinguish spiritual lies – to recognize that the source of all lies comes from the one who is able to disguise himself as an angel of light. This gift will always be confirmed by the peace and rest discernment brings, aligning all matters [issues] directly with God's Word.

Evangelism

This gift is how the Holy Spirit uniquely equips a person to boldly proclaim the gospel to others [evangelist in the Greek εὐαγγελιστής – *euangelistas* means “to proclaim good news”]. This is the same root word for angels [ἄγγελος] – a messenger. An evangelist shares the truth of the gospel with a strong personal testimony of salvation, offering the same to any who would call on the name of Jesus. Paul told the young pastor Timothy to utilize his gifting as an evangelist in the city of Ephesus [2nd Timothy 4:5]. Acts 21:8 specifically notes that Philip was gifted as an evangelist. And while men like Billy Graham and Greg Laurie have been raised up and gifted by the Holy Spirit as very public evangelists – having the opportunity to preach the gospel to 50,000 people in a stadium is not the only example of this spiritual gifting.

Many men and women are clearly gifted by God's Spirit to readily and easily share the gospel message to those at their job, in their neighborhood, family members, and anyone that the Lord might bring across their path each day. They do not get anxious or nervous about telling others the good news of Jesus because it truly is a supernatural gifting working within them to do this. And this gift is confirmed in both the loving and gentle

Gifts from the Spirit

way in which the message is delivered, as well as in the results of seeing people come to know the Lord because of this person's supernatural equipping for evangelism.

Exhortation

The gift of exhortation is the spurring on and motivating of others in ministry. It is emphatic communication that urges others on in an endeavor. In the church, it is a strong word from a mature believer that inspires and lifts up others to move forward boldly in what they're doing. This can be either a positive exhortation to continue in certain actions and direction – or a cautious exhortation to be careful, more aware, and take heed about where something may be headed. A word of exhortation might be, “Remain focused on what God is doing as you continue ministering to those in the county jail”. It could be, “Even when your Sunday school class doesn't seem to be paying close attention, remember to be faithful in bringing the lesson to those 6th graders with love and enthusiasm”. A pastor might exhort a summer missions team heading to Indonesia that they “remember, you are the Lord's ambassadors and those you serve should see the love of Jesus in all you say and do”.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to be unified and in the same mind, not divided, but in agreement together, for he had heard they had many quarrels [1st Corinthians 10:1]. He also exhorted them [1st Corinthians 4:16] to be imitators of his ministry to others. Paul exhorted the Thessalonian Christians to walk and please God, and excel even more in the sound teaching they received from him [1st Thessalonians 4:1]. And Peter made sure to exhort all elders [even as he himself was a church elder] to shepherd the flock of God, exercising oversight in your

church body in love and not by compulsion or because there is some gain in it for you [1st Peter 5:1-2]. Pastor Chuck had a subtle way of exhorting the men of Calvary Chapel to always press in deeper to the things of the Lord and spiritual maturity. Pastor Ricky Ryan had a much more overt [compelling] manner in his exhortation to anyone involved in ministry or thinking about new opportunities to get involved in church life – including deep shoulder rubs, an enthusiastic bear hug, and a firm squeeze of the hands, all while looking deeply into the eyes with a sincere “follow the Lord and let’s see what He will do”. This gift will be readily confirmed by the encouragement others receive to draw closer to Jesus and stay strong in their ministry areas.

Faith

There is a saving faith [Ephesians 2:8] that everyone has when they make the decision to accept Jesus and the message of the gospel. Acts 12:7-9 recounts how Gentiles were also saved by faith in Jesus – same as the Jews [also Galatians 3:8]. There is on-going faith to live our daily lives as Christians [Romans 1:17, 5:1, 2nd Corinthians 5:7] abiding in that original faith we put in Jesus as Lord. But there is a supernatural spiritual gifting of faith from the Holy Spirit given for specific times and circumstances, when being able to hold onto an unwavering faith in the Lord may not be possible except through the Holy Spirit. In Acts 3:1-10, Peter was given extraordinary faith to say to a man who was lame, “In the name of Jesus, walk” and then to grab his right arm and actually stand him up on his healed legs.

Gifts from the Spirit

The gospels note both a man and a woman who were healed by Jesus because of extraordinary faith [Matthew 9:22, Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 8:48, 17:19, 18:42]. Perhaps the Roman centurion had been gifted with a special measure of faith to believe that Jesus did not have to even be present in order to heal his slave [Luke 7:6-9]. However, in the time since the Holy Spirit was given to believers after Pentecost, the spiritual gift of faith has been both amazing and maligned [abused].

Some see this as the simple, private interaction between the Holy Spirit and a person who now trusts the Lord with exceptional confidence that He will do a certain work. But others view this as something anyone can ask for whenever difficult times come along [e.g. “Please Lord, give me the faith to get through this.”] There are also those who put themselves in the spotlight in front of others to display how much faith they have by making fantastic claims and statements about people, that God will do these things because of their amazing faith. It is also sad that there are those who put a burden on others by saying “You did not have enough faith” so that is why they are not healed, or didn’t get the new job, or have difficulty with their finances. There are many in today’s Word-of-Faith movement who hold to a “prosperity doctrine” that whatever you want you will get from God if you have enough faith. They love to use Matthew 17:20 that they can do anything if their faith is sufficient [similar to misinterpreting 1st Corinthians 13:2]. But God is not saying we need to get enough faith mustered up so we can then get whatever we desire. Psalm 37:4 clarifies that if we delight in the Lord, He will place in us the desires for our heart – but many read this as God will GIVE you whatever your heart desires.

Hebrews chapter 11 has 40 verses that recount incredible faith of those throughout Israel's history. This also defines faith as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen. Today the Holy Spirit's gift of faith remains those two things. Not the "I sure hope it doesn't rain" or "I hope I win the lottery" – but a blessed assurance deep inside entirely from the Spirit. This is what Philippians 4:6-7 means to be anxious about nothing, but by prayer and petitions [opening your heart to the Lord] with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to Him, and the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. The gift of faith is confirmed by the confidence and rest in knowing the Lord is in control of the situation, He has a plan, His will is perfect and is always good when it comes to fruition – and of course, He can do all things [Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:27, Luke 18:27].

Giving

Romans 12:8 is my favorite place to start regarding the gift of giving. "Whoever gives, do so with simplicity." Giving should not be complicated. Like the title of this book, there is power in the simplicity of how the Lord works. It's not flashy. The aim is not to bring attention to ourselves, but to meet another's needs – and do it as unto the Lord and on His behalf. The supernatural gift of giving has zero expectation for getting anything in return. Unlike the Word-of-Faith movement where giving is a required precursor to getting for yourself, the Holy Spirit gifts certain individuals to have a servant's heart where their giving is selfless, generous, and all about blessing others. It

Gifts from the Spirit

should be entirely in line with Jesus' teaching [Matthew 6:3] that our giving should not have any component whereby others know what we give – with no individual credit or personal recognition for us. Jesus explained to His disciples [Luke 21:2-4] that the widow's giving actually had more value than those who had seemingly given greater monetary amounts – because she gave all she had, while they merely went through the outward motions to be seen of others and gave from their surplus.

So then 2nd Corinthians 9:6-8 reminds us that when we sow [cast seed] sparingly, it should be no surprise that we will also reap sparingly. We are to give whatever the Lord settles with us in the privacy of our own heart – never with reluctance or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. The Greek word for cheerful is *hilaros* [ἡλαρός] from which we get our English word hilarious! True spiritual giving should be from a full heart the Lord places in you. It is actually fun to do it and brings the giver tremendous joy to bless others.

Grace

The gift of grace is perhaps best captured in 1st Peter 4:10. When we exercise our spiritual gifts, Peter reminds us they are to serve others, as good stewards of *God's grace*. This takes us to earlier in this book, with a reminder that mercy is not getting what we deserve, while grace is getting something we do not deserve. The spiritual gift of graciousness is all about the heart toward others – extending that extra measure of allowance and margin for error – never holding anyone to too high a standard, in the knowledge and understanding of just how much grace God has extended to us [always remembering Ephesians 2:8-9].

The Lord reminded Paul [2nd Corinthians 12:8-9] that His grace is sufficient when facing a very difficult situation. For Paul, that thorn in his flesh was the on-going annoying remembrances that he had once persecuted the church, hauling believers off in chains to prison and death – even as he watched the cloaks of the senior religious leaders as they stoned Stephen to death. He then struggled with the very real concern that others would not recognize his true authority as an Apostle alongside the eleven who had been with Jesus during His earthly ministry. The Lord had him go to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and John [Galatians 2:9] who extended the hand of fellowship. It is God's grace that sustained Paul as he matured in his ministry.

As believers, our entire status as children of God is all by God's grace – nothing we do deserves it. Joint heirs alongside Jesus with an inheritance stored for us in heaven [1st Peter 1:4]. Grafted into God's family [Romans 11:17]. Able to call the Lord of heaven 'daddy' [Romans 8:15]. Now with direct access to God through the down payment [remember the 'earnest'] of the Holy Spirit given to us as believers. Our salvation from sin and eternal life [Titus 3:7] are all by grace. We all make mistakes. We all stumble here and there. The gift of grace functions in that clear reminder by the Holy Spirit that we are to extend this same form of grace to others. This gift of grace is confirmed in the selfless manner by which a person extends to people every measure of graciousness that the Lord has extended to him/her.

Healings

We should give the Lord praise and thanks that He does in fact still heal people – even as Jesus was moved by compassion [Matthew 9:36, 14:14] when He saw so many people afflicted with all kinds of illnesses, and He healed them. Today, God can heal anyone, anywhere, and at any time. He knows the bodies and inner workings of every man, woman, and child on earth. He designed all our bodily systems and physical functionalities. The Lord can reverse decay, restore tissue, eradicate pain, and change a person's condition from sickness to completely healthy. He has no limitations on how He moves and works in the natural world.

The spiritual gift of healings is often misunderstood on these two key questions. Does the Holy Spirit give this gift to a man or woman and they then have it all the time going forward, such that they then have supernatural power to heal, and people will bring others to this person to be healed? Or, does the Holy Spirit effect His touch of healing in people's lives by equipping Godly men and women to be used of Him in a certain situation as He decides? When elders are obedient to James 5:14-16 to then anoint with oil and pray for those who are sick, any healing that takes place is not because the oil has magic power, or the elders possess the power to heal whomever they wish. The healing was accomplished by the Holy Spirit – as He wills for His purposes.

Sad to say, supposedly anointed healing services, healing rallies, healing rooms, and healing cloths have all gained much attention in today's world. Well known television personalities ask viewers to put their hands on the TV screen for healing to be transmitted to them during the "Night of Miracles"

event. But all the attention ends up on the person claiming to do the healings, with rousing applause from the audience, as if he [or she] is super spiritual, mighty, and an amazing emissary of God here on earth. Remember, healing doesn't happen because of a certain person, or at a special location, or through a formula ritual. True healing is a gift of the Holy Spirit. And arguably the greatest work of healing is to see sinners come to faith in Jesus as Savior. The gift of healing is always confirmed in the simplicity of trusting what the Lord wants to do, as He wills, in His time.

Helps

The gifting from God's Spirit for helps is an interesting one to interpret from the Bible how it functions, and what it looks like today. In its most basic manner, it is all about assisting others, and doing so with a true heart of joy. Jesus told a lawyer about *helping* others [Luke 10:25-37] and used the story of the good Samaritan to explain WHO is our neighbor [seen in light of Leviticus 19's "love your neighbor as yourself"]. Jesus' brother James really focused in on the difference between saying we will pray for someone with obvious needs vs. actually DOING something to meet that real need right then [James 2:1-3]. Seeing someone in need, but then having that heart from God's Spirit to respond with help is what James describes as the difference between saying "Go in peace, be warm and be filled" compared to feeding, clothing, and providing shelter for the one in need.

In our church family, I have seen many over the last four decades who had the obvious gift of helps. These are the people who hear of a need – something that has to get done, and they

Gifts from the Spirit

have that heart from the Lord to simply step up and help. An errand to run. A person needs a ride. People are needed to serve food or do dishes at an outreach. Workers to help set-up for the Easter service. These folk are always willing, and the first, to help – and they do so without any grumbling, and never so they can be seen or praised by others. They truly LOVE helping.

Hospitality

The gift of hospitality is an openness to readily make other feel welcome. To make them feel truly cared for. This is at times for complete strangers the Lord may bring your way. In Hebrews 13:2 Paul makes a provocative statement, that believers are not to neglect hospitality because through such, many have actually *entertained angels* without even knowing it. Wow! That is something to ponder. It first reminds me of Abraham showing hospitality to the three visitors who stop by his tents at Mamre [Genesis 18]. He welcomed them in, gave them water and fresh baked bread, as well as grilled veal with curds and milk. One of these visitors was “my Lord” [it was Jesus appearing in the Old Testament times – known as a theophany]. The other two “men” were in fact angels – messengers sent from Yahweh for the specific task given to them in God’s judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. These three were certainly known to Abraham, as he understood the dire situation for his nephew Lot.

Next, consider the jailer [Acts 16:33-34] who washed and cared for the wounds of Paul and Silas, then brought them to his own home and fed them along with his entire household. Jesus said [Luke 14:12-14] to not only invite friends, neighbors, and family members to your party, because they can reciprocate and invite you in the future to dine with them. But when you give a

banquet, invite also the cripple, the poor, blind and lame. They will not be able to repay you, but you will be blessed and repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. That's true hospitality!

Isaiah 58:7 declared that bread is to be shared with the hungry, and your homes with those who need shelter, and to also clothe those who are naked. 1st Timothy 5:10 and Titus 1:8 state that a primary requirement for a man to be in church leadership is that he show hospitality. 1st Peter 4:8-9 reminds believers that love covers a multitude of sins, so offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Jesus said [Matthew 10:42, Mark 9:41] as he looked out on the crowd with many suffering from different illnesses, "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these in my name, he shall not lose that reward". He also explained [Matthew 25:42-46] there were times when HE was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison and you attended to my needs. When his disciples asked, "Lord, when did we ever see you in such conditions and help you?" Jesus noted that whenever they did so to those truly in need [the least of these my brethren], you did this unto Me. Hospitality will always be confirmed by the heart of the one showing it to others.

Leadership

Perhaps the most foundational teaching on leadership is from Matthew 20:25-28 where Jesus reminded the people that the Gentiles have leaders who lord their positions over the average person in exercising authority over them. But it shall not be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great among you, let him be the servant to others. Whoever desires to be first,

Gifts from the Spirit

he must be as a slave – even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve others. Proverbs 16:5 adds this insight – those who are proud [arrogant] in their hearts are an abomination to the Lord.

There is leadership that functions informally. Some are gifted to bring guidance and direction whenever lots of details and deadlines come together, requiring someone with the vision to “see” what has to get done, and how to do it in a timely manner, while enabling others through delegation and well-defined responsibilities. There is the gal who heads up women’s ministries or oversees children’s Sunday school classes. The guy who leads men’s prayer or the drug recovery ministry. A husband and wife lead the married couples ministry. There is a former U.S. Marine colonel who oversees the logistics of getting Christmas presents to kids who have a parent in jail or prison. Each of these men and women can be supernaturally gifted by the Holy Spirit to bring vision and purpose, direction, order, planning, delegation, and getting things done. Leadership!

There is also formal leadership within the church for the elders providing spiritual oversight of the congregation. Those men specifically set apart as church elders [1st Timothy 3 and Titus 1] – referred to as over-seers [*epi-skopas* in the Greek] – should be recognized as uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to provide sound, mature *leadership* on behalf of the church body. They have a very important role to fulfill within the church – alongside the pastors, bringing spiritual oversight and protection for the body of believers, as well as stewardship over the financial resources God provides. But they are not to lord their position over others [remember Matthew 20].

Jesus gave the church in Ephesus credit for hating the Nicolaitans [Revelation 2:6]. This refers to leaders who abused their power and position over the average people in the church [the laity]. Nicolas of Antioch was one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6:5. A Gentile proselyte [he first switched from paganism to Judaism], he then became a Christian. Early church writers noted that he sought to blend his pagan beliefs with Christianity, including being the go-between for people and God, because of his superior spiritual position [similar to priests who intercede for everyday Catholics]. Those who supported “ruling over the laity” were called Nico-Laitans – creating a two-tier unbiblical hierarchy of regular people and the spiritual elite church leaders. True spiritual gifting in leadership is always confirmed in leaders who serve others, with humble hearts, providing their oversight as unto the Lord – never lording their position over others, but coming alongside and encouraging the congregation.

Mercy

The gift of mercy is well-defined in both Matthew 18:33 and Ephesians 2:4-6 – showing this to others because of the great mercy extended to us by the Lord. It was God being rich in His great mercy with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sin, who raised us up alongside Jesus. Galatians 6:2 reminds us to bear one another’s burdens, and Romans 12:15 says we are to weep with those who weep. Showing mercy to others in need is to be done with cheerfulness [Romans 12:8]. Jesus’ brother Jude notes [verse 21-23] we wait on the mercy of the Lord to us, have mercy on others, hating those actions done in the flesh. His

Gifts from the Spirit

other brother James [3:17] reminds us that wisdom from God is first pure, then peaceable, it's gentle and reasonable, unwavering without hypocrisy, and full of mercy and good fruit.

Those who have been supernaturally gifted from the Holy Spirit with mercy display amazing compassion, God's love and forgiveness. It is a special gifting to have the Lord's heart of mercy available to all those who require care and understanding in their sinful way of life – where words and actions of mercy can demonstrate how the Lord has mercy toward us and offers salvation in His name. The gift of mercy is confirmed in the consistency with which one sees those lost in this world as truly in need of God's mercy – the same that was previously shown the believer who came to Christ.

Miracles

Miracles are a phenomenon that occurs which cannot be explained by the known natural laws. Jesus turned plain water into high-quality wine [John 2:1-11]. Jesus walked on water in the Sea of Galilee [John 6:16-24]. Jesus fed over 5,000 people from five barley loaves and two fish [John 6:5-14]. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead [John 11:1-45], as well as the widow's son in the city of Nain [Luke 7:11-18]. Each of these involved a deliberate action with results that were completely outside normal explanation.

Gifted to do miracles is literally in the Greek *dynamis*, meaning “the workings of powers” [a double-plural word]. This infers that this happens in many different ways and is not a gift one would permanently have – such that men or women can now do miracles at any time they choose. The Holy Spirit did a lot of miracles through the Apostles as the 1st Century church was launched [see Acts 2:43 3:1-10 5:1-16 9:36-43 13:4-12 19:11-12].

Philip and Stephen were also gifted in miracles [see Acts 8:4-8 and 6:8]. The Spirit used this gifting to attract many to the gospel message and making a decision to receive Jesus [see Acts 4:29-31 and 9:35-42]. The key reminder is those through whom the Holy Spirit did miracles always gave the credit, honor, and glory to the Lord as the One who did the work. Miracles were not about putting attention on the person being gifted. The Lord used miracles to support a witness to the world [Acts 1:8].

Today, Christians have the complete Word of God, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, so the need to do fantastic miracles is not the same as it was when the church was just beginning. Jesus' warned [Matthew 16:4 and 12:39] that an evil and adulterous generation seeks after signs – but only ONE sign would be given, the sign of Jonah. 1st Corinthians 1:21-24 notes that the Jews wanted signs from God [but Gentiles seek wisdom] and God had a long Old Testament history of showing Himself to Israel through miraculous signs. That's why the Messiah killed by crucifixion was [and remains] a stumbling block to the Jewish people [even though resurrection is an amazing miracle], while Jesus' death on a cross for others' sins is foolishness to the Greek who is seeking deep wisdom and meaning.

God certainly still does miracles today. We are typically more aware and in awe of the miracle when someone has been healed physically [healings were covered earlier in this chapter]. In the right situation, faced with a compelling circumstance, God can do a miracle to assist believers and bring attention to His mighty power and being Lord over all creation. There are many

Gifts from the Spirit

well-documented and reliable accounts of incredible miracles the Lord has used in the lives of people. God has allowed the car of a missionary family to drive over 70 miles in the dark to the safety of their home when there was literally no gas in the tank. A family of six walked out untouched from their home in Kansas that had been flattened by a tornado. A youth group of 25 teens on a canoe trip all unknowingly drank water from a polluted tap and no one showed any signs of poisoning or sickness.

In my own life, two such situations come to mind. First, when I was 10 years old, I was face down on a snow sled and unable to stop on a very icy bottom of the hill, and ran into the metal pole of a large sliding board in a playground at a very high speed – my forehead was my first contact point with the pole. I probably should have died or experienced brain damage [concussion], but I was able to walk home, and after resting for a few hours, I was completely fine. Second, at age 22, my car's generator and power seemed to be failing and I pulled into a gas station to lift the hood and check the battery. As I was leaning directly over the battery, the top blew off and made such a loud sound several people ran over to see what made such a noise. The battery lid was about 50 feet away and the acid chambers were all empty – leaving battery acid burn marks covering the entire inside of the hood and all around my jacket front and collar. But my neck, face, and eyes had no marks, and it seemed impossible that the battery lid blew off and landed so far away, and yet did not hit my face or head as I was leaning in right over it when it exploded. Maybe you have a great remembrance of seeing a true miracle of the Lord firsthand.

But miracles should not be the primary focused pursuit for believers, or for a church gathering. They are not necessary to confirm God's presence. And they should certainly never be linked or associated with a certain person seeking to elevate his/her spiritual status or positioning. If God wishes to do a truly extraordinary action in a given instance that will impact people's hearts, faith, trust – He of course will do so as He desires within His sovereign will. But God's people need not be preoccupied with having to do miracles, or running to others who "perform" [supposed] miracles. Remember, the religious leaders pressed Jesus to do a miracle for them, and He replied that "a wicked and perverse [adulterous] generation seeks after signs, but you shall have only ONE sign – as Jonah was dead and then resurrected after 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish, so too the Son of Man shall be resurrected after 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth [Matthew 12:40, 16:4].

Prophecy

The spiritual gift of speaking prophetic words is another area where there is much error happening today. ***Prophecy*** is a noun – a statement about something still to come. ***Prophesy*** is a verb – the action of speaking prophecy. ***Prophets*** spoke the Word of God directly to people – this was very common in Old Testament time when there were not complete and readily accessible Scriptures written down for all to read and hear God's Word [Matthew 1:22, Luke 1:70, Acts 3:18, Hebrews 1:1]. Biblical prophecy is perhaps the greatest confirmation that God's Word is truthful, because more than 300 specific prophecies spoken in

the time of the Old Testament have already happened exactly as they were recorded hundreds of years earlier.

There are still unfulfilled prophecies about God's final plans for mankind and creation. It is very logical that if God had the prophecies about Jesus' first coming happen literally [born in Bethlehem, born to a virgin, worshipped by shepherds, from the tribe of Judah, descended from David, called out of Egypt, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey's foal, wounded for our transgressions, stripes on His back for our healing, pierced by a spear, His clothes divided and lots cast, buried in a rich man's tomb, resurrected from the dead] – then prophecies about His second coming will also be literally fulfilled [coming on clouds in glory, all will see His return, enters Jerusalem's East Gate, rules on David's throne rule with a rod of iron for ten centuries].

There are dozens of prophets noted in the Bible. Jesus recognized Adam's son Abel as one who spoke prophetically [Luke 11:42-50]. Enoch prophesied prior to the flood of Noah [Jude 14]. Abraham spoke the Word of God as a prophet [Genesis 20:6-7]. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jeremiah, Samuel, Nathan, Deborah, Ezekiel, and Malachi are others noted as prophets who spoke the Word of the Lord. John the Baptist [Luke 1:16] was the final Old Testament prophet in advance of Jesus the Messiah. Prophets spoke the Word of God to kings, to the common people, and called out sinful actions. They looked ahead to a time of grace [1st Peter 1:10-12] after Jesus' work at Calvary, knowing they did not serve themselves, but all those to come after God's salvation would be available to all.

Can the Holy Spirit still gift people to prophesy? He can and He does at His discretion, for His will and purpose. To speak

forth the word of God to a congregation, a smaller group, or an individual regarding something the Lord plans to do in the days ahead is entirely up to Him. The Holy Spirit can gift a person to speak very specific truth over someone that is entirely in line with what God declares to be true already in His Word. A word of prophecy might note that a newly ordained pastor is going to have a major impact on the un-churched area to which he is headed. Prophetic words could be spoken over a new believer coming out of drug addiction, that his testimony is going to have a significant impact on bringing others to Christ in the years to come. Prophecy can be when an author writes about events unfolding for the church as the world experiences a crisis. But a prophet cannot add to the full counsel and content of what is already in the Bible. God's Word is already final and entirely sufficient as it is, and does not need any man or woman to augment its message or doctrine. Paul provides instruction on this in both 1st Corinthians 14:37-38 and 1st Thessalonians 2:1-3, and is also noted in Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, and Revelation 22:18.

For today, it is important to ask why prophets would be needed to regularly declare prophetic utterances [prophecies] if we have the complete Word of God, and all prophecy has been summed up in Jesus Christ. The Bible has dozens of still-future prophecies yet to be fulfilled, so in what way would a woman or man today be capable of adding to these? Many people and churches today claim modern day prophecies being spoken. But many of these are outlandish and provocative predictions that have easily [readily] been shown as false. Others are very vague

so they can be construed as lining up with true events without having to be specific. Many are far enough in the future that there is no way to evaluate the truthfulness for years or even decades to come. The prophet [prophetess] should never be viewed as a spiritually superior person who is closer to God. And people should not be praising, following, idolizing, or seeking after prophets. Christians should be following/seeking Jesus.

A true prophet speaks God's own Word, so it will always be 100% accurate. If a prophecy is not, then it is easy to discern as false. A true prophet never gets financial gain from speaking God's Word. Certainly a pastor functioning in a full-time or part-time position in the church is worthy of his compensation [1st Timothy 5:18, Philippians 4:16-19, 1st Corinthians 9:9-14, as well as Luke 10:17, Acts 6:2, and 2nd Thessalonians 3:7-10]. And a true prophet is not idolized by others. Our eyes and heart should not be focused on following a man or a woman because we believe they have some special anointing or powers. We must always focus on following after Jesus [John 10:27]. Take care to do a thorough online review at DeceptionInTheChurch.org and their Biblically sound examination of the modern day prophetic movement. Also read Kevin Kleint's 2017 insider-perspective [HonorOfKings.org] about the false apostles and prophets at the ElijahList.com website. This false information-hub for the so-called modern day prophets actually lists the prophetic accuracy rates of the men and women who post there – noting that many of these individuals do well with 65% accuracy in their supposed prophetic words. But Deuteronomy 18:20-22 is VERY sobering: “A prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name but I have not commanded him to speak – *he shall die*; when a prophet

speaks and it does not come true, that is a word the Lord has NOT spoken – the prophet has spoken it presumptuously”.

So then, can God’s Spirit, today, gift a person to speak prophetic words? Perhaps, but it must be entirely in line with His existing Word [Bible], and be 100% accurate. Hebrews 1:1-2 notes that “long ago God spoke through His prophets, but in these last days *He has spoken to us through His son*”. So today we have the complete Word from God in our Bibles. We no longer look for prophets to bring God’s Word to us – God already has. And God is clear that we should not add anything to His Word [Revelation 22:18-19, Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, Proverbs 30:6, Mark 7:13]. There should never be a case where some newly spoken prophecy is seen as better or more complete than what is already in the Bible. It is quite easy to speak forth a word from God by simply reading the Bible out loud. The Bible is complete, lacks nothing, is dependable-reliable, always accomplishes its due purpose, and never returns empty [Isaiah 55:11]. Any true gifting of prophecy will remain within these guidelines.

Service

Spiritual gifting of service [serving others] – is a special empowering a person has to be completely selfless, regarding others as more important than one’s self [Philippians 2:3]. This service [Romans 12:7] is the Greek word *diakonos* [from which we get our English word deacon]. In the church, there are men and women specifically gifted to formally and faithfully serve the church congregation. These are the deacons [and deaconesses]. They are truly happy to serve in whatever capacity is needed.

Gifts from the Spirit

Acts 6:1-7 is worth looking at again for examples of men set aside to serve in order to free up the Apostles for teaching God's Word. Paul noted [1st Corinthians 16:15-16] those in the house of Stephanas devoted themselves to *serving* the other believers in the Corinthian church. This gift will always be confirmed by the people who are happy to serve in the background [out of the spotlight] – not seeking any favor from men, but of God – not striving to please men, but as a *bondslave* to God [Galatians 1:10].

Teaching

The gift of teaching God's Word immediately brings to mind James' exhortation [James 3:1] that not many believers shall become teachers, knowing that as such the teacher will incur an even stricter judgment. The reason? The teacher is in a position to greatly influence and impact those who receive the teaching. Jesus said [Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2] that if your teaching leads someone astray from the truth about the Lord, it would be better for that teacher to have a millstone tied around the neck and be thrown into the sea. Think about that in light of those who teach false doctrines [Mormons, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church, Self-Realization Fellowship, Scientology, 7th Day Adventists] and the millions of people who follow those teachings of error.

There are great opportunities for both men and women to be gifted by the Holy Spirit for teaching. However, the Bible clearly states that women should not teach men [1 Timothy 2:12]. This is not just for that culture of the 1st Century church, and was not Paul's response to not allowing a certain woman [singular] to teach in that Ephesian church. It is grounded in a foundational principle for all women [plural] directly based on Eve being

deceived into disobedience [1st Timothy 2:13-14 and Genesis 3]. God's original design, His created order, had a spiritual authority for men on behalf of women. His judgment of their sin clearly stated that from then on, the woman's desire would be for the man's position [Genesis 3:16] – and that has been the case since, as women have desired to become [and now are] pastor-teachers in all types of churches. However, God has the current order of spiritual authority based on His original plan, not on the worth or value of men vs. women.

The passage in 1st Timothy 2:9-15 has clear instruction for women in the church, but it does not include *teaching*. Then in 1st Timothy 3:1-10 Paul speaks to men in authority in the church and includes *teaching* in that gifting. Verse-11 includes women as deacons who serve [but not teachers]. These are consistent with his letter to that church in Ephesus [5:22-23] for women to submit themselves [spiritually] to their husbands, who are instructed to love their wives in the same way Jesus loves the church. The broader context of the New Testament also includes that no women are noted as pastors, elders, or Apostles, or seen teaching men or the general congregation of men and women. {See also 1st Corinthians 11:3, 10 and 14:29-35, as well as Romans 16 where women have certain leadership roles in the church, but are not elders, pastors, or teachers.}

Women are certainly gifted by the Holy Spirit to teach God's Word for other women, or children, or youth ministry – but the Bible clearly states they are not to teach men, including teaching the entire congregation of men and women. Overall,

Gifts from the Spirit

Bible teaching supports God's Word as the only authority for individual and church life, and the Holy Spirit has gifted people to teach within the church body.

Tongues and Interpretation

The gift *from* the Spirit to speak in tongues [or interpret the tongue spoken by another] must be done entirely in line with Paul's clear instruction. He says that a tongue is to speak praises to God [1st Corinthians 14:2] and is NOT for speaking to people. The tongue will not be understood by others, because the one speaking utters mysteries by the Spirit. That plain and simply means this gift is not for teaching, prophesying, Biblical exposition, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, or anything else. It is a deep, intimate voice of praise directly spoken to God.

Speaking praise to God in an unknown language can happen either in private, or in a public gathering of believers. Remember that all the gifts are given by the Holy Spirit as He wills for His purposes. 1st Corinthians 14:3-4 continues in this instruction, that the one who speaks forth a word of prophecy [the Word of God] will edify, exhort, and console all those who hear it. But the one who speaks praise to God in an unknown tongue only edifies himself.

So the Spirit of God either gives this gift to allow someone to speak praises to the Lord during a private time of prayer and worship, or the Spirit allows it to be spoken in the presence of others who have gathered for worship and prayer. The key intention is that the tongue should bring edification, exhortation, and consolation to those who hear and understand it. In the first case, the individual speaks out praise to God in the unknown tongue in a private setting with no one else to see or

hear. The only one who knows about this [and is edified] is that person speaking the words of praise. In the second case, the Spirit allows a person to speak out words of praise in a public gathering where everyone hears it – but without someone to interpret, the people will have no idea what was said.

If the whole church comes together and tongues are spoken in public [1st Corinthians 14:23], those who are there who are not believers will think the ones speaking are crazy [literally “out of their minds”]. The three requirements for tongues in a public gathering [1st Corinthians 14:27-28] are clear: 1) it is limited to two individuals [three at the most], 2) they must speak in turn, in an orderly manner, not at the same time, and 3) someone must interpret what is said so everyone else can understand the words of praise spoken to God and be edified.

The foundational principle in using the gift of tongues in a public gathering is that everyone else must be able to know and understand what the tongue means. It must be translated into the common language of the congregation. Paul wants ALL believers to be enriched – including speech, knowledge, and the testimony of Jesus – and to be clearly confirmed so we are not lacking in any gifting [1st Corinthians 1:5-7].

A few caveats must be noted about tongues. First, it is not required of all believers. Second, it is not true that you must speak in tongues to confirm the Holy Spirit in your life [for many Pentecostal churches this is a core belief]. 1st Corinthians 12:4-31 explains that all the gifts are not given to everyone. Paul is clear that not all are apostles, not all prophesy, or are teachers, or do

Gifts from the Spirit

miracles, and not all speak in tongues. He uses the analogy of our physical body for the church body. We have eyes, hands, and feet that each do something unique, yet all function and serve the same body. Third, if you are in a public setting [church service, women's fellowship, home Bible study] and someone speaks a tongue, then the interpretation follows with, "Thus says the Lord" or "Hear now my people", you can be assured that this is not from the Holy Spirit, because tongues are inherently praises said to God – not words of encouragement, exhortation, prophecy, or teaching. And fourth, always be aware that some have elevated tongues to confirm a person as "more spiritual" [same with the gifts of prophecy, healing, and miracles].

Word of Knowledge

The gift of the word of knowledge is the Holy Spirit giving insights to a person about a situation or other people that could not be known except by this supernatural knowledge given by God. In Acts 5:1-11, a husband and wife sold some property and told everyone they were giving ALL the proceeds to the Lord [but they kept some of the proceeds]. No one else knew or understood this detail except them. But the Holy Spirit gave a specific word of knowledge to Peter about their deception so that he could openly confront them on this matter. And Peter noted that they had not only lied to those in the church, but more importantly, they had lied to the Holy Spirit.

In Damascus, Ananias received a word of knowledge from the Lord to go to Straight Street and bring instruction to Saul of Tarsus [Acts 9:10-12]. Saul also received a word from God to expect this man Ananias to show up to restore his sight.

Peter stated that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God [Matthew 16:16-17], and Jesus clarified that it was not in Peter's own mind that he reasoned this, but this knowledge was given to him supernaturally by the Holy Spirit.

In 1st Kings 21:17-18, Elijah has a word of knowledge on where to meet King Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth. There is no way that Elijah could have known that apart from God's Spirit.

In Acts 10:19, the Holy Spirit gives a word of knowledge to Peter that three men were looking for him, and he is to go with them to the home of the Roman soldier Cornelius.

In 2nd Kings 6:8-12, Elisha was given a word of knowledge for the location of the camp for King Aram's army – warning the king of Israel not to go that way. Aram was convinced one of his insider officers told Israel about his position, but one servant informed him it was Elisha who knows the words you say in the privacy of your bedroom. Only God's gifting by His Spirit could provide Elisha with such knowledge.

Today the Holy Spirit can use this gift in situations where needing complete and accurate information about a matter is necessary for God to use believers for prayer, counsel, advice, or confronting unconfessed sin. Any time additional information is needed beyond a person's current awareness, the Holy Spirit can provide that word of knowledge so the ministry opportunity will be complete and fruitful for those involved. This is not something to showcase on a stage, calling out vague generalities to a large audience ["I believe there's a person here who needs to be reconciled to his brother"]. The statistics of a

Gifts from the Spirit

big crowd will always have a few people who fit that supposed word. This is not like a Las Vegas psychic-act trying to garner applause and personal recognition. Rather, it is a private gifting that allows one person to minister to another one-on-one, with very specific information given by the Holy Spirit. Such a gift will be confirmed in the way the one who receives the word responds to God demonstrating His interest in the situation, and complete knowledge of all the facts involved, by using another person to know that truth.

Word of Wisdom

This gift is more than just supernaturally knowing about a matter. It is all about how to proceed, what to do next, how to move forward in the pure wisdom that only God's Spirit can impart. Pastor Chuck Smith noted that wisdom is the proper use of knowledge. Psalm 111:10 reminds us all that the fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom. Having such an awareness of who God is, His power and might, His omniscience and providence over everything allows us to rest in His Holy Spirit gifting us with the wisdom needed to understand and make decisions in difficult circumstances. The Lord's wisdom is foolishness to those who are lost, but to those who are saved it is the very power of God [1st Corinthians 1:18]. The Holy Spirit can step into any tough decision scenario and provide a clear word of wisdom – many times through a person simply reading God's Word.

Parents need this gifting in dealing with their children. The church elders need this gift as they handle delicate matters among the congregation, or decisions regarding church finances. Teachers need this regarding their students, and students need this as they learn from their teachers. Pastors need this gift

when preparing their sermons. Youth leaders need this for sorting out the various issues going on among the teenagers who have been entrusted to their leadership.

This gifting will be confirmed in the logical settledness everyone sees as the wisdom on the issue is shared, and of course in the sound results that come from that wisdom in moving forward on the situation at hand. It is truly a wonderful thing to see and encourage others in when we can say, “It was obvious that the Lord gave you wisdom on that matter”.

Gifted Positions

There are also eight positions [offices] within the church that are gifted *from* the Holy Spirit for the work of the ministry:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ <i>Apostle</i> | ■ <i>Elder (Overseer)</i> | ■ <i>Evangelist</i> |
| ■ <i>Missionary</i> | ■ <i>Pastor</i> | ■ <i>Prophet</i> |
| - ■ <i>Teacher</i> | ■ <i>Deacon</i> | - |

These are seen throughout the New Testament, and tie in on many levels with the gifts previously covered. The key in each of these eight positions is to recognize clear and obvious 1) spiritual gifting and 2) calling in the person. People don’t just volunteer for such, and you don’t apply for them like a job. It’s not about finding good talent. And it is never about individual popularity. God will uniquely gift a person for His purposes, as He wills, and will specifically call that person into such a position. The clear confirmation of gifting and calling will be seeing fruit in the ministry area where the person serves. And, the congregation

Gifts from the Spirit

will say “Amen” in recognizing that the right people are in those places, functioning just as God wanted it to be.

God Does The Work

The Apostle Peter [1st Peter 4:10-11] clarifies that every gift given is for serving others, faithfully administering God’s grace in various forms, then he mentions gifting in a general manner with: 1) “whoever speaks” and 2) “whoever renders service” [provides hospitality]. Paul also makes it very clear [Romans 12:4-6] that the gifts are diverse within the church, for “just as each of us has one body with many members” [our legs, arms, hands, feet], “they do not all have the same function for the body, and so it is in Christ, we who are many form one body” [the church], so that each member belongs to all the others”. In summary then, we have different gifts according to the grace that is given to us by the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus stated very clearly [John 15:26] that when the Holy Spirit comes, whom Jesus will send to us from the Father – He is *the Spirit of truth* who proceeds from the Father – He will testify of Me”. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus. Therefore the gifts *from* the Spirit are never to bring attention to a person exercising the gift. Jesus follows that up with [John 16:13] “when *the Spirit of truth* comes He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak of Himself”. And so by this we know the Spirit of God, because every spirit that confesses that Jesus came in the flesh is from God [1st John 4:2-3].

And while everyone who is a true follower of Jesus Christ should have obvious *fruit of God’s Spirit* in their lives, when it comes to the *gifts from the Holy Spirit*, He alone is the one who decides how He will uniquely gift certain men and

women for specific ministry in the church. These are gifts, *given by Him*, as He wills. For it is God who is at work in us both to will and to work *according to His good pleasure* [Philippians 2:13]. As such, people do not decide for themselves which gift they would like to do. People do not try out a gift to see if they are good at it. An individual cannot “practice” the gifts in order to become more proficient. It is God’s Spirit doing the work. Its function and results will always be in its fullest, most complete, and entirely accurate form and operation. And this gifting from the Holy Spirit [as with His calling] is irrevocable [Romans 11:29] and cannot be rescinded, and WILL come to pass as He wills. This is specifically noted for His people Israel, who had a hardening of their hearts, even as the Gentiles came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. But God’s gifting and calling of His Jewish nation is going to come to fruition at a still future day.

Only One Focus

We should always be cautious when someone has to be on stage in the spotlight to supposedly show [off] a gift from the Spirit. It should never be about focusing on a person – it should always focus on Jesus. And because the gifts are given by the Spirit as He wills and for His purpose, it does not mean that a person now has that gift at all times and is able to use it whenever he or she wants. If the Holy Spirit gifts a woman with a specific word of knowledge to minister God’s encouragement, love, or correction to a specific person, she doesn’t need to be up in front of the church congregation with a microphone giving various clues that gradually home in on the person – much like a

Gifts from the Spirit

psychic performing a show in Las Vegas. Instead, the woman should simply, quietly go to the person the Lord has shown her and speak the word of knowledge in private so the Holy Spirit can do His work in that person's life. When elders anoint a sick person with oil, lay hands on, and pray for healing [James 5:14] and the Lord chooses to restore that person to health, the men didn't do the healing, God did. They also don't then have the on-going power to heal any people brought to them - they were simply the instruments used [gifted] by the Holy Spirit for that unique situation. When the Holy Spirit gifts the pastors with discernment to fully understand a difficult situation within the church, it is to supernaturally equip them in their leadership and decision making for that time. If women on the missions prayer team have been gifted by the Spirit with amazing faith to intercede for a family planting a church in a foreign country, it is to provide encouragement to be steadfast in their belief that God will meet specific needs for that season.

Word of Caution

We find it interesting that many of the false teachers and itinerant preachers never choose to showcase on stage or in their television programs the gifts of helps, hospitality, serving others, or administrations. It always has to be a spectacular [supposed] prophecy or healing, word of knowledge or extravagant tongue highlighted to present themselves as being super-spiritual with a more direct connection to God than the average person. And yet people continue to flock to these healing rallies, signs and wonders events, miracle prophecy nights, and testimony events. We strongly recommend to our readers to pick up a copy of Chuck Smith's book *Charisma vs. Charismania*. This provides an

in-depth and “scripturally balanced look at the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and will equip you to avoid the extremes surrounding the subject of the Holy Spirit”.

It’s also interesting to note that Paul describes an explicit rank-ordering [1st Corinthians 12:28] of “first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administration, and finally tongues”. Theologians have debated for centuries what Paul’s ordering says of the relative importance of the gifts. False teachers who claim to do signs and wonders, and all the people who rush to seek after these supposed supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, typically do public displays on-stage, on-camera, and online of purported healings, words of knowledge, tongues, or prophesying. Their spectacular assemblies and events tend to focus on themselves and how spiritual they are, when the Bible says the gifts are used by God’s Spirit to testify of Jesus Christ.

God’s Gifts In You

People always ask, “How can I know what gifts the Holy Spirit has for me?” or “How do I get started with the gifts?”. The Bible is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is the only One who will decide on gifting a person, for His purposes. The first promise all believers have is that Jesus made sure the disciples knew [John 7:38-39] whoever believes in the Lord, “from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water – by this Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit”. Jesus also said [John 3:34] “for whoever God sends, will speak the words of God, for He gives the Holy Spirit without measure”. Remember, Paul referred to God’s Spirit as the One

Gifts from the Spirit

who seals us, in our hearts as the Lord's pledge [2nd Corinthians 1:22], because He prepares us for His purposes, and He gave us the Holy Spirit as His pledge – that down payment on our full ultimate redemption [2nd Corinthians 5:5].

For 20 years, Pastor Ricky Ryan poured into each of us, and his Godly counsel about the gifts remains the best we have heard on the subject. First, there is no need to be anxious or worried about how the Lord might gift you. Certain gifts do not elevate a person to a higher spiritual position or maturity. If Jesus is your Savior, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. Spend time in God's Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers, and the Lord will lead and prompt you to step up and serve others in some capacity, as He leads, for His purpose.

We read in 1st John 3:24 that whoever keeps the Lord's commands abide in Him, and He in them, and we can know that He abides in us by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us. John follows up [1st John 4:13] by explaining again how we know we abide in the Lord – it is because He has given us His Holy Spirit. So then, there is a clear difference between ALL Christians showing the fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in them throughout their daily lives, and the Holy Spirit giving certain gifts to a man or woman in order to equip for specific ministry. That's why Paul does not say, "do all men have love, joy, peace or patience?" – because the fruit of the Spirit is to be evident in ALL believers. But he does ask rhetorically [1st Corinthians 12:29-30] "are all apostles, prophets, teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all heal, speak in tongues, or interpret?" This shows clearly that the gifts are not given to everyone exactly the same. It is up to the Lord to decide what gifting to give to whom and for what purpose.

Encouragement

There is great comfort in knowing that it is the Holy Spirit who will decide how to uniquely equip you with specific gifts for ministry. The ultimate confirmation of any spiritual gift should be whether it draws attention to the person exercising the gift, or does it have complete focus on the Lord. Remember, the Holy Spirit testifies not of Himself, but of Jesus [John 15:26]. Review Pastor Chuck's excellent book *Charisma vs. Charismania* to see more details on the gifts in the power of Biblical simplicity versus those who only wish to draw attention to themselves as having greater spirituality and supposedly being closer to God. When the gifts are truly from the Holy Spirit, it will always result in attention, glory, honor, and praise going to the Lord and not to men or women. The next chapter begins Section-II of the book regarding the power of simplicity for church life, starting with how the church worships when it gathers together.



How did this chapter affect your thinking about the ways in which the Holy Spirit has specific gifting for you?

Gifts from the Spirit

Take a moment and reflect on what specific gifting the Holy Spirit has demonstrated in your life?

Now that you have a deeper understanding of the gifting from the Holy Spirit, what have you seen in your life?

As you consider the gifts, what are some actionable ways you can begin to encourage others with your gifting?

SECTION II

Church Life

CHAPTER FIVE

Worship

“Exalt the Lord and worship at His feet for He is holy.”
Psalm 99:5

One of the greatest privileges we have as Christians is to join together to worship the Lord as a congregation of believers. It is a wonderful way for us to not only express our hearts to God, but also for Him to prepare our hearts to hear directly from Him through the teaching of His Word. 1st Corinthians 10:31 states clearly how all believers should approach coming together for church: *whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God*. Paul tells the Ephesian believers [1:3-14] praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavens with every spiritual blessing in Christ. He set us apart for adoption by His will and for His pleasure, to the praise of His glorious grace. The Psalmist exhorts us [150:6] *let everything that has breath praise*

Worship

the Lord. The church in Colossae was encouraged [3:15-17] to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts, to be thankful, and admonish one another in all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with gratitude in their hearts.

In both Acts 1:14 and 2:42 Luke records that the earliest “church” services [those gatherings of followers of Jesus Christ] showed they were of one mind together and devoting themselves to prayer, the Apostles’ teachings, and to fellowship [*koinonia*], and the breaking of bread. Ephesians 5:18-20 reminds believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking out psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs – making melody with our hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. Worshipping the Lord God is the most basic action believers should have when they think about who God is and all He has done. When we consider the heavens [Psalms 8:3] the work of His hands, the moon and stars God has ordained, our response [verse 9] is “oh Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth”. Worshipping God is a foundational part of why believers gather together.

He Is Worthy

The Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are worthy of all praise and worship because of their great power, their love, and mighty works displayed throughout the creation. They are awesome in the works they have done. The Father showed His great mercy and kindness to us when He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, and so we thank Him for that. We have been extended grace so that we are now become children of the living God, adopted into His family and made

joint-heirs with Jesus so that we have an inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven – and for that we thank Him. Any time we turn our attention to the Lord in reverence, adoration, praise, and thankfulness – it is then worshipping Him for who He is and what He has done.

There is no one equal to the Lord, and of course there is no one higher than our God. There are no other gods alongside Him. He alone rules over all His creation and holds it together by His very word. 1st Chronicles 16:23-31 encourages us to *“SING to the Lord all the earth and proclaim His salvation day after day and DECLARE His glory among all the nations – His marvelous deeds among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise for all the gods of all the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him – strength and joy are His dwelling place. ASCRIBE to the Lord the glory due His name, and bring an offering before Him. WORSHIP the Lord in the splendor of His holiness. Let the heavens REJOICE and the earth be glad. Let them say among the nations ‘the Lord reigns’.”*

The Lord God alone is worthy of our worship. He made everything we see [and cannot see with the naked eye], He is before all things in this physical realm, and He holds the entire creation together by His very Word [Colossians 1:17]. He is great and greatly to be praised [1st Chronicles 16:25 - Psalm 48:1, 96:4-5]. His greatness is unsearchable [Psalm 145:3]. We will call upon the Lord because He is worthy to be praised [2nd Samuel 22:4]. Psalm 29:1-2 says we are to ascribe to the Lord all glory and strength due His name and worship Him.

It is completely logical for believers to worship God when they gather together as the church body. Being in the same room, side-by-side, seated or standing, there is something very beautiful that happens when several [or several hundred, or several thousand] believers in Jesus Christ collectively lift up the name of the Lord. Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds us to stir up in each other love and good deeds, not forsaking assembling together [as has become the habit of some], for we are to encourage one another all the more as we see the day of the Lord's return approaching. When the room fills with joyous songs of praise and worship from the congregation, two things happen. First, each person's heart and mind become entirely focused on who God is, His attributes, His love and mercy, His power and might, His grace and blessings in our lives. We get the attention off ourselves, and place it 100% on the Lord of the universe. Second, as the body of Christ [1st Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:12], our corporate worship ascends to the Lord just like a fragrant aroma that is pleasing to Him [2nd Corinthians 2:15].

Intent of Worship

Whether we gather with other believers, or come to the Lord privately, worshipping God is entirely about recognizing who He is, and then praising Him because of His attributes, and for all He has done. We come together as the church to put all of our attention on the One who rules and reigns over everything. Our motivation is the joy and thanksgiving we have deep inside in knowing God and having a relationship with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 63 declares, "Oh God, you are my God, to behold You in Your sanctuary, I will seek You earnestly,

I will seek after You, my soul thirsts for You, my heart yearns for You, Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You, I will bless You, I will lift up my hands unto Your name”.

The church worships the Lord because He is worthy of all praise and honor and glory. Psalm 18:3 exhorts followers of Jesus to call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. Revelation 4:11 reminds us, worthy are You our God to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things and by Your will they exist. Psalm 96:4 and Psalm 145:3 both state plainly, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Psalm 92:1-2 declares it is good to give thanks unto Thee of my God to sing praises to Your name Oh most High – to show forth Your lovingkindness and faithfulness by night. The foundation for the intent of our worship is simply that God is worthy – and so we bring our praises to Him together.

Call To Worship

Many of the more traditional denominations have a very specific *call to worship* as the start of the liturgy in their church services. It is often printed in the Sunday morning bulletin that people refer to, along with corporate prayers, hymns, perhaps a Nicene Creed or Apostles’ Creed, and maybe a doxology. While the Calvary Chapel model for church services is considered more informal [unlike the more “high church” of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians], we might consider how the *call to worship* might be a great way to settle everyone in and prepare our hearts for time in worship to our King. A recent review of some bulletins, psalters, and orders-of-worship included these

Worship

calls for the congregation to commence in worship to the Lord. This would simply be done by having a pastor, elder, lay-leader, or worship leader open up with “Welcome everyone to Calvary Chapel, at this time, let us turn all our attention to our Lord as we worship together”. Then a scriptural *call to worship* could be read aloud, drawing everyone to simply “be still and know that He is God” [Psalm 46:10]. There could then be an opening prayer prior to the first song of congregational worship. The following are bible verses that each provide a wonderful call to worship as the church gathers together:

- *Salvation belongs to the Lord,
Your blessing be on your people.* Psalm 3:8
- *Through the abundance of Your steadfast love,
We enter Your house, We bow down in holy fear,
Lead us Oh Lord in Your righteousness,
And make our way straight.* Psalm 5:7-8
- *Let us give thanks to the Lord with all our hearts,
Let us remember all your wonderful deeds,
We will be glad and exult in You,
We will sing praises to Your Name Oh Most High.* Psalm 9:1-2
- *Shout for joy to God all the earth,
Sing the glory of His name, Give Him glorious praise,
Sing to God, “How awesome are Your deeds” -
Great is Your power, all the earth worships You
and sings praises to You, Praise to Your name.* Psalm 66:1-4

My intent is not to imply any form of negative commentary on a more informal style of church service as not being as good as High-Church liturgy. But just as we might like to see the more formal traditional denominations include some contemporary praise music among their 18th century hymns, so too there might very well be something to gain in coming before the Lord in worship with a bit more recognition [and reverence] that we will be bringing our praise and adoration to the King of Kings, and a *call to worship* from His own Word is a good thing to do.

Great Worship Songs

Let me say right up front that this section is not some type of official list of approved songs that a church must sing to have excellent worship. And these are certainly not the only worship songs I would label as “great”. Rather, the following psalms, hymns, spiritual songs [remember Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3] are simply wonderful examples of lyrics that draw our focus and attention on worshipping and giving praise to God. These are praise and worship lyrics that help our hearts and minds truly focus entirely on Him, as we acknowledge who He is, His love, His power and might, and all He has done. Truly the Lord alone is worthy of our praise and worship:

- *Come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel
before the Lord our God our Maker, for He is our God,
and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep
of His hand.*
- *When I consider the heavens, the works of your hands,
when I consider Your love, each morning there are
mercies new when I consider you.*

- *Over all the earth You reign on High, every mountain stream every sunset sky, and my one request Lord my one only aim is that You reign in me again, Lord reign in me reign in Your power over all my dreams and in my darkest hour, You are the Lord of all I am, so won't You reign in me again.*
- *You're calling me to a deeper place, You're calling me to come away, this is the day that You have made to walk in Your love and Your grace, and I will sing to You my King forever and ever, I will rise up and worship Your holiness, I will sing a song of Your faithfulness oh yes, from the mountains to the valleys Your love will be my peace, and I will sing of Your love for me.*
- *I see the Lord seated on His throne exalted and the train of His robe fills the temple with glory, and the whole earth is filled with His glory, Holy Holy Holy is the Lord.*
- *As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after You, You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You. You alone are my strength my shield to You alone may my spirit yield, You alone are my hearts desire and I long to worship You.*
- *I will worship with all of my heart, and I will praise You with all of my strength, I will seek You all of my days and I will follow all of Your ways – I will give You all my worship I will give You all my praise, You alone I long to worship, You alone are worthy of my praise.*
- *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, Holy Holy is He, sing a new song to Him who sits on heaven's mercy seat, Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come, with all creation I sing praise to the King of Kings, You are my everything and I will adore You.*
- *Bless the Lord of my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name, He has done great things [Alleluia] He has done great things [Alleluia], He has done great things bless His holy name.*

- *It's falling from the clouds a strange and lovely sound,
I hear it in the thunder and the rain, It's ringing in the
skies it's like canons in the night as the music of the
universe plays, We're singing You are holy great and
mighty, the moon and the stars declare who You are, I'm
so unworthy but still you love me, forever my heart will
sing of how great You are.*
- *Grace You've shown me grace by lifting my shame, called
Me with lovingkindness, washed whiter than snow, You
have redeemed and made me whole. Jesus You have won
me You have broken every chain with love and mercy,
You have triumphed over death and You are worthy
of glory and praise.*
- *Bless the Lord oh my soul worship His holy name, sing
like never before oh my soul, I'll worship Your holy name
The sun comes up it's a new day dawning It's time to sing
Your song again, whatever may pass and whatever comes
before me, may I be singing when the evening comes.*
- *I come before You in this holy place giving worship to
the Lord of heaven, I see the great compassion on Your
face as I bow in humble adoration, now that I know
Your mercy given to me, Your grace covering me
Your Spirit living in me and I believe. Atonement setting
me free, Your glory I want to see, Your power working
in me and I believe!*
- *Jesus we have come to praise you and to lift Your name
on high, Jesus we have come to listen to Your words of
truth and life. As we lay our lives before You as a living
sacrifice, we lift our hearts and hands up to You for You
are the truth and life, as You take Your place among us be
a part of all we say, Give our hearts to understanding for
we know You are the way.*

- *Nothing can separate even if I ran away, Your love never fails. I know I still make mistakes but You have new mercy for me everyday, Your love never fails. You stay the same through the ages, Your love never changes, there may be pain in the night but joy comes in morning. And when the oceans rage I don't have to be afraid because I know that You love me and Your love never fails.*
- *Light of the world You stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes let me see beauty that made this heart adore You hope of a life spent with You, here I am to worship here I am to bow down here I am to say that you're my God, You're altogether lovely altogether worthy altogether wonderful to me.*

As you can probably imagine, this section about great worship songs could go for 50 pages or more, listing song after song after song that all have wonderful lyrics about praise and worship to the Lord. In addition to the worship songs just summarized, there would also be recognition of great hymns composed over the last few centuries, including: John Newton's *Amazing Grace*, Carl Gustav Boberg's *How Great Thou Art*, Reggie Heiber's *Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty*, Spafford's *It Is Well With My Soul*, and Chilsolm's *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*. We would also not omit Forgaill's *Be Thou My Vision*, the rich worship of *Blessed Assurance* by Fanny Crosby, Perronet's *All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name*, and the majesty of Matthew Bridges' *Crown Him With Many Crowns*. My intention here is to bring to mind many of the kinds of worship songs that share the common theme of Biblically sound lyrics focused entirely on the Lord and a lovely melody that is easy to sing and remember. If your favorite worship

songs, hymns, or *Maranatha Music* choruses were not listed, these were simply meant to be a representative sample from the rich library of wonderful worship music and lyrics.

Over the last few years, I have found myself revisiting time and again to this wonderful reminder from Matt Redman [Watford, England] of what worship really should be all about:

*When the music fades and all is stripped away and
I simply come longing to just to bring something that's of
worth that will bless Your heart. I'll bring You more than
a song for a song in itself is not what You have required.
You search much deeper within through the way things
appear, You're looking into my heart,*

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship it's all about You
it's all about You Jesus, I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've
made it when it's all about You, it's all about You Jesus.*

*King of endless worth no one could express how much
You deserve. Though I'm weak and poor all I have is
Yours, every single breath.*

More Than Songs

While many people equate church worship with singing songs, that is only one form of worship to God – and the song in and of itself is not what the Lord expects from us. What is truly pleasing to the Lord in our worship is the condition of our heart. In Matthew 15:9 Jesus spoke right from Isaiah 29:13 when noting that people try to honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him – they worship the Lord in vain as they teach their own precepts as if they were doctrine from the Scriptures. This is quite sobering, to think that the action of worship can be nothing more than going through the motions, while the heart

Worship

inside is not actively involved in giving praise the God. May all of us be diligent to check our motives, thoughts, and concerns as we come together with the church body for worship – that all we do would not be routine or just some customary process.

Paul says [Romans 12:1-2] we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God – *our true and proper worship*. Paul often mentioned singing as a form of worship for believers in the church [Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 refer to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with the heart toward the Lord]. But there are many other ways to worship the Lord aside from singing songs.

The Bible can be read aloud to the people declaring the awesome power, mighty works, and majesty of the Lord so that everyone can hear those declarations and agree in their hearts [“Amen”] with the Lord’s attributes. In 1st Timothy 4:13 Paul tells the church to devote themselves to the public reading of Scripture. Jesus read from Isaiah when He was in the Nazareth synagogue [Luke 4:14-30]. Paul closed His first letter to the church in Thessalonica [5:27] with instruction to read that letter out loud to all the church. Believers can speak out *thanks* to God for this is His will for us in Christ Jesus [1st Thessalonians 5:18].

Time in prayer is another way to focus on the Lord and worship Him. The Lord’s Prayer [Luke 11] includes time spent recognizing “Your name is holy” [hallowed be Thy name]. Paul said [Philippians 4:4] to rejoice in the Lord always, and [verse-6] in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let all your requests be made known to God. Hebrews 13:15 says we can declare with the fruit of our lips giving *thanks* to His name.

Psalms 95:6-7 exhorts us to come and worship, bow down, and kneel [in prayer] before the Lord our God our Maker. And Jeremiah 29:13 reminds us that when we seek the Lord in prayer and worship, we will find Him with all our heart.

Paul exhorts believers [Romans 12:1] to present their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice that is acceptable to God who is our spiritual service of worship. That means we can daily give worship to the Lord in how we present ourselves to Him for His service. The very same way that Paul explains that because our bodies have now become a temple for the living God, and we should glorify Him with our bodies [1st Corinthians 6:20]. And while physical exercise and discipline in our earthly bodies has some benefits for being “in shape”, godliness is profitable for all things since it holds the promise not only for this present life, but also for the life still to come [1st Timothy 4:8].

Other forms of worship include how men and women as painters, sculptors, writers, and composers show worship to the Lord through artistic expression - dedicating their works entirely to God. This can be a beautiful way for human creativity to turn hearts and minds toward the Lord. Michelangelo sculpted King David from marble and also painted a chapel ceiling. Leonardo painted the last supper. Caravaggio painted Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road. Handel composed *Messiah*. Timeless music giving glory to the Lord came from Mozart, Bach, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schubert, Wagner, and Liszt. The same is said of Keith Green, Fanny Crosby, John Newton, Charlotte Elliott, and Andrae Crouch. Bunyan, Lewis, Tolkien, Chambers,

Worship

Tozer, Chesterton, and Edwards each penned timeless literary works for which they gave God the glory and praise. Architects designed and built buildings as worship to God. 1924 British Olympian Eric Liddell famously said, “I believe God made me for a purpose, He made me fast, when I run I feel His pleasure”.

Not One Location

Worship does not only happen in a church sanctuary. It is not confined to a physical location. The Samaritan woman drawing water at the well in Sychar told Jesus [John 4:20-24] the Jews say true worship only happens in the Temple at Jerusalem, but her people worship on Mount Gerizim. So the Lord clarified for her [and us] that God is Spirit, and true worshippers do so in spirit and in truth - these are those the Father seeks to worship Him. This is the same word of truth of which James 1:18 speaks, that gives us new birth. The same word of truth we wish to handle correctly [2nd Timothy 2:15]. Because that which is born of the flesh is flesh, while that born of the Spirit is spirit [John 3:6].

I have visited many gorgeous cathedrals throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia [Notre Dame in Paris, St. Patrick's in New York City, Ely Cathedral Cambridgeshire England, St. Stephen's in Vienna, Santa Maria del Fiore in Firenze Italy, The Cathedral in Chartres France, St. Paul's in London, St. Mark's in Venezia, the Cathedral Basilica in Lima Peru, the Vitus Cathedral within Prague's castle, Sainte Chapelle in Paris, and Washington D.C. National Cathedral]. These are each truly awe-inspiring in architecture, acoustics, and ambience.

However, worshipping the Lord in one of these glorious buildings is in no way superior to worship that happens when a

Maasai tribe assembles in an open field of the Tanzanian bush to lift up praises to the Lord. Or when a person stands alone on a beach or mountaintop to take in the incredible beauty of a sunrise or sunset, declaring praise to God for His handiwork in creation. Or when 30 individuals secretly meet in an outlawed home church in Hanoi, Saigon, Shanghai, or Beijing. Even when several hundred people worship in an converted lemon-packing warehouse two blocks off the beach in Santa Barbara. Always remember that worship is entirely about the person's heart, and is not dependent on the locations or structure's beauty.

Obedience Is Worship

Perhaps most interesting of all is that the Bible presents a very strong case that the most direct form of worship is simply *obedience* to God's Word. What matters most to the Lord is our relationship to Him. Living our daily life in obedience to His Word, following His precepts, spending time in His Word, hearing the Holy Spirit's witness in all our circumstances, and standing firm in God's will together define the close relationship the Lord desires for believers. Consider Deuteronomy 10:1 – God's people are to love the Lord and keep His requirements, decrees, laws, and commandments. Jesus said [John 15:14] that we are His friends if we *keep His commands*, and [John 14:15] if you love me, *keep my commands*. Our Lord also said [Luke 11:28] how blessed are those who hear God's Word and *obey it*. The Apostle John wrote [2nd John 1:6] "this is love, that we walk in *obedience to His commands*, as you heard from the beginning".

Worship

The Lord charged King Saul to complete a specific task [1st Samuel 15], yet the king made his choice to disobey God's Word to him and instead used worship and sacrifice as covering [an excuse] for his failure to simply *obey God's Word*. The Lord's response to Saul's use of an elaborate form of worship was simply, "***to obey is better than sacrifice***". James 1:25 says when we look deeply into God's perfect law and continue in it, we are blessed in what we do. Walking closely with the Lord each day, abiding in Him, obeying God's Word, keeping His statutes, remaining consistent in following His direction – these are all forms of daily obedience and perhaps the best way to worship.

Focus Of Worship

When the church comes together for worship, it is not to sit and listen to a skillful band of musicians put on a concert - a performance - and maybe have some people sing along. It is not to showcase the talents of the vocalists and instrumentalists. The main focus is to simply lead the congregation so ***they can worship***. The attention of the worship time should be entirely on the Lord. People should not be staring at the stage, or busy watching the musicians and vocalists. The time in worship is not to showcase the musical talents of the vocalists, the drummer, a guitarist, an organist, pianist or any other person up in front. There is no need to have to prominently highlight who is the owner of the copyright for the music or lyrics. The sound levels should be balanced somewhere between hearing those singers who lead, while also hearing the beautiful melody and harmonies of the congregation singing out together.

Men and women should be able to turn their hearts and minds entirely toward Jesus – without the various distractions of a busy concert production going on up in front. The content of the lyrics should be biblically sound and not introduce concepts or images and ideas that are not consistent with God’s Word. Some of the very best worship music remains putting Scripture verses to a lovely melody, so that all can sing praises and worship together right from the Word of God. This was one of the hallmarks of *Maranatha Music* and the “Praise” series of albums [starting in 1974 with *Praise-1 The Praise Album*, through *Praise-20 Who Is Like The Lord* in 1999]. In the 1980s, the late Tom Howard, along with Bill Batstone, led the Worship Community vocal choir of 75 or so lay-people within Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. They produced an album series *Psalms-Alive* [4 volumes] that had lyrics taken directly from the Psalms put to beautiful melodies and arrangements. As each new album was finished, these were given away for free out in the church foyer or in the courtyard to everyone attending the services. Here are a few examples of worship songs with lyrics from Bible verses:

- *How lovely is Your dwelling place, Almighty Lord, there’s a hunger deep inside my soul, only in Your presence are my heart and flesh restored, how lovely is Your dwelling place. A single day is better when spent in humble praise, than a thousand days of living without You, the Lord bestows His favor on each one who obeys and blessings on the one whose heart is true.*
- *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you, Alleluia!*

- *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty – the beauty of the Lord, to inquire in His temple – the temple of the Lord.*
- *Give ear to my words oh Lord, consider my meditation, Harken unto the voice of my cry my King and my God, for unto Thee will I pray, my voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, oh Lord in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee and will look up.*
- *Thou oh Lord art a shield about me, You're my glory, You're the lifter of my head, Alleluia!*
- *It is good to give thanks unto Thee oh my God to sing praises to Thy name oh most High, to show forth Thy love by morning Thy faithfulness by night, to sing praises to Thy name oh most High – worthy, worthy is the name of the Lord, of the Lord.*
- *Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name – He has done great things Alleluia!*
- *Oh God You are my God, to behold You in the sanctuary oh my God, I will search for You, my soul thirsts for You, my heart yearns for You, oh my God – in a dry and weary land and no water where I stand I want to see Your power and Your glory!*
- *The Lord, He is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation, He is my God and I shall prepare Him my heart. The Lord He shall reign forever and ever, Amen!*
- *Search my heart, look deep within my soul, see if there be anything at all that might keep me from hearing You, keep me from knowing You, keep me from loving You dear Lord.*
- *Hear my cry oh Lord attend unto my prayer, from the ends of the earth will I cry out to Thee, and when my heart is overwhelmed You lead me to the Rock that is higher than I, that is higher than I.*

Encouragement

There is such a wealth of great worship music and lyrics for the church to sing praise and worship to the Lord. Hymns from the last five centuries. Songs of praise from four decades of the Calvary Chapel movement. New melodies and lyrics from today's composers and artists. The main principle is that worship should be focused on the Lord, and worship leaders should have only one objective – lead God's people! Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman at the well [John 4:23-24] the time had come when true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for these are the kinds of worshippers the Father seeks. There is tremendous joy that occurs when the church gathers to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

Worship is a great first area for the *power of simplicity* in church life. It starts off when the body of Christ gathers together for Sunday mornings, midweek evenings, men's fellowship, women's Bible study, young adults, college ministry, youth, kids, retreats, conferences, or home groups. The time spent in corporate worship can prepare hearts to hear from God's Word, so the Holy Spirit can speak into lives. Worship sets the focus of our life 100% on Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Spirit, as we turn all our attention [Hebrews 12:2] toward the author and finisher of our faith. He created the world, everything was made and is sustained by Him. He loved us so much, He made a provision for us to have restored relationship with Him – even though we are by nature sinners. And He extended grace to us that we are now adopted into His family as joint-heirs with Jesus

Worship

Christ. This is why we worship when the church assembles. The following chapter looks at how solid teaching from God's Word is the next thing that simply builds powerful church life.



In what ways does this chapter impact your understanding of congregational worship and praise within the church?

What can improve in your heart and mind as you prepare for a focused time in worship with other believers?

What are examples of worship in your everyday life?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CHAPTER SIX

Teach God's Word

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the Word.”
Romans 10:17

When believers in Jesus Christ gather together, another key focus for that time is to hear directly from God's Word. We already covered in Chapter One that Christians have this amazing provision from the Lord - the Bible - God's very specific and personal Word to mankind. Time given to the teaching of God's Word allows the entire congregation to hear and respond to the Holy Spirit using that teaching to speak to people's hearts and minds. We have already seen previously that God's Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness [2nd Timothy 3:16]. And it is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing right through and able to divide the soul from the spirit [Hebrews 4:12] – and discerns the

thoughts and intentions of the heart. What a blessing it is for the church to receive instruction and encouragement from the Bible.

Teaching God's Word [the Logos], the simple truths of the gospel [that "good news"] is the foundation upon which the church is built [Romans 15:20]. Paul and Barnabas spent their time with the church in Antioch *teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord* [Acts 15:35]. When Silas and Timothy came down to Corinth from Macedonia, Paul began to devote himself entirely to the *teaching of God's Word*, testifying to the Jews in that city that Jesus was in fact the Christ, having already spent time in the local synagogue on each Sabbath teaching the Jews and the Greeks about the Lord [Acts 18:4, 11]. Many in Corinth came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior because of Paul's teaching from God's Word in the synagogue [verses 7-8 note Titius Justus who lived next door to the synagogue, and Crispus who was the leader of that synagogue]. Verses 9-11 recount how the Lord told Paul to stay in that city for 18 months and *teach the Word of God* because there were many believers, and no harm would come.

When several thousand people crowded outside the house of the Apostles during Pentecost in Jerusalem in 32AD, the main focus was Peter standing up and *teaching God's Word* – going through the Torah and the prophets – explaining that Jesus was the Christ spoken of throughout the Jewish scriptures. The 27 verses from Acts 2:14-40 record this sermon, as Peter taught God's Word – and the result was 3,000 people accepted Jesus as their Messiah. From that, the pattern was then in place for the church [verse-42] - so that they were continually devoting themselves to the Apostles' *teaching* and to fellowship.

In Acts 3:12-26 Peter preached a provocative sermon in the Temple at Solomon's Portico, *teaching the Jews* from the book of Moses, that the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had now glorified His own Son Jesus who was crucified. Philip went into Samaria [Acts 8:5] and began *teaching about Jesus*. In Acts 10:34-47 Peter was *teaching Gentiles* about salvation through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, encouraging them to be baptized. Peter is teaching in the Jerusalem church that Gentiles can also be saved [Acts 11: 4-18] – recounting what he experienced in Joppa. Paul is *teaching in the Antioch synagogue* [Acts 13:16-41] directly from our Old Testament, using the Torah, the Psalms, and the prophets to show that Jesus is the Messiah in fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies.

Barnabas and Paul were *teaching God's Word* in the Iconium synagogue [a major metropolitan center in Asia Minor halfway between Antioch and Tarsus], with many Jews and Greeks readily believing in Jesus. The Jews who did not believe tried to stir up the Gentiles against this teaching [Acts 14:3-7]. Jesus' brother James [Acts 15:13-21] brought a strong *teaching from God's Word* about whether Gentile believers must be circumcised according to the Law of Moses. These are but a few of the many examples where teaching God's Word is the focus of believers gathering together [and those who did not believe]. The Word is a solid rock upon which the church stands to receive instruction, exhortation, and admonition when needed.

All throughout the gospels we see Jesus *teaching*, whether one-on-one with Nicodemus [John 3], with two men on

their way to Emmaus [Luke 24], with the rich younger ruler [Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, 18:18-30], a larger gathering of scribes and priests in the Temple [Mark 12 & 14, Matthew 21 & 26, Luke 19-20-21, John 7-8], in local synagogues [Matthew 9 & 13], or to crowds of several thousand [Matthew 14]. In Matthew 24 *Jesus was teaching* on the Mount of Olives about the future events, using the fig tree as an example for discerning God's plan and timing for Israel. Jesus taught a lengthy, detailed, and varied Sermon on the Mount [Matthew chapters 5-6-7] that included the following twelve topical teachings:

- The Beatitudes
- Salt, light, and our witness in the world
- Old Testament law
- Care for the poor
- How to pray and fast
- Defining true wealth
- Worrying [anxiety] in this world
- Not judging others
- The Golden Rule
- The narrow gate
- The tree and its fruit, and
- Two contrasting foundations.

That's a DVD or podcast series we would all love to have in our library of Bible teachings. Jesus also taught on missionary work [Matthew 10], church life [Matthew 18], and He used various parables [Matthew 13:1-53] to teach key lessons. People often say

how great it would have been to hear the *teaching* of Jesus during His almost 3-year ministry prior to the cross. Of course it would have been amazing to hear Him *teaching* through Moses and the prophets about Himself as the Christ who had to suffer. But the very Word of God is available every time the church assembles, for *teaching* by a person who is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to bring God's Word to tangible application in the lives of those who will listen with an open heart and mind.

Gifted Teachers

The pastor-overseers who have been specifically gifted by the Holy Spirit to *teach the Bible* are specifically charged with bringing understanding, insights, and connections for daily life from the Word of God directly to His people. Being able to accurately and responsibly *teach the Word* is a core requirement for an elder- overseer [Titus 1:9, 1st Timothy 3:2 and 2nd Timothy 2:24]. Those who *teach* the Bible must fully recognize that it is not just another book from which to make references, but it is the very Word of God – living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, such that it can pierce through in a person's life to the point where it is able to divide one's conscious soul from the spirit, even discerning the inner thoughts and intentions of a person's heart [Hebrews 4:12].

We also recognize [Romans 2:21] that those who teach are also taught themselves by the very same Word of God. This is such a true statement from my personal experience over the last 30+ years of teaching the Bible. It is such a rich and blessed time doing my preparation in God's Word for a men's study or

retreat, family camp in Twin Peaks, a Wednesday evening home group or midweek church service, a prophecy conference, or filling in for my pastor on a Sunday morning. Elder-overseers should be sure that all the pastors' schedules allocate extended, regular time in their weekly planning for study-preparation in *teaching God's Word*. It is a great investment in the life of the congregation when there is specific time set aside for reading God's Word, meditating on it and thinking through its meaning, cross-referencing Scriptural passages, and developing key applications for the church body.

There is great responsibility that comes with *teaching the Word of God* to others. This should not be taken lightly. And not everyone is gifted to teach God's Word with depth and accuracy. James [3:1] notes that not many in the church should become teachers, knowing that as such, those who do teach will incur an even stricter judgment from the Lord. What is James getting at? The teacher carries the expressed spiritual responsibility to be sure and *teach sound doctrine* [1st Timothy 4:6] as a good servant of Jesus Christ who is being constantly nourished on the words of faith. That's why Jesus said very clearly [Matthew 18:6] that for one who teaches and causes someone to stumble [not handling God's Word of truth correctly, accurately – see 2nd Timothy 2:15], it would be better for that teacher if a heavy millstone were tied around his neck to be drowned in the depths of the sea [than to lead people astray with false doctrine].

Instruction

Perhaps the most important aspect of teaching the Word is to provide clear direction to know and understand more about

the Lord. Proverbs 4:2 states “I will give you sound teaching, do not abandon my *instruction*”. Verse 13 continues “*take hold of instruction*, do not let go, guard her for she is your very life”. Proverbs 8:10 makes it clear that *instruction is better* than silver, and Godly knowledge better than even the choicest gold. The person on the path of life will *heed instruction* [Proverbs 10:17], while having a healthy and reverent fear of the Lord is the *instruction for wisdom* [Proverbs 15:33]. Paul knew [Romans 15:4] whatever had been written in earlier times [the Torah, prophets, Psalms] was *for our instruction*, that through perseverance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Great sermons for the church will lay out foundational principles regarding God’s character, His nature, and how He has revealed Himself to mankind. Solid teaching with sound doctrine provides the church congregation with knowledge of the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. People will have a sure footing in the timeless truths about God’s providence in His creation and plan of redemption. Excellent instruction from the Bible will anchor the church for how to live in the world and be a strong witness to those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior. The outcome of high quality Biblical instruction is a church body that will grow and mature in the knowledge of the Lord – to have a closer relationship with God and other believers.

Exhortation

Time spent being taught from God’s Word will always provide exhortation to the church – strong encouragement to be following the Lord more closely, abiding in His promises, and

trusting in God's will. What better way to exhort believers to walk closer to the Lord than to teach the timeless principles of the gospel message. Paul *exhorted the church* [Colossians 3:16] to have the Word of Christ dwell richly in them, *teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom*. Sound teaching from the Bible will be part of the process of how the Holy Spirit sanctifies the church to greater spiritual maturity – even as Jesus noted [John 17:17] that it is truth that sanctifies believers, and God's Word is that truth. Paul understood [Acts 20:20] that *teaching the Word* was profitable, whether in public, or in smaller venues, or teaching from house to house. Paul said [1st Thessalonians 4:1] *exhortation* is received by *instruction* as to how one should walk and please God - [Titus 1:9] holding fast to the faithful Word through the teaching of sound doctrine.

Admonition

When the church is settled in to hear from God's Word, the teaching will also *admonish* men and women about specific matters about which the church should be careful. Romans 15:14 is a great starting place in how the Lord uses knowledge from His Word as the basis for how the church can effectively be able to admonish men and women in love. Colossians 3:16 also shows as the Word of Christ dwells richly in the church with all wisdom, it can teach and *admonish the brethren*. Paul clearly spoke to the church [1st Thessalonians 5:14] to *admonish* the unruly among them. Admonition is correction brought firmly in God's Word, but expressed in love, to see those who receive it turn from their current path or situation, and move in the direction of godliness. This is never to be done in an adversarial

or confrontational manner, but handled in love, as with a brother or sister [2nd Thessalonians 3:15].

Verse-By-Verse

Chuck Smith established a Calvary Chapel tradition of teaching the full counsel of the Bible by going through it verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, Genesis through to Revelation and back again. If you have gone through any of his teachings online [or by DVD, CD, and even cassette tapes] you will notice they are listed as either the 2000-series [followed by 3000-series, 4000, and so on] based on which cycle it was going through the entire Bible start to finish. Pastor Chuck noted that this process would ensure that the church would be taught everything in the Bible, and not just selected items. The church would get instruction in every aspect of God's providential plan for mankind. Many will say that over the course of 20-25 years, they had been through the entire Bible multiple times with Pastor Chuck – each time being better, with a more rich understanding than the prior cycle(s). This will also mean the congregation gets exposed to what might be described as more obscure [less popular] books such as Leviticus, Numbers, Habakkuk, Nahum, Haggai, Titus, Philemon, or Jude. God can have very important things to say to His church through verse-by-verse teaching that covers all the facets of the Lord's interactions with mankind – and some of the interesting [less famous] men and women He used to bring about His perfect will and plan for all creation.

For 20 years, Pastor Ricky Ryan would select a certain book of the Bible and teach verse-by-verse through it, always

reminding the congregation in Santa Barbara “God will have us in the right place at the right time” - whether teaching on idol worship, the rapture, heaven, hell, unconfessed sin, tithing, creation and evolution, premarital sex, missionaries, family life, loving your neighbors, raising children, fruit of the Spirit, gifts from the Spirit, outreach-evangelism, or end times prophecy. It was always so encouraging to see the connection between where we were in 1st Peter, Genesis, Acts, Daniel, Psalms, or the gospel of John and how that fit exactly with what was going on in our local community, and what God had for the church at that time.

Topical Teaching

While verse-by-verse teaching remains a hallmark of the Calvary Chapel movement, it is certainly not the one and only way to teach God's Word to the congregation. A topical study is a great way to take on a specific issue – going through both the Old Testament and the New Testament to see the bases for how God addresses certain matters from the patriarchs to the early church. Here are several examples of topical studies I have both taught and seen taught to others over nearly 40 years attending Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa and Santa Barbara:

- Godly Wisdom and Approaches to Finances
- Anchoring Strong Marriages
- The Major Prophets
- The Minor Prophets
- Raising Kids God's Way
- The Bible's Mighty Men of Valor

- The Precepts of Godly Women
- The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
- Acts and the Launch of the Early Church
- The Case for Biblical Creation
- Sanctification in the Life of Believers
- Absolute Truth in a Relative Culture
- How We Got Our Bible
- End Times Biblical Prophecy
- The Life of Paul the Apostle
- The Footprints of the Messiah

God can use the focus of one topic to develop spiritual maturity in men, women, young adults, families, teens, pre-teens, college students, young professionals, and children. Key principles can be developed from the Scriptures that apply to a given topic. The church can then be grounded in a clear and sound Biblical perspective that is well referenced and specifically taught throughout the full counsel of God's Word.

Be Bereans - Be Alert

Luke told Theophilus [Acts 17:11] that the believers living in the city of Berea [located in central Greece] were more noble-minded than the believers in Thessalonica [about 45 miles east], because they received the *teaching of God's Word* with great eagerness – and examined the Scriptures daily [going through the Torah, the prophets, and Psalms] to see whether these things being taught were so. Whatever was being taught was probably checked and double-checked to confirm it was sound. This is a

great reminder to the church today. The 1st Century church was warned [same for the 21st Century] that a time would come when people will NOT want to listen to sound doctrine – but wanting instead to have their ears tickled with the things they wish to hear, they will gather for themselves those who will teach in accordance with their own desires [2nd Timothy 4:3].

Time allocated for the church to be deeply instructed in God's Word, from pastors who are specifically gifted to teach it, should always build up the body of Christ in *true knowledge* of the Lord by the Holy Spirit. Paul warns [1st Timothy 6:3-4] that if anyone *teaches* or advocates a different doctrine that does not agree with the sound words of Jesus, and with doctrine that conforms to godliness, that person is conceited and understands nothing, but instead has a morbid interest in controversial types of questions and disputes about meanings of words, and from that comes envy, strife, and friction from a depraved mind.

That's why Paul encourages all Christians [Titus 1:9] to hold fast to the faithful Word in *accordance with the teaching they had received*, so they also will be able to *teach and exhort others in sound doctrine*. He followed that up by saying, "But as for you Titus, always speak forth the things that are in line with sound doctrine" [Titus 2:1]. Teachers of God's Word must be those who have been formally approved to teach, so they have no need to be ashamed, because they are able to rightly divide and explain the Word of truth [2nd Timothy 2:15]. Men were sent out to other churches [1st Corinthians 4:17] specifically to teach the same truths they had been taught, passing along this sound doctrine so others would do the same with consistency [1st Timothy 4:11],

even as Paul exhorted the young pastor in Ephesus, “those things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these same truths to faithful men who will be able to *teach* others [2nd Timothy 2:2].

Encouragement

Teaching the Word of God [the Logos] is clearly one of the most basic components for healthy church life, and should always be the basis upon which the church is built. The great news is that God’s Word is complete, lacking in nothing. When the church gathers together, the teaching from the Bible speaks to everyone’s heart, mind, and spirit.

The Word is 100% inspired directly from the Holy Spirit [2nd Timothy 3:16] so it is then profitable for ***teaching***, as well as for reproof, correction, and training in all that is righteousness. Paul reminds the church [2nd Timothy 4:2] to preach and ***teach the Word of God*** – to be ready in season and out [meaning for those times prepared for and the spontaneous times that catch you off guard] so we are able to reprove [provide a reprimand], rebuke [bring truth to an area of error], and exhort [encourage] others, always doing so with patience [a fruit of the Spirit].

The ***power*** available to all believers for great church life includes time to worship the Lord as a congregation, as well as time to teach the Word of God – so that everyone may receive guidance and direction from a reliable source of truth. These are the basics that define the simplicity of how the Lord provides all we need for both our Christian life and church life together. It is not necessary to chase after the newest fad, latest craze, or

supposed new revelations, signs, or wonders. The simple basics in place in the 1st Century church [and subsequent 19 centuries] remain the timeless foundations God knew would always work for individuals and congregations. The next chapter looks at how prayer is a powerful component of sound church life.



In what ways does this chapter challenge you about the depth and consistency of how the Word of God is taught within the church?

What are your expectations for how God's Word should be taught in the church - to all ages and in all ministry areas?

What are ways you can incorporate teaching God's Word in your daily routine, and can you actively teach God's Word to others?

Teach God's Word

How does the whole congregation being taught from God's Word move out into and through all facets of church life?

[illegible]

CHAPTER SEVEN

Prayer

“Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.”
1st Thessalonians 5:17-18

When the church comes together as that gathering of believers, they will also spend time in prayer to the Lord. Prayer is intentional, direct communication with God. To pray is to literally open up an active conversation with the Lord of the universe, on a very personal 1-on-1 basis. We can always have confidence [1st John 5:14] that when we approach God in prayer, if we ask in accordance with His will, He hears us. Thank the Lord that because the Holy Spirit dwells in believers all the time, it's the very Spirit of God [Romans 8:26-27] who helps the church in its human weakness, when we don't know on our own how to pray or what to pray for – as the Spirit will then intercede on our behalf, and He searches our hearts and He know our minds, all in accordance with the will of God. There is tremendous power for a church that prays about everything [Philippians 4:6-7] with thanksgiving, bringing all requests directly to the Lord.

Prayer

Pastor Chuck's 2001 book *Effective Prayer Life* covers these topics: 1) What is Prayer, 2) Purpose of Prayer, 3) Privilege of Prayer, 4) Effective Prayer, 5) Strength in Prayer, and 6) Pray and I Will Answer [you can find the PDF online for free]. This is a wonderful resource to get solid grounding in the basics about prayer in the life of the believer. My favorite take-aways from this small book are that prayer can be *worship* to God, *petition* to God, or *intercession* on behalf of others. All are excellent ways to understand the simple *power of prayer* for church life.

Prayer as Worship

The congregation is drawn into a close spiritual bonding with the Lord when the prayers of the saints rise up before God. In my numerous visits [since 1997] to Calvary Chapel in Nice, France, I always love seeing this beautiful hand-scripted plaque hanging in the sanctuary that says:



La fumée des parfums monte avec les prières des saints de la main de l'ange devant Dieu.

[from Revelation 8:4] “The smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints from the angel’s hand went up to God”. Prayers of God’s people rise up as a fragrant aroma and they bless the Lord. This same imagery foreshadows the tabernacle and the Temple [Exodus 30, 31, 35, 37, Leviticus 4, 6, 16, 1st Samuel 2, 1st Kings 12, 13, Isaiah 27, 1st Chronicles 6, 28] as coals were set on the altar of incense, creating a beautiful aroma. David wrote of this also [Psalm 141:2] that our prayers would be counted as incense before God - the lifting of our hands like the evening offering. Paul also noted [2nd Corinthians 2:15] that we are a fragrance of Christ to God – a witness to those who know God, and also to those who do not yet believe. This is again clearly defined in Revelation 5:8 – that in the heavenly realm there are elders who fall down before the Lord, and in their hands are bowls of incense which ARE the prayers of the saints. What a wonderful and profound picture to have come to mind as the church gathers – that our prayers are actually a form of worship rising up before the Lord just like a fragrant aroma – an incense that pleases Him. May the church always understand prayer as a core focus of our collective time together.

Prayer as Petition

The congregation brings all kinds of requests right to the Lord when they pray together. Such petitions are brought as we lift up a wide range of needs, both within the church body, as well as matters of our city, state, and country. Psalm 19:14 serves as a clear reminder of the importance of prayer, that the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart would be

Prayer

acceptable in the sight of the Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Paul reminded the Ephesians [6:18] to bring prayers of petition at all times in the Spirit, and in such a view to be on the alert with all perseverance and petitions for all the saints. This clearly means that we are to not only pray for our own needs, but also to be mindful [aware] of the needs for many others throughout the church family. Paul once again [1st Timothy 2:1] urged the churches that entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made to God on behalf of all men. The same was said to the church body in Philippi [4:6] – in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let all your requests be made known unto God. So then, this is a major component of what God wants to see happen when His church gathers.

Prayer as Intercession

The congregation can also be intercessors in prayer. To intercede is defined as “intervening on behalf of another”. This prayer will ask the Lord to sustain others with His grace and hope. This prayer will ask the Lord to not let others grow weary as the church prays for them, that God would strengthen them and grant them faith to endure. Paul referred to petitions and intercession as two different prayers offered up [1st Timothy 1:2]. Intercessory prayer is different from offering petitions [which are passed along specifically from others about some expressed need]. Intercession is when the Holy Spirit prompts hearts to step right in alongside those associated with a difficult or pressing matter, to lift them up so they will not grow weary as they petition God and wait patiently on His answer.

Think of this as: *petitions* are needs that have been made known to pray for in very specific terms. *Intercession* involves coming alongside others in their time of need – praying for those who are struggling in their prayers. An example of a petition is “Pray for our son who is having a difficult time with his college courses and grades”. An example of an intercession is stepping in and praying for those parents who are not sure what to do about their son’s situation. The church can bring intercessory prayer alongside many people in the congregation – that God would sustain them, and they would not be discouraged or feel alone in facing tough times in their lives. Such prayer literally begins with, “Lord I come before you on behalf of this family”, and you then intercede for them before God. Many times this intercession is not even known to those on whose behalf you are praying. The real joy is to later hear testimony of people who have come through a very difficult time, recounting how they clearly felt spiritually supported and uplifted to stay the course, hold their faith, trust in God, believe even more in their hearts – all because others had interceded for them. The church should always be about prayerfully coming alongside men and women who are going through challenges to their faith. Intercession shares in the questions and hurts of others.

Guide to Prayer

Jesus provided a wonderful and clear model for how to pray [Matthew 6:9-13]. This provides sound guidelines for any prayer time when the church gathers. Start by acknowledging He is our Father who resides in heaven, and is over and above

everything. We recognize that His name is holy. These first two statements confirm in our hearts and minds that God is completely [and always] worthy of our worship and praise. There is no one like Him, no others alongside Him – He alone is enthroned on high [Psalm 113:5, Psalm 71:19, Exodus 15:11].

Then we agree that our desire is to see His kingdom come and His will be done here on earth even as it is in heaven. His kingdom [Psalm 47:7-8] is over everything. His reign will be forever [Exodus 15:11, Psalm 146:10, 93:1, 1st Timothy 6:16]. We all look forward to the day when the Lord will once again rule and reign over all the earth, sitting on David's throne in Jerusalem [Psalm 9:7-8], and He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and with the increase of His government and peace there will be no end [Isaiah 9:7]. We know the throne of David will be established forever [1st Kings 2:45], and Jesus will one day rule all nations with a rod of iron [Revelation 2:27]. The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ [Revelation 11:5] and Jesus Christ will reign forever and ever. His descendants will be established forever, and His throne as the days of heaven [Psalm 89:29]. This is the One to whom we pray. As the church comes to Him in prayer, we do so with holy reverence, acknowledging His kingdom still to come.

We can then bring daily needs to Him. These petitions are not demands of Him, but our requests offered in humility, because we recognize the Lord rules over all heaven and earth. And these are already in the context of His will being done on earth even as in heaven. The posture for “give us this day our daily bread” is to know in our hearts that God is the One who

meets all of our needs. Everything we have comes from Him [Romans 11:36]. His divine providence has provided us all we need pertaining to this life and to godliness [2nd Peter 1:3]. All our needs are supplied [Philippians 4:19] according to the riches of His glory. Because the Lord is our shepherd watching over us at all times [Psalm 23:1], we shall not want. We do not have to worry about daily food or clothing [Matthew 6:25, 31]. God cares for even the smallest [and seemingly insignificant] sparrow, so He will of course provide for us [Matthew 6:26]. The Lord knows our needs even before we bring our petitions [Matthew 6:8]. As we seek first His kingdom and righteousness, all things earthly will be added unto our daily lives [Matthew 6:33]. The church is in a great position to bring all kinds of petitions to the Lord, all in line with our worship and time in teaching from God's Word. Prayer throughout the entire congregation opens up wonderful communication between the Lord and His church.

In prayer, we also ask forgiveness of sins we have done, and in that same manner we extend forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. Peter asked Jesus [Matthew 18:21-22] how many times should he forgive someone who has wronged him – should it be 7 times?“ Jesus said he should be prepared to forgive “70 times 7” [not that the literal 490 times is the actual limit, but that we have the mindset to put no limitations on how often we will forgive others]. Jesus notes [Matthew 6:14-15] that if we do not extend forgiveness to others, our heavenly Father will not forgive us of our sins. Remember [Psalm 103:101-2], the Lord has not dealt with us according to our sin – for just as the

Prayer

heavens are far above the earth, so great is His mercy toward us. When the church is praying [Mark 11:5], if we have anything against others, forgive them, so that the Father will also forgive us – even as we then bear each other’s burden [Colossians 3:13], forgiving one another as the Father has forgiven us. This is a wonderful hallmark of a strong and vibrant church.

When we come together and pray we can also ask for His help that we not be overly tempted, and that the Lord would always provide a way out of doing evil. The Bible is very clear [James 1:13] that God does not tempt anyone, because He is holy and cannot be tempted Himself by evil. But each of us [verse-14] is tempted when carried away and enticed by our own lust. And when lust is conceived it gives birth to sin, and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death [verse-15]. So while we are all tempted [1st John 2:16] by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life, Paul explains in a very clear manner [1st Corinthians 10:13] that any type of temptation faced is common to all people, and God who is faithful will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to handle, and He always provides the way out of that temptation, so we are able to endure it. Thankfully we can pray and see His provision for us.

The Lord’s model for prayer encourages us to conclude by recognizing He alone has the kingdom, the power, and all the glory forever, and to affirm all these with “Amen” – meaning *let it be so*. This is a great way for the church to seal its position in how God provides His specific providential care over everything pertaining to the congregation. The church can rest in this.

Public Prayer

Prayer within the church's gathering can be corporate, openly expressed among all the people, with the pastor leading the entire congregation in certain topics that apply to everyone in attendance. Public prayer can happen during [as part of] the time in worship, as the hearts and minds of the people open up to the Lord's power and majesty. There may also be time for the church to speak out prayers from different individuals across the sanctuary who are led by God's Holy Spirit to do so in an orderly manner, that all may be encouraged by the praying out loud of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is also common when the church gathers together to have a "prayer team" of mature men and women waiting in front or in a separate room, ready to spend time with people who are responding to the teaching from God's Word. As the service concludes, there may also be people informally [casually] sitting or standing with one another to pray together for various needs. There can even be prayer requests written down and given to the pastors or prayer team that will be prayed for by others in church in the coming days. Some of those written requests can be put on a "prayer chain" [via text message, email, phone calls]. The men and women committed to intercede in prayer on behalf of others will pass along these needs and requests from one person to the next, until perhaps dozens of individuals are then praying together about the same matter. Requests can also be passed along to the weekly men's prayer breakfast – or women's prayer fellowship – where believers gather for the

Prayer

purpose of praying about different requests from all across the congregation, including any visitors who ask for prayer.

Jesus stated very clearly [Mark 11:17] that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be holy – a place for prayer. Today, that same model should characterize our church gatherings. We are encouraged in Jeremiah 29:12 that when we call on the Lord and *pray* to Him, He will listen. The body of Christ will worship God through their prayers, as well as bring petitions and intercession before the Lord. Be reminded that early gatherings of believers [Acts 1:14] had a common mind and were [Acts 2:42] continually devoting themselves to *prayer*; along with the Apostles teaching, fellowship, and breaking of bread. Prayer was clearly an integral part of experiencing great church life.

Private Prayer

There is also a time for 1-on-1 time communicating with the Lord privately in prayer. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day [Matthew 6:5] because they would pray out in public for all to see, creating a spectacle they believed would exalt their stature among the common people – as if they were more holy and closer to God. They stood on the street corners so everyone saw them – but their motive was all about drawing attention to their own positioning. Jesus said [verse 6] but when you pray, go into your inner room, close the door [so you're not being seen by others], and your heavenly Father who sees and knows all, will reward you. But always remember that we are clearly instructed to not be like the pagans who ramble on and on with endless repetitions and babbling, thinking they will be heard because of their many words [Matthew 6:7]. Instead we speak to God with a

clear heart and mind [Ephesians 1:18], that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened, so we will know the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance.

Pray Always

There is then a time for private prayer and there is a time for corporate prayer with the entire congregation. We are encouraged to look to the Lord and His strength *always*, and seek His face [1st Chronicles 16:11]. Romans 12:12 states that Christians should be devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to each other in honor, being diligent and fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope, persevering in spite of trials, and always ***devoted to prayer***. The Lord wants us to pray about everything and to be consistent in our prayer – even when His answer seems unclear or it feels as if we have not had a clear reply from the Lord within the timing we expected.

Paul encouraged the church [Ephesians 6:18] to *pray at all times* in the Spirit and to be on the alert with all perseverance and *prayers* for all believers. He also made a very interesting, and often misunderstood, statement [1st Thessalonians 5:17] that Christians should “pray without ceasing”. This does not mean praying non-stop without ever taking a break. It simply means there should never come a time when – for any given need – when we would ever stop [cease] praying about that, because we came to the place where it seemed that prayer is not working.

In the same way he gave instruction [1st Timothy 2:1] that first of all, I urge you that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men. And we continue

Prayer

[verses 2-3] to *pray* for all those in authority so we may lead a tranquil and quiet life with all dignity, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of our God and Savior.

The church gathered together need not be anxious about the circumstances of the day, but instead [Philippians 4:6] through *prayer* and supplications with thanksgiving, we are to make all our requests known to the Lord, and then the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. When believers come together, we are told [James 5:13-14] that if anyone among us is in trouble, we are to pray. If anyone is sick, the elders should come together and *pray* for that person, and anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. We are instructed [Matthew 5:44] to always show love to our enemies and *pray* for those who persecute us.

Encouragement

The church comes together to worship, to hear sound teaching from God's Word, and to pray about everything. This is both corporate across the entire congregation, as well as private among just a few, or two people agreeing together, or just one person simply seeking the Lord individually. Remember Jesus' account [Luke 18:10-14] of two men who went up to the Temple to pray? One had a prideful heart, while the other was truly humble as he bowed before the Lord. May prayer in the church always be characterized by humility and a contrite heart, as we come together and bow before our heavenly Father.

Joseph Scriven's lovely poem [1855] was set to music and remains a great encouragement for the church today. "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, what a

privilege to carry everything to God in prayer; oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer". May church life be filled with men and women who love to pray about all things, and at all times, recognizing that regular on-going communication with our Lord will greatly enrich our church life. The next chapter concludes this book with a review of the beautiful spiritual fellowship among believers that happens in a vibrant church.



What are some prayer needs in your own personal life that you still need to bring before the Lord?

Prayer

What are some tangible ways that you can spend not only more time, but also better time, in prayer within your church life?

[illegible]

In what ways does this chapter challenge you about having more time to be devoted to prayer in your church life?

What are some prayer needs in your own community for which you could begin to intercede?

Chapter Addendum

The following narrative is an excerpt from the 2009 presentation I did at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara that examines the amazing process and features of how prayer works [you can view the 9-minute podcast at YouTube.com - search "technology of prayer"] © David Newton 2008



Over the last 40 years I have seen dozens of new-product demos for innovative technologies that radically alter and improve our lives. The technology of prayer represents classic overshot technology, where the various features and benefits to end-users are far in excess of what the typical person probably uses on a regular basis. The Bible is the operating guide, and the prayer infrastructure utilizes a seamless 100% inter-dimensional wireless interface that directly connects this natural, physical world [that is seen here within time-space] to the supernatural metaphysical unseen realm outside time-space. Truly an amazing dual-platform of functional capabilities.

Prayer utilizes a fully integrated compatible heuristic-algorithm that works exactly the same way with every spoken language available, accessing built-in dynamic programming to provide instantaneous real-time two-way translation for both transmitting and receiving voice data. This dialogue protocol utilizes an origination voice-recognition virtual application that delivers immediate personal contact with a refresh rate of less than 10 nanoseconds. Use of the prayer technology application requires no additional hardware components to purchase or

connect to, as it utilizes an innate connectivity that has been pre-installed by the original equipment manufacturer [OEM].

The technology re-boot of usage availability can go from dormant and inactive [even after weeks, months or years of non-use] to being fully-functional in less than one second – it’s a true “instant on” utility [although it does require the individual to modify personal attitudes and behaviors to willingly access this communications medium]. This system functions in a pre-existing sophisticated global network with infinite bandwidth capability, that can handle tens of billions of simultaneous connections at any given time, while boasting a perfect quality-assurance of 100% connectivity, guaranteed never to be dropped on the metaphysical reception end of an executed transmission – although the earthly origination sites have been known to voluntarily cease or drop connections for no apparent reason. Trouble-shooting the earth-side non-utilization down-time and non-use of prayer remains a difficult problem to explain.

The metaphysical point of reception outside time-space never utilizes any forms of typical call-waiting in managing transmission traffic, due to its infinite bandwidth and virtual-refresh cache, so there’s never slow-down due to queued-up processing. There’s no voicemail, which renders obsolete any need for managing file-directory storage limitations. In fact, all earthly-originated transmissions get through immediately, 100% of the time, without delays of any kind. This hardware and software work without interference from rain, fog, clouds, and do not require an unobstructed clear angle-line to the horizon.

The prayer-communications technology also comes with virtual instant-messaging based upon the 100% non-text user-interface that can be activated from anywhere on the planet, any time, 24/7, without any cumbersome file-compression utilities or transmission size limitations. And it works seamlessly between voice and thought-based initiation sequences at origination.

But perhaps the most misunderstood issue related to this technology is that it remains significantly under-utilized at the earthly, physical point-of-origination, even though continuous quality control guarantees that the system is 100% available and fully functioning at all times on the corresponding metaphysical reception-platform. An innovative feature exists that allows the metaphysical link outside time-space to originate non-text voice-messaging to any individual, provided the person leaves the transmission portal open and clear from any distractions that can queue-up on the earthly side of the connection and typically interfere directly with message reception. And while many earth-based users continue to report “non-replies” on their previously sent transmissions, the evidence clearly notes that the perceived lack of response is entirely a function of how well-calibrated and fine-tuned the receipt functionality of a person is with regard to deciphering metaphysical responses through a processor-filter that is too-often only programmed and focused on physical, natural, earthly data.

There are never any account files to configure prior to executing successful transmissions. An *a priori* knowledge of the 3-Person engineering team that jointly developed the system is not required to use it, so anyone can activate this technology and

all communications get through, are processed, and noted for reply. One last item to note from the operating guide: it was designed as a 100% open-system public domain technology, with no sign-up costs or monthly fees. In fact, we each have completely free life-time account access - unlimited use through a very special offer that has already paid for you.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Fellowship

“Our fellowship is with the Father
and His Son Jesus Christ.”

1st John 1:3

As the church gathers together to worship the Lord, hear from His Word, and offer prayers – this all results in a wonderful form of personal interaction with God and with other believers referred to in the Greek as *koinonia* – true spiritual communion. The word is also translated as community, close association, joint participation, and even intimacy. This defines Christian “fellowship”, as we jointly share in each other’s lives, even as the Holy Spirit dwelling in us connects us directly with the Lord and each other. The church is the body of Christ [Colossians 1:18], so we are intimately connected in very close association to function as one by His leading as the head over us, as He holds all things together [verse-17]. This is often referred to as “the communion of saints” [Romans 8] as believers jointly participate in church

life, having been made one with Jesus, as well as the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the body of Christ is not just one, but many members [1st Corinthians 12:12-27], so we can then experience a full life together in common. We know we are fellow heirs [Romans 8:17] along with Jesus, if we identify with Him in His suffering – so that we will one day be like Him in His glorified body. As such, we in the church are one, even as the Father is in the Son [John 17:21] and the Holy Spirit resides in all believers.

Spiritual Connection

The Apostle John understood the Holy Spirit would now be a spiritual connection between Jesus Christ and those who call Him Lord. He knew [1st John 1:3] that what he had personally seen and heard from the Lord, he was now able to proclaim to others like us who had not been among those eyewitnesses. And yet amazingly, we too could then have *fellowship* [koinonia], the same as the original disciples, because indeed such *fellowship* is entirely with [and through] the Father and His son Jesus Christ. Jesus' disciples saw firsthand all He did in His nearly three years of earthly ministry. Yet our Lord was clear [John 20:29] that although they believed because they saw Him in person, how blessed are those who have not seen the Lord and still believe. That describes us today as Christians.

This spiritual connection among believers does not only happen at church gatherings. Whenever and wherever two or three are gathered in His name [Matthew 18:20] there He is in the midst of them. *Koinonia* occurs in a metaphysical dimension outside the realm of what science can prove. It is inherently

spiritual. It transcends typical friendships. It is far more than a close colleague or earthly family relationships. The very Spirit of the living God, who dwells in all believers, has now connected everyone within the family of God [at your church or outside your church] on a uniquely spiritual level. This happens as I experience an immediate spiritual connection with believers who I just met in France, Sweden, Hungary, England, Vietnam, or China. We are led by the same Holy Spirit who is alive in all of us, and so regardless of our church or geographic location, we have fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in each of us – He connects us all.

Common Spiritual Life

Paul reminds us [1st Corinthians 12:13] we are all baptized into the one church body, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free – and we all drink of the same Holy Spirit. He made this same point in explaining that Israel's forefathers [1st Corinthians 10:1-4] were baptized into the Law of Moses when they passed through the Red Sea, and all ate the same spiritual food [manna from heaven], and drank the same spiritual drink [water from a rock, see Deuteronomy 8:15, Psalm 78:15-16, 105:41, 107:4-9, 114:8]. Paul clearly defines that Old Testament rock as being Jesus Christ. The idea conveyed is that God's Holy Spirit will now be the one thing that finally satisfies the deep inner longing all men and women have to know God and experience peace. And like living water, it then provides refreshment to our heart, soul, and mind. This takes us back to Chapter 2 and how God's Spirit is the living water we all drink, so that we are no

longer thirsty again and again [John 4:13-14, 6:35, 7:37], as with earthly water that only satisfies for a short time.

There is tremendous power in the simplicity of believers being filled spiritually by God. The cares of this world then fade in their urgency and intensity. The Holy Spirit enables church life to be peaceful and settled, when everyone is likeminded and functioning as one body under Christ. It is a beautiful thing to see [Ephesians 2:21-22] as the entire body is being fitted together and growing as a living temple in the Lord, each person literally connected to a common dwelling of God in the Spirit. This is the basis of our *fellowship* for powerful church life.

Paul asked that [Philippians 2:1-2] if there be any form of encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love among us, any *fellowship* in the Holy Spirit, or true affection and compassion, then we would fulfill his joy by all of us within the church being of the same mind, while maintaining unconditional love for each other, being united in our spirits, and intent on one purpose. He makes that rhetorical statement to confirm the 1) encouragement of Christ, 2) consolation of true Godly love, 3) *fellowship* in the Spirit, and 4) affection-compassion among believers ARE those characteristics that define spiritual life in the church.

1st Century - 21st Century

Once again that famous passage in Acts 2:42 reminds us how believers in the early church gatherings devoted themselves to teaching from God's Word and *fellowship* in being together. People of different ages, backgrounds, and economic positions gathered in a common mindset, connected by the Holy Spirit

who was present in each of their lives. Together they were the body of Christ. They no doubt embraced encouragement from scripture passages such as Psalm 133:1 “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity”. These 1st Century churches were [Acts 4:32] congregations of believers, with ONE heart and mind as they functioned – never claiming that anything they possessed as a church body was just about one person. Rather, all that they owned [belonged to them] was viewed as theirs, in common for everyone.

There are many commentaries that interpret this as the earthly wealth [goods, money, homes, land] held by the church members – and that certainly has some merit as they did share their belongings among themselves so that none had any need. But a strong case can also be made that the ONE heart and mind had them understand that all facets of church life were always about the entire body of Christ, with nothing to be counted as gain for any individual alone. So while they all would share in their provision for the daily needs of life, this passage also speaks of them sharing jointly in every facet of the *spiritual life* in the church, with no one having higher status than any other, with each contributing to a *fellowship* that was common to all.

Those earliest churches often met together under great persecution from the broader Hellenist-Roman culture of that day, as well as from those Jews who viewed belief in Jesus as completely out of line with their views of Messiah and the Law of Moses. The only way this new enterprise of the church was able to launch and be sustainable was because the Holy Spirit had been given to believers – to dwell in them at all times [see

again Chapter 2]. It was His church, directed by the Holy Spirit, ordained by God, and anchored on the testimony Peter spoke [Matthew 16:18], that Jesus is in fact the Christ, the only Son of God. Can you even imagine the status of the church trying to start up and function without the *fellowship* of believers through the Holy Spirit? The true power of simplicity is clearly seen in how ordinary men and women were spiritually equipped to be witnesses in the world to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus explained to His disciples [John 14:16] that after He ascended back to the Father in heaven, He would send them a Helper so He would be with them forever. This Spirit of Truth [verse-17] whom the world cannot receive would then abide in all believers. And when the world no longer saw Jesus in the flesh [verse-19], believers will still see Him because He then lives in them, so they will also live. And in that day [after the cross of Calvary and the resurrection], we all will know Jesus and the Father are one. We are in Him and He is now in us [verse-20]. This spiritual *fellowship* [connection] is profound, that earthly men and women who were formerly sinners and far from God, now have through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a close personal intimacy with the Lord of all creation. To be in Christ Jesus is now a *powerful* position for us [Ephesians 2:13], that we who were far away have been brought near by the blood of His sacrifice on our behalf. This is the firm foundation for the power we can then have in our church life – and it is the very same as those early 1st Century churches.

Called Into Fellowship

It is the Lord who originates this *fellowship* in our times together as the church. Paul explains [1st Corinthians 1:9] God is faithful, and it is through Him that we are *called into fellowship* with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Remember, it was God who proved His love toward us [Romans 5:8], in that while we were yet sinners, it was then that Christ died for us. Our *fellowship* is not something that happens based on our initiation toward God. Rather, we were already entirely dead in our trespasses and sins in which we used to live, when we followed the ways of the world [Ephesians 2:1]. But it was God alone [verses 4-5] being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgression, who made us alive together with Christ. That is our calling to *koinonia*!

Paul wrote the same to the Colossians [2:13] that it was when we were dead in sin He made us alive together with Him [exact same language he used to the Ephesian church]. And in Romans 11:29-31 he explains that God's calling into *fellowship* is irrevocable – we were shown mercy in our former disobedience, so we now show mercy to others because of mercy shown us. These may be the strongest passages to confirm the *fellowship* we have been called into, all by what Christ has done for us. That prior note to the Corinthian church is explicit - we are CALLED into *fellowship* with the Son Jesus Christ. The Greek word for called is *kaleo* and is translated “to call aloud, utter with a loud voice, to make a strong invitation”. The Lord literally beckons us to come over and actively participate in our new church life.

Fellowship Completes

Having *fellowship* with the Lord of heaven and earth, and with His Son Jesus Christ, completes the full cycle of the process of our redemption by the Lord. And what a journey that is for us, who go from sinners who were far away from God, to being offered a free gift of salvation if we would simply believe, to being ushered into this incredible status as sons and daughters in the family of God. We are now spiritually connected by the Holy Spirit who dwells in all believers. Behold what manner of love the Father has for us that we should be called children of God [1st John 3:1] – and such we are. Referring back once again to Romans 8 [verses 14-17] we see that all those led by His Spirit are now sons [and daughters] of the living God, and having received a spirit of adoption, we can now call the Lord of heaven and earth “Abba, Father”. And it is the Spirit of God who testifies with our spirit that we are His children.

Paul’s joy was made complete in knowing that believers within the church would clearly know this encouragement in Christ Jesus, this consolation of love, and this *fellowship* of the Holy Spirit [Philippians 2:1]. The root word of *koinonia* *fellowship* is the Greek prefix *koinos* meaning “to hold in common”. When this was added to any noun or situation it made it forever a joint matter. Knowing that the men and women in the church body have a common purpose and mind should always complete the joy of our abiding together in a congregation of fellow believers. True *fellowship* within the church depends on the participation of others - it is not a solo endeavor. Ephesians 4:16 clearly

teaches it is through Christ Jesus that the entire body, which is joined and held together by all the different people [each one functioning like a ligament], grows and builds itself up in love as everyone does their contribution to the whole. This is the wonderful simplicity of the gospel in His church.

Paul strongly encouraged believers [Hebrews 10:24] to consider how they can stimulate love and good deeds among themselves – being active participants in the lives of others. This is what church life is all about. Believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit have power available to them beyond the physical realm. Ecclesiastes 4:12 remarks that a cord of several strands is not easily broken, because there is the added strength that comes when believers have their lives knit together with others from within the church community. This is directly linked to Paul's admonition for all believers to not forsake gathering together with other believers, as had become the habit of some in the churches [Hebrews 10:25]. Instead, when the congregation assembles, it is to encourage one another, and even more so as we see the day of the Lord's coming drawing near.

Individual Church

These two words - individual, church - are by definition an oxymoron. The former is about one person. The latter refers to many people coming together as one. At its core, *fellowship* is inherently plural. It involves people connecting and interacting. There is meaningful dialogue, caring, support, and relationship. *Fellowship* is not intended to be "live streamed" in a 21st Century hi-tech culture of DIY [do-it-yourself] individuality. Sad to say, it actually is now the habit of many today to have their church in

a customized one-way interaction that fits their own schedule of availability. There is nothing inherently wrong with watching a teaching podcast or “live” online service. But if these become the only way a person has contact within a church, how is there any *fellowship* with other believers? Certainly someone who is physically unable to get to a church service or event can feel a part of the body of Christ by tuning in on television or online. But even for that person, true Biblical *fellowship* in the Spirit should happen when others come to visit and pray together.

Attending a Sunday service, a midweek Bible study, the men’s or women’s ministry, a weekly prayer breakfast, or a small group in a home, all involve gathering together in person. These are how church community gets anchored and grows. Spiritual *fellowship* includes sharing in each other’s lives – for both good news and during tough times. We have become as siblings from the same family. Christians are spiritually related. Believers are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and can speak to God as “Father”.

Paul encouraged all those in the Galatian church [6:2] to come alongside and bear the burdens of their fellow believers. He exhorted the church in Rome [12:15] to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice. Our *koinonia* brings us brothers and sisters in Christ to depend on [like family] when times get hard. Jesus provides a model [Matthew 11:28] of how to share in the load that others experience, so your fellow believers know they have those who care for and support them.

To the Philippians Paul said [2:2-3] do nothing for selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, value others as more

important than yourself, not looking out for your own interests, but more importantly for the interests of others. He taught the Ephesian church [4:2-3] to bear one another in love, and make every effort to keep unity of the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly teaches that the church should be about God's people being in community with each other, in good times and bad. We can pray, help out financially, provide food, clothing, and shelter, support a benevolence fund, or simply provide encouragement.

More Than Affiliated

This is truly a spiritual connection because believers will know [and identify with] the *power* of Jesus' resurrection and also have *fellowship* in the Lord's suffering [Philippians 3:10]. It is so important to recognize there is great spiritual *power* available to believers who simply commune with one another in church. As such, one key area in which believers can become more sensitive, is to recognize those individuals who show up at church services, events, or meetings, but are not actively participating in the spiritual life of the church community.

I can think of many men over the years who showed up at various gatherings, and then seemed to just disappear. No one knew much about who they were when they did show up, and once they stopped coming to church, it took several weeks [maybe even months] to even recognize they were no longer around. They had the façade of typical guys at church, but true relationships had never been developed. There was no evidence of spiritual connection to the full body of Christ. The Apostle John noted [1st John 2:19] the ones who had departed from the church body had never actually been part of the true fellowship.

For had they truly been believers, they would have remained – but they went out from the church so it could be clearly shown that they were not all of the true faith.

That is why Paul can say to every believer [Philemon 1:6] “I pray the *fellowship* of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of all good things which are in you for the sake of Christ”. Think of that. What a powerful statement for all who believe. We too often make the false assumption that everyone attending church is solid in their faith and walking closely with the Lord. It tends to be our human nature to not initiate contact with others, but to assume others will be the ones to come and introduce themselves to us. It is so important that people are not just affiliated with a church, but that they press into Biblical *fellowship* all across the congregation. This holds true for young adults, college ministry, seniors, new moms, singles, married couples – as well as the high school and junior high groups.

May we in the church never allow someone to remain on the periphery of our true *fellowship* – positioned on the outside looking in, so to speak. We should actively extend the hand of *fellowship* to everyone who comes through the doors. If they are a strong believer, let’s get them plugged in. If fairly new in their faith, let’s get them discipled. If struggling with circumstances of life, let’s come alongside and serve them. If they have not yet made a personal decision for Jesus, let’s show them compassion as we present the truths of the gospel. Whatever their situation or understanding of the Lord, may all believers in the church be

ready, willing, and able to welcome everyone in from the edges of the church – into spiritual *fellowship* and true community.

True Fellowship

Paul often closed out his letters to the various churches by encouraging believers with reminders [2nd Corinthians 13:14] that the grace of our Lord, the love of God, and the *fellowship* of the Holy Spirit be with us always. Once again, the power of this simplicity is available to all believers. Think about the grace we have covering us [Ephesians 2:7] – it is immeasurable. Consider [Ephesians 3:18] the length, width, height, and depth of God's love for us. And thank the Lord daily for the wonderful way He has supernaturally linked us all together with Him by the indwelling of His Spirit in us. Whenever someone says to me, "How do I get more *power* in my life?", I am quick to reply in no uncertain terms that God has already supplied everything we need to experience His power in our lives through the simplicity of the gospel message. We stand firmly on [1st Corinthians 15:4] a great promise - that Jesus died for us according to the Scriptures, and was raised three days later, according to the Scriptures. This was always God's plan to have His power alive in us.

When Saul of Tarsus was supernaturally born again, and he turned from persecuting the early church, to being an Apostle – an influential teacher and preacher of God's Word - many were skeptical of his authority to be an Apostle alongside the likes of Peter, James, and John. But we read in Galatians 2:9 that Paul went up to Jerusalem and these disciples of Jesus extended to him the right hand of *fellowship*, confirming that Peter, James, and John were specifically called by Jesus to

minister to Jews in and around Jerusalem and all of Judea, while Paul and his co-worker Bar-Nabas were specifically called and empowered by Jesus to preach the gospel to all the Gentiles throughout the Mediterranean basin.

And while there is much encouragement throughout the Bible regarding this *koinonia* among believers through Jesus our Lord, it is quite sobering to be reminded [2nd Corinthians 6:14] there is no such fellowship between a Christian who has been born again [in whom the Holy Spirit now resides] and those who do not believe in Jesus. This is not a prejudicial exclusion of unbelievers in our lives, certainly not. We are to be lights in the world [Matthew 5:14-16] as witnesses of the change in our lives. But Paul makes it very clear by asking whether there can be a spiritual partnership between righteousness and lawlessness, or any communion [*koinonia*] between light and darkness.

John confirmed this [1st John 1:6-7] by explaining “if we say we have *fellowship* with the Lord and yet walk intentionally and continuously in darkness, we are liars and do not practice the truth – but, if we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we have *fellowship* with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin”. The capstone of church life – following worship, teaching God’s Word, and prayer – is that all of these contribute to a spiritual bond among believers. Paul brings home this idea of *koinonia* [1st Corinthians 10:16] as our literal “sharing” in how the Lord shed His blood for us on the cross [the cup], as well as our literal “sharing” in how His body was offered up on our behalf. Can we even grasp how profound that is? Believers have

Fellowship

fellowship with Jesus' sacrifice for our sin – the very action that now brings us into communion with the Lord. And this spiritual relationship has become the basis for our power in church life.

Encouragement

The binding together of believers in spiritual *fellowship* is truly amazing. Remember the transitive property in algebra? If we have *koinonia* in Christ's death and resurrection, and He has *koinonia* with the Father and the Holy Spirit [they are One], then by the same Spirit of God, we have *koinonia* with each other as we live in close spiritual relationship [community] within the church. And so, we have everything we need through the power of simplicity in our Christian walk with the Lord, and our church life together. May we desire to press more deeply into the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and our Lord and Savior.



How does your fellowship with God directly translate into fellowship with various people connected to your daily life?

Are there any personal setbacks you've encountered as you pursue fellowship, and what are some tangible ways you can address those?

What are the likely positive outcomes of desiring more fellowship with other believers throughout your church life?

Final Encouragement

The intent of this book was to present a practical, clear, and logical case about the tremendous *power* that is available to all believers in Jesus Christ, through the simplicity of what God has provided for daily Christian living and church life. The Lord made incredible provisions for our Christian life and church life. We have His Word, available to read anytime, anywhere – and it is powerful in how God can speak directly to us on any topic and about any situation when we read and study it. He has given us His Spirit, to dwell in us all the time, so that our Lord is truly with us always. As such, we can exhibit fruit *of* the Holy Spirit in our daily lives, showing the very character of God in all we say and do. We are also gifted *from* the Holy Spirit to be equipped for ministry – as He wills and for His purposes. Together, these give us the spiritual power to live for the Lord and to be used of Him, to be His witnesses in the world, and to minister to others.

The simplicity of the gospel also provides us with all the power we need for vibrant church life. When we gather as the church body, we worship the Lord, we hear teaching from His Word, we pray with each other, and by His Holy Spirit in all of us, we enjoy wonderful fellowship [*koinonia*] that knits our lives together in a uniquely spiritual manner. There is great power in the spiritual gifting and actions of God's people moving forward and functioning as one in the church – with Jesus Christ as the head of that body of believers. May we never look past what the Lord has provided to us - the power of simplicity in His gospel. Let me strongly encourage all readers to literally take the time to

carefully review the Scripture verses presented with each topic covered in these eight chapters. Invest thoughtful time in revisiting the responses you wrote to the questions at the end of each chapter. Earnestly seek the Lord in prayer that He would speak clearly through His Word about the mighty ways you have been uniquely equipped by Him for power in your Christian life. And ask Him to show you tangible ways that you can be used powerfully and effectively for Him in your church life. How and in what ways can you serve in the body of Christ? Who are the people you can specifically reach out to, and be more involved with, as you move forward in your Christian life and church life?

Start each day recognizing that God has provided all the power you will ever need for daily living – because you have His Word, His Spirit dwells within, you can show forth His fruit in all you say and do, and the Holy Spirit has gifted you to be used ministering to others. Be satisfied that you have everything you need for living a powerful life for your Lord.

Thank Him for your church family of believers, with whom you are supernaturally knit together in close fellowship as you worship, hear from God's Word, and pray together. The real power of simplicity in the gospel is the miracle that sinners who are far from God can be forgiven and receive amazing new life in Christ. And then, as living stones, are built together as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [1st Peter 2:5]. May the Lord richly bless you as you daily embrace all that you have in Christ, so that you will simply live for Him.

