

SPIRITUAL GIFTS GUIDE TEACHER MANUAL

www.DiscipleshipMinistriesAustralia.org

By Bob Stone

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FOR THE TEACHER

Dear Teacher,

I am so pleased that you have decided to offer this valuable information to your students. As you will quickly discover, THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS GUIDE is a lot more than just teaching on Spiritual Gifts. In fact, we don't discuss spiritual gifts in detail until the last lesson.

The reason for this is because it is the belief of the author (that's me!) that often we teach people about spiritual gifts before they really have a foundation laid concerning what God's expectations are for them as His servant. Each lesson will build on the previous one, until the students are ready to receive detailed instruction concerning their particular calling.

Your manual includes a complete manuscript containing a "word for word" script that you can use. You can either add to my comments, edit them to fit your style, or ignore them completely. I am providing this in Microsoft Word format so that you can feel free to edit what you desire (please remember that the student manual will follow the main points of this manual, and so will the Powerpoint slides, so you might need to edit them also.) The Student Guide contains all the main points and sub-points, as well as all Scripture texts referenced.

I am pleased to be able to share with you the software package Spiritual Gift Guide which was designed by Barry L. Davis, D.Min.

You should familiarize yourself with the software included in this package. I would advise you to take the *Spiritual Gifts Guide Inventory* yourself before giving it to others. It is designed to run in Microsoft Windows only. After a person completes the software program sometime after the last lesson, either you, or someone else who is very familiar with spiritual gifts and the church, should sit down with the student and help them to discover their place of ministry.

Thank you again for beginning to teach this course of study. You, your students, and the church will be blessed as a result.

In Christ,

Bondservant. Bob Stone. www.DiscipleshipMinistriesAustralia.org

THE POWER OF EXPECTATIONS

I would like to welcome you to our new course, designed to help us to discover and implement the Spiritual Gifts that God has given to us. We will not be focusing a lot on the actual gifts until the last few lessons where we center in on the Holy Spirit, because it is important for us to understand some fundamental truths about who we are in Christ, and what God has called us to first. After the final lesson you will be invited to take a computerized Spiritual Gifts Inventory where you will answer a series of questions about yourself to help determine where God is calling you to serve.

Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, told a story about a goose who was wounded and landed in a barnyard with some chickens. He played with the chickens and ate with the chickens. After a while that goose thought he was a chicken. One day a flight of geese came over, migrating to their home. They gave a honk up there in the sky, and he heard it. Kierkegaard said, "Something stirred within the breast of this goose. Something called him to the skies. He began to flap the wings he hadn't used, and he rose a few feet into the air. Then he stopped, and he settled back again into the mud of the barnyard. He heard the cry, but he settled for less."

How many of us are settling for less than God intended? How many of us have gotten our hopes up only to have them dashed? How many of us have heard the call of God upon our lives, upon our families, upon our careers, gotten inspired, began to rise to the call, and then let it fizzle out?

There are a number of reasons for why we don't always live up to our calling, but I believe the biggest one is that we have not tapped into the power of expectations. If the truth were known, we would find that most of us are not advancing spiritually, experiencing God more fully, or developing personally because we do not expect for those things to happen any more. Somewhere along the line we gave up hope for a better tomorrow, and in the process forgot what it was like to live in anticipation of a bright future.

When we look to the first chapter of Philippians, we find the Apostle Paul still holed up in his prison cell writing to the church at Philippi. And rather than finding a man who has given up hope for the future, we find a man that is still filled with the power of expectation. Let's make his story our story this as we start this course, and begin to experience what it means to live our lives fully expecting God to do great things. We can do that right now by answer three basic questions.

1. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I LIVE IN EXPECTATION?

As I said, some people have simply stopped expecting. They have accumulated enough of life's disappointments to become afraid to dream, to reach, to stretch, to broaden their horizons. But God wants to free us into tomorrow – to show us that there is always something to reach for, something better just over the horizon.

Paul wrote: *For I live in eager expectation and hope...* Philippians 1:20a

If there were ever a guy we could excuse for not living in eager anticipation and hope, Paul would be the guy. Yet he lives his life with the power of expectation, even from a prison cell.

What happens when I live with the power of expectation?

☒ I RISE ABOVE THE NORM

When you take the steps that we will look at in just a moment, you will be one of a very small percentage of people living on this planet. You will be focused, not on just who you are, but on who you will become. And you'll very quickly find out that you are one of the few who live with the power of expectation – waiting to see what God will achieve through you.

You will rise above the norm, because your outlook on life, and the potential of what can be accomplished through God's power, runs completely contrary to how most people view the world around them, and their own place in this world.

☒ I ACHIEVE WHAT I CAN CONCEIVE

Again, Paul said: *For I live in eager expectation and hope...* Philippians 1:20a

The phrase “eager expectation” is only one word in the original language, and it is only used one other time in the New Testament, in Romans 8:19:

For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. – Romans 8:19

The word literally means, “to look away from the head” – to look forward toward something that you know is going to take place – it is living in expectation. It is seeing with your mind’s eye what it is that God is going to accomplish in this world, in your life, and in your church. It is living in the realm of what will be, believing in faith that God will accomplish exactly what He has promised.

When you can conceive that, you will begin to achieve it. Not because you are such a powerful person, but because you have placed your faith in our powerful God.

Once a man came to Jesus to see if He could cast an evil spirit out of his son – the man pleaded with Jesus, saying “Do something if you can.”

Jesus replied, *“What do you mean, ‘If I can’? ...Anything is possible if a person believes.”* – Mark 9:23

When we live in expectation we are not asking “If you can,” but rather, stating by the way we live our lives, “We know you can.”

✠ **I MOVE FORWARD IN CONFIDENCE**

When you live your life in expectation of God’s great work in you, you will set your sights on the future, confident that come what may, God will accomplish whatever He has set out to accomplish. Rather than sheepishly going through life wondering if anything will ever come of God’s promises, you will stand upright, with your chest thrust forward, claiming the promise of Philippians 1:6:

God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.

2. HOW DO I BEGIN TO LIVE IN EXPECTATION?

What I am talking about right now is so far outside of the realm of most people’s way of thinking, that it deserves a “how to” kind of explanation. Thankfully, our Bibles come to the rescue for us again.

✠ **LIVE FOR CHRIST, NOT FOR YOURSELF**

If you’re thinking that so far I’m talking about the power of positive thinking, like so many secular sources will point you to, you’re completely

mistaken. I am talking about living a life that is entirely focused on Christ, rather than self.

For I live in eager expectation and hope that I will never do anything that causes me shame, but that I will always be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past, and that my life will always honor Christ, whether I live or I die. – Philippians 1:20-21

Paul eagerly expects and hopes for 3 things here that we need to pledge ourselves – “I live in eager expectation and hope that...

- 1) ...I will never do anything that would cause shame;
- 2) ...I will always be bold for Christ;
- 3) ...My life will always honor Christ.

This begins by admitting that I am not number one in my life, but Jesus is. It's really as simple as that.

☒ LIVE TO SERVE, NOT TO BE SERVED

Ann Jeffries said that her pastor was organizing an evangelistic outreach using small acts of kindness to demonstrate Christ's love. He phoned several neighborhood grocery stores and Laundromats for permission to do specific services. On one call, the employee who answered the phone hesitated, then said, "I'll need to ask the manager, but first, let me make sure I understand: You want to clean up the parking lot, retrieve shopping carts, hold umbrellas for customers, and you don't want anything in return." "Yes, that's right," her pastor replied. After disappearing for a moment, the employee returned to the phone. "I'm sorry," he said, "we can't let you do that because if we let you do it, we'd have to let everyone else do it, too!"

I've got a sneaking suspicion that that wouldn't have been a problem for them. We have been conditioned to serve ourselves, or even better, to get others to serve us – but living with expectation begins with serving, not with being served.

For to me, living is for Christ, and dying is even better. Yet if I live, that means fruitful service for Christ. I really don't know which is better. – Philippians 1:21-22

The power of expectation doesn't revolve around what I'm going to get, but on what I'm able to give. What I am looking forward to is not what God can do *for* me, but what God can do *through* me.

✠ **LIVE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OTHERS**

Rather than investing our time, talents, and efforts toward only improving ourselves, those who live in expectation recognize the importance of working toward improving the lives of the people around them. When I focus only on improving myself there is much that can be accomplished, but when I focus on improving your life we both benefit greatly.

I'm torn between two desires: Sometimes I want to live, and sometimes I long to go and be with Christ. That would be far better for me, but it is better for you that I live. I am convinced of this, so I will continue with you so that you will grow and experience the joy of your faith. Then when I return to you, you will have even more reason to boast about what Christ Jesus has done for me. – Philippians 1:23-26

Paul knew that in death he would be with Christ forever, but in life he would be able to continue to improve the lives of others. You see, the power of expectation is not only realized through the anticipation of what God will do for us, and through us, but on what He will do through us as we minister to other people.

When I look at you and try to discover what it is that I can do or say to improve your life, I am living in expectation of a greater future for us all. That is the kind of thing that God blesses.

3. WHAT DOES LIVING IN EXPECTATION LOOK LIKE?

Let's say that you adopt the discipline of living in expectation, and so do I, and so does everyone who is attending our church. What would our future together look like? If we could gaze forward a few years from now, after we'd been putting this into practice, just what would we see?

✠ **WE SEE CHRIST HONORED**

There can be no doubt that Jesus would be greatly honored by our actions.

But whatever happens to me, you must live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. – Philippians 1:27a

And what does it mean to “live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ”? It means to live in the way that we’ve been looking at during this study. As we honor Christ today with the way we live our lives, and as we honor Him in the same way tomorrow, and in the days yet to come, something wonderful happens. Jesus is fully aware of what is taking place, and as we live our lives in imitation of His own life, He is honored and glorified and pleased to call us His own.

✠ WE SEE THE CHURCH UNITED

Disunity and division comes to a church that is not living in expectation; that has members focused on self instead of the Savior. But the church that is living in expectation becomes a united, impenetrable force.

Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing side by side, fighting together for the Good News. –
Philippians 1:27b

The church whose members are equipped with the power of expectation is a church that stands together, as one person, facing a common enemy, yet also serving a common Lord. It is a church, one like ours, where we fight, not each other, but we fight together for the Good News of Jesus Christ and its spread throughout our world. We see the Church united, not because we are all alike, but because we serve the same Savior and have welcomed the fact that His agenda must be adopted as our own.

✠ WE SEE THE ENEMY DEFEATED

The united front that we present is one in which Satan, the great imposter, cannot penetrate, try as he might.

Don't be intimidated by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. – Philippians 1:28

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. – Romans 16:20a

We fully live in expectation of his demise, and will see His demise, because we know that God’s promises to us are true, and what He has begun, He will bring to fulfillment.

✠ WE SEE VICTORY IN THE STRUGGLE

Some people are quite discomfited that God does not promise those who live in expectation a life without suffering and struggle. But comfort can be found when we see the picture God has presented, not of a life without struggle, but of a life where victory can be found in the struggle itself.

For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle. – Philippians 1:29-30

How foreign this is to our thinking – to imagine, for even a moment that suffering for Christ could be considered a privilege. But that is what it is. As you struggle, and I struggle, we lock arms with each other and with the Christ who suffered more than any of us, and we move forward hand in hand, supporting each other through it all as we move forward, in expectation, to that final victory that God has promised. That is a picture of what God has in store when we live by the power of expectation.

THE REASON FOR YOUR EXISTENCE

Why do I exist? Is it to make money? To party on the weekends? To bring myself pleasure? Or is there something deeper that I might be missing?

Some people never come up with a satisfactory answer to the question, “Why do I exist?” and they take their own lives. In 2002, 132,353 individuals were hospitalized in the U.S. following suicide attempts; 116,639 were treated in emergency departments and released, while 30,622 were successful in their attempts to end their lives.

People often ask themselves the question that I’m going to deal with here this session: Why do I exist? What in the world am I doing here?

The question is: Am I just a product of random selection as Darwin would have me believe? Are we just here because we happen to be the ones who survived the battle of the fittest, or is there something more? Am I here living and breathing for a reason? Is there a higher purpose for my life than what I’ve found so far? Could it really be true that life is a gift from a loving God who created me?

In this session I want to answer this question from a distinctively Christian angle – since I am a Christ follower, I will admit my bias up front. But understand that the reason I believe what I believe today is because I asked this question myself until I discovered the only answers that would truly satisfy. And I want to share with you the answers that I discovered and my hope and prayer is that they would impact your life in the same way they have my own.

1. TO BE LOVED BY GOD

You might not feel this way right now, you might not understand what I’m saying, and you might even disagree with it – but the Bible makes it clear that we exist to be the recipients of God’s love. We could say that we exist so that God would have someone to love.

Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us... – Ephesians 1:4a

Before you ever breathed your first breath, God was in love with you and He wants nothing more than for you to bask in the experience of His love. No matter what you have done, no matter where you’ve been, no matter what your life experience has been...even when you’ve done things that God was displeased

with, it didn't change the fact that God loves you and that He wants you to receive His love.

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. – 1 John 4:16

It isn't just that God loves us but that He is defined by His love for us—*God is love*. If we were to come up with a one word dictionary definition of God it would be the word "Love." And it is not just a love in the warm, fuzzy, emotional sense of the word, but in the sense that God will go to great lengths to prove that He loves us.

In 1989, 96 fans were crushed to death in a soccer stadium in Sheffield, England, and another 200 were injured. At one of the hospitals where victims were taken, an attending surgeon spoke to the parents who had come to find out the fate of their children. The surgeon read the names of those killed and expressed his sympathy. He said that he believed that God understood the parents' grief and was with them in their time of need. One father bitterly responded: "What does God know about losing a son?"

This father was surely overcome with emotion and didn't realize what He was saying, but the fact is that God knows exactly what it is like to lose His Son. God gave His Son as a sacrifice for our wrongdoing, because He loved us.

This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. – 1 John 4:10

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. – Romans 5:8

When we rejected God's love – and we all have done that – rather than turn away from us God came up with a remedy so that we could be reconciled to Him. He sent His own Son to die in our place so that we could continue to experience His love firsthand. God took the one that He loved the most, His own Son, and gave Him to pay the penalty for those who had loved Him back the least.

He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed

away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all. – Isaiah 53:5-6

Why do we exist? To experience the great love that God has for us.

2. TO BE A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY

Kevin Young tells the story of being at the Special Olympics one year. He said that the runners for the 400-meter dash were being helped to their marks. "As I watched, a gentleman in a three-piece suit jumped up in the stands in front of me and began yelling, "Lenny! Lenny!" An overweight middle-aged man with Down's Syndrome looked up in the direction of the voice. The gun sounded and the runners leaped forward—all except Lenny, who was dead last and losing ground. He had a preoccupation with his hands, which he wrung furiously as he tried to make his way around the track. Pointing to him, the gentleman in front of me turned and addressed my section of the crowd. "That's my son, Lenny. Isn't he doing great?" When Lenny reached the last turn on the track, the other runners had already finished. The gentleman began to shout encouragement to his son, throwing his fists in the air in a triumphant gesture. "Great job, Lenny! Way to go, son. Keep going, you're doing great!" He turned to my section again, and reminded us all that his son was about to finish. We applauded dutifully, feeling somewhat embarrassed. When Lenny crossed the finish line, the man made his way down to the track and hugged his son, who was exhausted, drooling, and still wringing his hands. While I watched them embrace, I began to weep. As I thought about what I saw, it seemed as though God was saying to me, "You're like Lenny in this race I have called you into. You're challenged, perplexed, far behind the pack. Most days, you're a pitiful pile of exhaustion. But I'm here cheering you on. I love you the way that man loves his son."

(God's) unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. – Ephesians 1:5

So many people have the mistaken view of God that He is somehow against them, that He wants nothing to do with them, or that He wants to keep His distance. But nothing could be further from the truth. God says that He wants to adopt us into His family, that He wants us to be His kids, and that He takes great pleasure when we accept His invitation by coming into a relationship with His Son, Jesus.

Not only is God not displeased with you, not only is God not trying to keep His distance from you, not only is God not staring you down waiting for you to make a mistake – instead God takes great pleasure in being in a relationship with you.

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. – John 1:12

We talk a lot about “rights” in the United States, and rightly so – but there is a right that God has given to every man, woman, and child who has ever, or will ever live, no matter what country they live in, no matter what the color of their skin, and no matter what language they speak. It is the right to become a child of God, to be adopted into His family, to have a father, unlike many earthly fathers, who truly loves, protects, and cares for His children. It is the right to say with no hesitation that I know to whom I belong, and I know for what purpose I live, and I know my eternal destiny, because I know who my Father is. He’s adopted me into His family, and every promise that He makes to me is a promise that He will follow up on.

Why do I exist? I exist to be a fully accepted and adored member of God’s family.

3. TO BUILD GOD’S KINGDOM

In the Bible the word “kingdom” is used in several different ways. It is used in the earthly and political way that most of us think about when we talk about the kingdom of a particular country on earth. It is also used in the sense of the kingdom to come, the kingdom of heaven.

Another way it is used is in the present spiritual sense, where we have two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness where all that is evil dwells, and the kingdom of righteousness, which is manifested in the church of Jesus Christ. This is the kingdom for which we exist –the kingdom of the church that God is building, growing, and developing until that day when the kingdom of heaven is ushered in and all who are presently in the kingdom of the church will one day dwell

In the book of 1 Peter it speaks of those who stumble over God’s Word and who end up rejecting His message of love and relationship. But immediately following that he speaks of those who accept God’s offer of love through His Son.

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. – 1 Peter 2:9

In this verse and others like it, we find both a statement of our identification and a mission mandate that God has directed us to fulfill. In the language formerly reserved for the Old Testament people of Israel, God says to the church of Christ – you are chosen people, you are a kingdom of priests, you are God's holy nation, you are God's very own possession.

God says this to us corporately – to the entire church, made up of different denominations and fellowship throughout the world. He says this to local churches like this one. And He also says it to us as individual members of His church.

He identifies us all in this way, and then He says that our mission, as individuals and churches, is to show others His goodness and to call those who are in darkness into His light so that they can experience the same love that we've experienced – so that they, too, can be adopted into His family – and so that they, too, can work toward something much greater than themselves – namely, the ushering in of the kingdom of God in its final and eternal form.

We are not meeting here studying the Word together to simply “do church.” We fully plan and expect to work here in this community, building the kingdom of God and spreading the good news of Christ to our neighbors and friends. And what we are hoping and praying for is not just to build up our membership, but to build up a kingdom army that will help us to fulfill the task that God has given us.

Why do I exist? I exist to build God's kingdom.

4. TO BRING GOD GLORY

Nikola Tesla is the man is the scientist who invented the method of generating electricity in what we call *alternating current*. Many people regard him as a greater scientific genius than Alexander Graham Bell.

Author Philip Yancey tells an interesting anecdote about Tesla. During storms Tesla would sit on a black mohair couch by a window. When lightning struck, he would applaud – one genius recognizing the work of another. Tesla

could appreciate better than anyone the wonder of lightning because he had spent years researching electricity.

In a similar way, the more we know about God, the more we desire to bring Him glory, and honor, and praises. When we truly understand that we exist to be loved by God, to be adopted into His family, and are given the great privilege of building His kingdom, within our inner being erupts a need to bring glory, and honor, and worship to Him.

This is why the apostle Paul, while in the middle of teaching us about the forgiveness and mercy he had received from God, bursts into praise, saying:

Glory and honor to God forever and ever. He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen. – 1 Timothy 1:17

It is impossible to truly know God – I mean, really know Him and not live a life that desires more than anything to give Him glory. Now until I understand the first three answers to our question – why do I exist? – this fourth answer doesn't make a lot of sense. But when I truly grasp what God has promised me, and accept it as true, I not only begin to comprehend what it means to give God glory, it actually becomes a part of who I am as a person – and then, and only then, will I truly be satisfied.

So now I've got to ask you the question I've been trying to answer for us in this session? Why do you exist? Is there a reason for you being here on this planet? Is there a reason for you being here at this class? Could it be that God wanted you to be here, to learn, to discover, and to accept the love that He has for you? Could it just be that what you have been looking for is right before your eyes in the person of Jesus Christ? And is there any possibility that God is the answer to the question you've been asking? I have no doubt that He is.

THE UNIQUE ROLE GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO

Have you ever asked the questions, “Do I have any intrinsic value? Is there anything about me that stands out and makes me different from everyone else? Or am I just one of billions of people on this planet with nothing that sets me apart?”

I think there is an innate need within all of us to know that our presence here on this earth has some level of value. The good news is that the Bible clearly teaches us that that is the case – no matter who you are, or what your background might be, you have been created as a unique individual unlike any other.

Let’s look at four specific answers to the question – *Am I Unique?*

1. GOD CREATED ME DISTINCTIVELY

What I mean by this, is that you are the only you that God ever created. There is no one else who is exactly the same person that you are. This is even true if you are an identical twin – there are still distinctive traits that you have that no one else shares.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. – Psalms 139:13-14

You are personally and individually an absolutely unique creation of God. Think about it; Your retina pattern—no one else has it on the entire planet. You're different than everyone else. Your fingerprints—no one else has the same fingerprints that you do. Your voice pattern—no one else could claim to have exactly the same voice. Your DNA is one of a kind and is not shared by anyone.

In fact, I read that if you took your DNA strands and stretched them to the sun 93 million miles, your DNA strands would stretch to the sun and back 400 times. That's how critically and wonderfully and uniquely you are made. We are putting people in jail and getting them out of jail that committed crimes years ago because of DNA testing. Why? Because you're the only one that has your unique DNA structure. You are uniquely created by an Intelligent Designer.

I believe that Designer is Jesus Christ, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, who all cooperated together to form you.

2. GOD KNOWS ME INTIMATELY

I've spent a large portion of my life on a spiritual quest seeking to know God from a theological and doctrinal perspective. And while that is an interesting and valuable thing to do, I have discovered that that type of search was leaving me feeling empty inside.

What was missing was an experience of intimacy, of closeness, of knowing God at a level beyond the academic. I needed to know God in the way that I know my friends, and family. Rather than a sterile search for that which is beyond my capacity to know, I found that, unbeknownst to me, there was still a void inside my heart. I knew God in the way I know a book – a God of black and white, of words and deeds, a God of history, present, and future, but not a God that I'd sit down with and watch a movie, or discuss the latest news with.

And while there is a sense in which God is at a distance, in that He is infinitely beyond us, there is also a sense in which God pulls up a chair at the table beside us and chooses to know us and to be known by us on an intimate level.

All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now. – 1 Corinthians 13:12b

Paul is speaking of the future when the knowledge that is presently beyond his grasp will become something he knows perfectly. But this last phrase is important for us in the here and now – God knows everything there is to know about each and everyone of us.

Now you can read that from the angle that God is sitting there, knowing everything about you, and condemning you for it—but I think you would be mistaken. Rather, He knows everything about us because He takes delight in knowing us. And what He so desperately wants from us is for us to return the favor, and to desire nothing more than to know Him as intimately as we are known by Him. Not just as Creator, Sustainer, and Eternal God, but as Father, Comforter, and Friend

This is necessary for all of us, but especially for those who are broken right now – through bad experiences of the past, failed marriages, or whatever it is that has made you feel distance between yourself and God.

You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." – Romans 8:15-16 (NIV)

Abba is the Aramaic word that means “Daddy”—it is a term of endearment, a term of intimacy, it is a term that God Himself invites us to use when we call upon Him. God wants us to experience Him, not as the God out there beyond our grasp, but as the God that sits with us in front of the fire and lets us share with Him our hurts, and our dreams, and our deepest secrets.

And when we let Him in on most intimate details of our life, He in turn shares with us the comfort of His embrace as He lets us know that He will never leave us nor forsake us. God wants you, the unique, one-of-a-kind, you, to be in an intimate relationship with Him.

3. GOD LOVES ME INDIVIDUALLY

Again, I think that most of us can understand God’s love for us from a theological perspective – we can grasp the “*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...*” truth because it simply defines God’s love for us in a corporate sense. What I mean is that theologically speaking, we can understand the Cross, and the necessity of the resurrection, because it still seems far removed from our everyday experience and doesn’t make us too uncomfortable or challenge us as deeply as perhaps it ought too.

But when we think of a God that loves us individually, that calls us by name, that loves us as a person, which cares about us even if there were no one else on earth to concern Him, that’s a different story. Because when we come face to face with a God who loves us as individuals we are forced to either love Him back or reject Him.

Luke 15 is a passage in the Bible that has such practical meaning for us today. Luke 15 tells us three stories – one about a lost sheep, one about a lost coin, and the third about a lost son. In each of the stories God is the one who has lost something valuable and does whatever is necessary to find what He values. And the reason He does that is clear – it is because He loves the one that was lost. His focus is not on the many who are already in His care, but on the individual that has wandered away from Him.

In each case, when the lost one is found, God throws a party, because He is so in love with the one that was missing and now they have been found. The story is used to illustrate the love God has for everyone who is not presently in a relationship with Him, but there is more to the story than that. Even those of us who are presently found were at one time lost, and God searched for us diligently until we came back into His possession. He searched for us as individuals, not as a group. And when He found us and we came into a relationship with Him, are we to think that His love for us as individuals somehow came to a close? Of course not! He loves us just as much today as He always has, and that will never change. But for some reason, many of us who have been found for a long time, tend to forget the loving aspect of the relationship we have with God.

Mike Yaconelli, the cofounder of Youth Specialties, tells about the time when, dejected and demoralized, he went off with his wife, Karla, to Toronto, Canada, for a five-day retreat. He went hoping to draw inspiration from the mentally and physically handicapped people who lived at the retreat center, or to find solace in the preaching of Henri Nouwen who was teaching there. Instead, he found his true self and rediscovered the love of God – He said: “It took only a few hours of silence before I began to hear my soul speaking. It only took being alone for a short period of time for me to discover I wasn’t alone. God had been trying to shout over the noisiness of my life, and I couldn’t hear Him. But in the stillness and solitude, His whispers shouted from my soul, ‘Michael, I am here. I have been calling you, but you haven’t been listening. Can you hear Me, Michael? I love you. I have always loved you. And I have been waiting for you to hear Me say that to you. But you have been so busy trying to prove to yourself that you are loved that you have not heard me.’”

Some of us are trying so hard to prove to ourselves that we are loved that we don’t hear God’s voice telling us that He truly does love us. And in our attempt at being whole, and right, and doctrinally correct, we have forgotten that true love is experienced when we admit our brokenness. Many of us have misunderstood the Christian faith to teach that God comes to us only in our strength, and in our unwavering faith. But to truly experience the love of God we need to discover that it is in our weakness that Jesus makes us strong, and that it is in our lack of faith that God grants us faith, and that it is in the acceptance that even when we are the most unlovable, God loves us still. You are uniquely and completely loved by God at this very moment.

4. GOD CHALLENGES ME SPECIFICALLY

I don't know about you, but I like to be around people that challenge me to live life at a level beyond what I'm living. To me there is nothing more boring than remaining in the present state of being. There is always another goal to reach, always another mountain to climb, always another rung on the ladder.

If we don't have challenges in our lives, the problem isn't that we stay the same, but that we begin to go backwards, to digress, and eventually to break down. God comes to us and specifically challenges us to become better people today than we were yesterday. He lets us know that He is on our side, ready to equip us, sustain us, and share with us in the victory.

The Apostle Paul had journeyed across the world for the cause of Christ. He had accepted every challenge thrown at him, and never backed away from anything God wanted him to do. Through living a life that accepted the challenges that God threw his way, Paul lived one of the most fulfilling lives of anyone who has ever lived.

But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love. – Acts 20:24

Before Paul started on his journey, I'm sure he never dreamed of what God would and could do through him. But when he accepted the challenge, when he raised the bar, when he listened to God's calling and acted upon it, he discovered that God's challenges result in God's reward.

God is challenging you today to something specific – it might or not be the same challenge that he gave to Paul – but He is challenging you to go beyond yourself, outside of your comfort zone, and to reach the next level. I've got a feeling that you already know what the challenge is – the question is, are you ready to rise up to meet the challenge and to be used by God?

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A SERVANT

Jesus walked up to some fishermen and said, “Follow me, and I will make you fisher’s of men.” They dropped their nets and followed Him.

He met a woman at a well and said, “Follow me, and you’ll never be thirsty again.” She dropped her bucket and went to get all of her friends.

Jesus still calls out today – to dock workers, CEOs, plumbers, electricians, firemen, homemakers, and even preachers, and they drop what they’re doing to follow

History has repeatedly shown that people hunger for something larger than themselves, and leaders who offer that have no shortage of followers.

Studies show that people will work harder and longer on projects when they understand the overall significance of their individual contribution. The study most often quoted is that of airplane workers who were divided into two groups. Members of one group simply did what they were told to do, while the other group’s members were taken to the engineering lab and shown how their particular pieces were part of a magnificent jet that would fly higher and faster than any jet had ever flown before. Without any additional incentive, the second group’s productivity soared. They knew how important their contribution was to a larger plan.

Jesus was and is a master at teaching us the “why” behind what He calls us to do. He wants us to know exactly what it is He wants from us and the significance behind His commands.

We see this demonstrated when James and John came to Jesus and asked Him if they could sit at His right and left hands in the heavenly kingdom. It was a bold thing to ask, and also an extremely selfish request. Jesus could have rebuked them, He could have kicked them off the leadership team, or He could have made fools of them in front of the others. Instead, He used the opportunity to teach them, and us, how significant it is to be a servant in the kingdom of God.

"You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to

be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many." – Mark 10:42-45

When Jesus calls someone to be His follower, He calls them to a life of servanthood, not a life of fame, fortune, and prestige. To better understand that, there are two things we really need to understand today – the first is our need, and the second is our goal.

OUR NEED: SEE THE SERVANT

When He calls James and John, and each of us today, to servanthood, He does it with complete credibility. Because He lived the life of a servant, even though He was the creator of the universe. If we can look a little closer at His life, we can better understand what Jesus is asking of us.

1. SEE WHY JESUS CAME

Before Jesus came to earth He had heaven as His home. He had everything that He could possibly need there – Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit were dwelling together in perfect unity. To leave the comfort of heaven to come to an earth filled with sin, violence, and rebellion doesn't seem to be that sweet of a deal to me.

But Jesus explains the "why" of His coming here in Mark 10:45:

For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many." – Mark 10:45

This is so absolutely foreign to our way of thinking that it is hard to grasp. God came to earth, not to be served, but to serve – not to take, but to give – not to demand of us, but to sacrifice Himself for us. We were held kidnapped by our sin, and Jesus came to pay the ransom price to set us free.

There is so much more I'd like to say about this, as it is one of the deepest theological truths in the Bible, but for now, let's just recognize the fact that Jesus demonstrated servanthood at the highest level by giving His life for us.

2. SEE WHAT JESUS SAW

Jesus saw the people of His day and our day, through the eyes of a servant. He looked out at a lost humanity and was filled with compassion and a longing for fellowship that is beyond our finite imaginations. Jesus didn't look at people and put them in categories of good and bad. He saw each and every person as one that was in great need of a Servant Savior who could turn their lives around and help them get started in the right direction. Let's just look at a sampling of Scriptures that will help us to see this clearly.

When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. – Matthew 9:36 (Message)

Some blind people told Jesus they wanted to see:

Deeply moved, Jesus touched their eyes. They had their sight back that very instant, and joined the procession. – Matthew 20:34 (Message)

Jesus looked out over the city of Jerusalem:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me." – Matthew 23:37

Jesus didn't see people as objects or as detriments or as throw-aways. He saw them as human beings who were in need of a Servant Savior. And He came to fulfill that role.

And that is how Jesus stills sees each one of us today – not as a mass of humanity, but as individuals who He loves and cherishes with every fiber of His being.

3. SEE HOW JESUS LIVED

Being God in the flesh could have its advantages, you know? Just a blink of the eye or a snap of the fingers and you could have whatever you wanted. If I had to guess what kind of life God would have lived if He came to earth without already knowing what I know, I would have pictured Him living in the biggest mansion, with the most servants, and everyone running around like crazy trying to meet His every need. But Jesus didn't live like that – He lived like the servant He claimed to be.

Jesus said, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have no home of my own, not even a place to lay my head." – Matthew 8:20

He was born into the home of a carpenter and worked for a living. He lived among the poor and was Himself poor. He lived like a man who had a purpose greater than Himself, and that purpose was lived out, not in self-gratification, but in the giving of Himself to the world He came to serve.

4. SEE HOW JESUS DIED

If you travel up I-395 through Washington, D.C., and cross over the Potomac, you will likely cross the Arland D. Williams, Jr., Memorial Bridge. Who was Arland D. Williams, Jr.? On January 13, 1982, he gave hope to five individuals at the cost of his own life. On that cold January day, Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the icy Potomac. Ice on the wings prevented the plane from a successful take-off. Almost all of the passengers perished. Five different times, a helicopter dropped a rope to save Williams. Five times, Williams passed the rope to other passengers in worse shape than he was. When the rope was extended to Williams the sixth time, he couldn't take hold, and succumbed to the frigid waters. His heroism wasn't rash. Aware that his own strength was fading, he deliberately handed hope to someone else over the space of several minutes.

Jesus didn't make a rash decision to give his life for ours. That Jesus would be an atoning sacrifice for us was His destiny from eternity past. In the Cross Event Jesus fulfilled the promise He had made to His disciples. As the suffering servant He poured out His life as a ransom for us all.

OUR GOAL: BECOME THE SERVANT

On *The O'Reilly Factor*, Mel Gibson spoke about his movie about Christ's life – *The Passion*:

"I think it's meant to just tell the truth. I want to be as truthful as possible. But, when you look at the reasons behind why Christ came, why he was crucified, he died for all mankind and he suffered for all mankind, so that, really, anybody who transgresses has to look at their own part or look at their own culpability. It's time to get back to a basic message, the message that was given. At this time, the world has gone nuts, I think. Christ spoke of faith, hope, love, and forgiveness. And these are things I think we need to be

reminded of again. He forgave as he was tortured and killed. And we could do with a little of that behavior. ”

I’m not holding Mel Gibson up as a role model here, but his words ring true. Jesus lived out what He taught. He didn’t just call us to be servants, but was a servant Himself. His purpose in coming; the way that He saw people; the way that He lived; and the way that He died, all stand out to us as an example of servanthood.

Jesus clearly taught that His servant nature was a model for all who would follow Him:

Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. – Mark 10:43-44

The way up is down; you come in first when you come in last; the greatest among us is the least; we are exalted when we are brought down low – all of these are ways of describing what Jesus calls each and every one of us to be. Our goal as individuals and as a church is to model the servanthood of Jesus. To do that we need to be able to answer four questions that line up with what we’ve already seen in the life and ministry of Jesus.

1. WHY AM I HERE?

Why do I exist? What is my purpose in life? What reason do I have for taking the next breath? Why should I wake up tomorrow morning?

Jesus came to this planet to serve as a ransom that would pay for our sins. And while we know that we can’t do that, we do know that Christ can continue to live His purpose through us.

In fact, my purpose is His purpose. His reason for coming to earth becomes my mission. We are here as God’s servants to spread the news of Christ’s sacrifice. I live, and you live, as servants of Jesus Christ with the overarching purpose of making more disciples that can join with us in the pursuit of growing God’s kingdom.

2. WHAT DO I SEE?

When I leave church and I see people on the street, or in their cars, or at the store, what do I really see? Do I see people that are getting in my way, or people that disgust me, or people that I want to steer clear of? Or do I see individuals each in need of what Jesus has to offer? Do I look out at the city and see those that I love and desire to gather them together like a mother hen gathering her chicks so that they can be safe and secure.

What I see when I look outside my door tells me whether or not I have obtained the servant heart of Jesus Christ.

3. HOW DO I LIVE?

"If any of you wants to be my follower," he told them, "you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life." – Mark 8:34-35

Do I live every waking moment for the cause of Christ? Is the mission of the church more important to me than my own life? Am I willing to pick up my cross and follow Jesus wherever He leads me?

If I have the heart of a servant, I will live like a person that is not worried about what others think, or my status in the world, but will instead live as a person that has nothing greater in my life than living it for Jesus Christ.

4. HOW WILL I DIE?

Have you ever walked through a cemetery and read the epitaphs? Let me share a few with you:

On a grave from the 1880s in Nantucket, Massachusetts...

Under the sod and under the trees,
Lies the body of Jonathan Pease.
He is not here, there's only the pod.
Pease shelled out and went to God.

On a coal miner's grave...

Gone Underground For Good

Winterborn Steepleton Cemetery, Dorsetshire, England...
Here lies the body of Margaret Bent
She kicked up her heels and away she went.

On a housewife's tombstone...
Mary Weary, Housewife
Dear Friends I am going
Where washing ain't done
Or cooking or sewing:
Don't mourn for me now
Or weep for me never:
For I go to do nothing
Forever and ever!

Have you ever wondered what will be written on your tombstone? I would hope that on mine, as well as yours, with all honesty it could be said that he/she died a true servant of Jesus Christ. That can be said, if we will commit ourselves to following Jesus with a servant heart.

GUT CHECK: *What am I going to do to close the gap between Jesus' level of servanthood and my own.*

When I compare the four areas where Jesus demonstrated servanthood, with my four answers I have no doubt there is a gap between the two. This is true for me, as well as for you. But what are we going to do about it? Can we at least start by identifying the areas where we are not living as a servant, and begin working toward it today? Jesus calls us not to be great, but to be the least of all. We do that, when we learn from Him and follow His example.

THE HOLY SPIRIT YOU CAN COUNT ON

Back in the 1990s, the police department in Joplin, Missouri came up with an interesting plan. They didn't have enough officers to patrol all of the high traffic intersections, so they would set up a patrol car on the side of the road, and put a mannequin in the driver's seat, complete with a police uniform. Even though word got around town fast, people would still slow down when they saw that car sitting in the intersection.

Another strange thing I've noticed is that some of the newer stores and malls with small ponds out front will put fake swans or other birds in them that are very realistic. In fact, it is not uncommon to find people taking pictures of these birds, thinking that they are going to have photographs of real birds.

We are easily fooled by imitations, aren't we? Both in our every day experience, as well as in our spiritual lives.

I would contend that many of us view the Holy Spirit like we view the Police Officer mannequin or the fake swans. We read about Him in the Bible, and in some sense we believe that He is present in our lives, but at the same time He doesn't seem quite real to us.

In fact, I would have to say from personal experience that if there is one factor that is missing in many Christian's lives, it is an awareness of, and a deep relationship with, the Holy Spirit of God. And if we are to utilize the spiritual gifts that God has given to us, we have to first have a good idea of just who the Spirit is, which is our focus in this study.

1. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD (Trinity)

Now, I'm not trying to get overly theological on you, but you need to understand that the Holy Spirit is God, just as much as the Father is God, and Jesus is God. They are all three God, working together as the Godhead/Trinity. They each have different roles to play, but they are all God. So when we talk about the Spirit, we are not just talking about God in Spirit form, but God the Holy Spirit, as an individual member of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is completely and fully God – there is nothing about God the Father or God the Son that is not also true about Him in that respect. Let's look at a few passages of Scripture together where we see the qualities of God attributed to the Holy Spirit:

➔THE SPIRIT IS ETERNAL

Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our hearts from deeds that lead to death so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. – Hebrews 9:14

➔THE SPIRIT KNOWS ALL THINGS

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. – 1 Corinthians 2:11 (NKJV)

➔THE SPIRIT IS ALL-POWERFUL

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God." – Luke 1:35

➔THE SPIRIT IS ALL PLACES AT ALL TIMES

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. – Psalms 139:7-8 (NKJV)

➔THE SPIRIT IS ADDRESSED AS “GOD”

Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God." – Acts 5:3-4

Now I could give you many more passages to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is presented to us in the Bible as wholly and completely God, but these should suffice. Other places in the Bible He is referred to as “The Spirit of Truth,” “The Spirit of Grace,” and “The Spirit of Wisdom.”

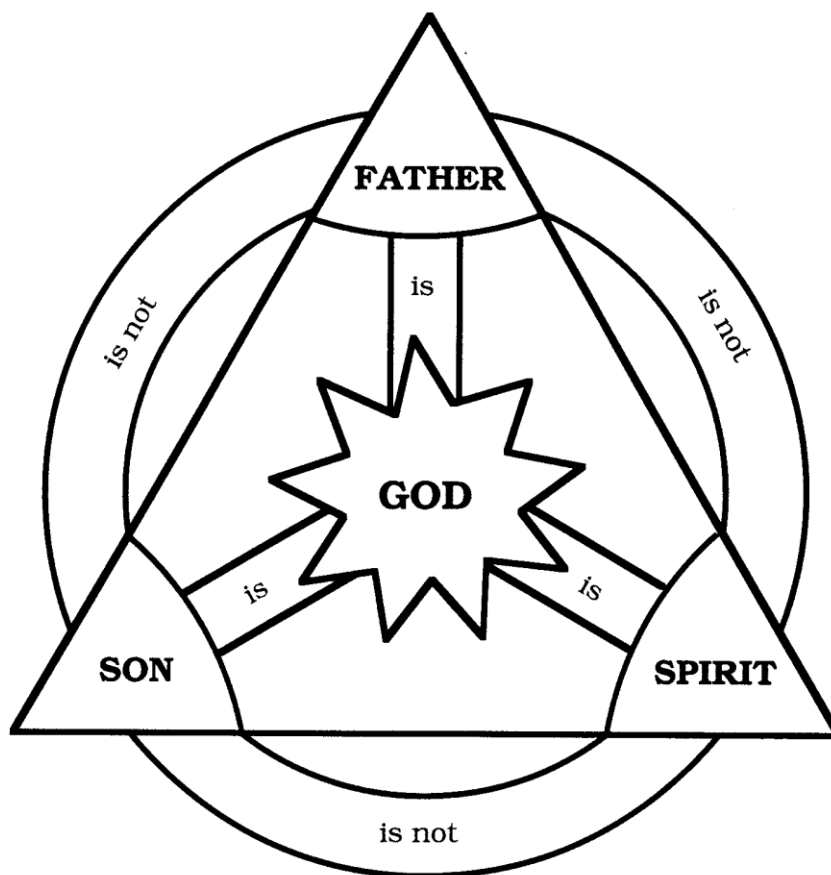
The point I’m trying to get across is that when we talk about the Holy Spirit we are not talking about an “it” or a ghost, we are talking about the very Person of

God Himself. The respect and honor that we give to the Father and Son, should also be given to the Spirit of God.

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS UNIQUE

Now when we say something or someone is unique, we are saying there is something about them that makes them stand apart from the crowd. There are many women in the world, but my wife is unique in that she is the only one that is married to me (whether that's good or bad I'll let you decide). And while the Holy Spirit is God, in the same way the Son and Father are God, He plays a unique role in ministry.

There is a chart in your notes that should help us to better understand what I'm talking about:



Notice on the chart that the Father *is* God, the Son *is* God, and the Spirit *is* God. Yet when you look at the outer circle you'll see that the Son *is not* the Father,

the Father *is not* the Spirit, and the Spirit *is not* the Son. They are all equally God, yet they each have a completely unique function. And while you don't have to be an expert on the Trinity, it would be great if you could remember this one basic truth. The Holy Spirit ministers to you, and to the world at large in a different way than do the Father or the Son.

Confused yet? I hope not...in fact, I'm hoping this is becoming clearer. Let me give you a couple of passages that tell of us all three members of the Godhead and their unique roles.

And when Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens split open and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you." – Mark 1:10-11

But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you. – John 14:26

Now I could show you any number of verses to prove this point, but the idea is that they each function in different ways, and we need to know that the Holy Spirit's function to humankind is undeniably important to each one of us. In particular it is the Holy Spirit's job to lead people to faith in Jesus and the one who gives them the ability to lead a Christian life.

Let's look at some specific roles of the Spirit in dealing with us:

➔THE SPIRIT REVEALS THE MIND OF GOD

As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. – Ephesians 3:4-5

➔THE SPIRIT GIVES US THE MEANS TO BE BORN AGAIN

"The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven." – John 3:5-6

➔THE SPIRIT ALLOWS US TO APPROACH THE FATHER

Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. – Ephesians 2:18

➔THE SPIRIT TEACHES THE TRUTH OF GOD

No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. – 1 Corinthians 2:11-12

Now there are many more things I could say to you about the unique role of the Spirit, and we will be looking at those in more depth in the next few lessons, but for now just remember that the Holy Spirit has a unique role in your life and in the world.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WITHIN YOU

One of the more humorous quirks of scientific history is the debate over who should get the credit for discovering oxygen. Joseph Priestley, an English scientist and clergyman, is often given that honor because he was the first to publish his findings, doing so in 1774. Interestingly, Priestley originally called the gas, "dephlogisticated air." However, in 1772, two years prior to Priestley's find, a Swedish chemist named Carl Scheele independently discovered the gas that is vital to human existence. Strangely enough, the term *oxygen* didn't actually come into use until 1775, when yet another chemist, Frenchman Antoine Lavoisier, discovered and named the gas we breathe. Lavoisier was the first to recognize oxygen as one of our natural elements. Regardless of who gets the credit, it's odd to think of a human being "discovering" oxygen – Does a fish discover water? The truth is that oxygen literally surrounds us every day, and even if we choose to call it "dephlogisticated air," we can't live without it.

The same is true of the Holy Spirit. He is here, He is real, and He is promised to every person who places their trust in Jesus Christ. Whether you have recognized His work in your life up to this point or not is irrelevant. He is a necessary part of your success in leading a Christian life.

Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." – Acts 2:38

Now the gift of the Holy Spirit, is the Holy Spirit Himself. And as we've already seen the Holy Spirit is fully and completely God. So if the Holy Spirit lives in you, that means that God lives in you!

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? – 1 Corinthians 3:16

Those who obey God's commandments live in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Holy Spirit lives in us. – 1 John 3:24

Now, knowing that God literally lives within us should cause us to make some radical changes in our lives:

*If God lives within me, then I have the power to overcome every single temptation that is ever thrown at me.

*If God lives within me, then I have the ability to love others in the same way that God loves them.

*If God lives within me, then I have no excuses when it comes to living the way He wants me to live my life.

*If God lives within me, there is absolutely nothing that can stop me from becoming the dad, mom, husband, child, employee, or employer that He wants me to become.

In fact, if God lives within me, there are no limits to what I can become, what I can overcome, or what I can accomplish in life. Because I have come to realize that the same God who created the universe, the same God who parted the Red Sea, the same God who showed compassion for the masses, is the same God who has promised to live within me. And with that kind of presence as a part of my life, I've got to come to the realization that Paul wasn't kidding when he said:

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. – Ephesians 3:16

With God's Spirit within us we have the power to see, be, do, say, learn, and accomplish anything God wants us to. It really comes down to a matter of trusting in Him, to not only see us through, but to lead us to live lives of spiritual success.

THE RENEWAL THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS YOU

Clean House is the name for a show on the Style Channel where experts in cleaning, organizing, remodeling, and painting sweep into a cluttered home with the purpose of leaving it more comfortable, attractive, and livable. The experts face the challenges of clothes strewn across the floor, bulging cabinets, closets filled from top to bottom, filled counter tops, and overflowing kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, and living rooms—not a clean room in the house! The experts' first step is to take an inventory of all the "stuff." Then, decisions are made about what to sell at a yard sale and what to keep. The home's inhabitants hesitate and hold on to favorite clothes from years gone by, childhood keepsakes, space-taking trivia, but then they yield. The sale is held, and money comes in to help with the makeover. Then the family leaves, and the work begins. Rooms are cleaned out, redone for more efficiency and attractiveness, and repainted. Curtains are hung, cabinets set in, and walls decorated. A transformation takes place, and when the family returns, they can't believe it. Nervous anticipation quickly gives way to excitement and laughter when the family sees what's taken place.

In the spiritual realm, there comes a time for each of us to "take inventory" of our lives, get rid of some things, and do some repairing and remodeling – we need to “clean house.” And like the families on the show, we have an expert in remodeling and renovation—the Holy Spirit—who can make our makeover an astounding success. For each and every one of us there comes times when we need a fresh start with God, where we can sweep out the old junk, and bring the new stuff inside.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. – Titus 3:5-6 (NIV)

Now this rebirth and renewal was given to us initially when we became Christians. But there is an ongoing act of renewal that needs to take place on a regular basis as we live the Christian life. There are four areas in particular that I like to pray to God for the Holy Spirit's power of renewal, and I'm hoping that you'll adopt these as your own today.

1. GOD, GIVE ME A NEW HEART

Biblical speaking, when we talk about the heart, we are talking about the seat of our emotions – the place where we either invite God in, or try to shut Him out. Often, when we first become Christians we have a heart that is open to the things of God, and we are spiritually hungering for His Word. We can't imagine a time when we would not want to have a heart that is ready and willing to receive whatever God has to give to us. But somewhere along the line, some of us choose not to hear from God the way that we once did, and our ability to be spiritually sensitive seems to disappear. We find ourselves going through the motions, attending church, maybe even reading the Bible and praying, but not having the ability to hear God any longer.

“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away.” – Matthew 15:8

That is a very convicting passage, because it forces us to examine our hearts under the light of God's Spirit. Am I really praying to God, or am I just mouthing empty words? Am I allowing this lesson to change me, or am I just politely taking notes that I'll throw away when I get home? Am I going to God's Word with the intent of learning what God has to say to me, or just so I'll be able to check off that day on my daily Bible reading schedule? If someone else had the ability to examine my heart today, would they see a heart that is drawing closer to God, or further away?

The good news is that if your heart is far from God today, the Holy Spirit can bring renewal that will help you to draw close to God all over again.

It is God who gives us, along with you, the ability to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment of everything he will give us.
– 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

If you are a Christian the Holy Spirit is already present in your heart. Now it is just a matter of allowing Him to do His work of renewal.

David prayed: *Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.* – Psalms 51:10

And that is where we must begin also – pray to God to give you a new heart, to renew you, to give you the ability to hear and see Him again. Admit to God that your heart has not been in the right place, but that you know with His help, it can

be made right again. If you really want to experience spiritual renewal it has to begin right here, with you willing to open up to God and confess to Him your heart's condition. And the Spirit will begin to do His work – reviving what was once so strong and true, and making it whole again.

2. GOD, GIVE ME A NEW ATTITUDE

¹Perhaps you've heard of Donald Drusky, the man who took God to court. The one-time employee of US Steel blamed God for failing to rectify the wrong done to him when he was fired in 1968. Drusky waged a 30-year battle with the steelmaker, before deciding to take legal action against God. The suit reads: *The defendant, God, is the sovereign ruler of the universe and took no corrective action against the leaders of his church and his nation for their extremely serious wrongs, which ruined the life of Donald S. Drusky.* For damages, Drusky asked for the return of his youth, the skill of a great guitarist, and the resurrections of his mother and pet pigeon. Drusky hoped that God would fail to appear in court, allowing him to win the case by default. Thankfully, his case was declared frivolous and thrown out by a Syracuse court.

While Drusky obviously took extreme measures, I don't think his attitude toward God is all that uncommon. Many people tend to blame God for everything that has gone wrong with their lives, while others get upset if God doesn't answer their prayers exactly the way that they think that He should.

And then others, who don't necessarily have a bad attitude toward God, have a really bad attitude concerning people in general, or their boss, or spouse, etc... Now when my attitude toward God or others isn't right, then my spiritual life is also going to begin going down the tubes.

Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. – Ephesians 4:22-23

We need to understand that when Paul wrote this, he was addressing it toward people who were already Christians. Which just goes to show that this attitude problem is nothing new. But what does he tell us to do about it? He says to throw off like dirty clothes. And then, we are to enter into the process of spiritual renewal.

¹ *Servant, a publication of Prairie Bible Institute (Issue 70, 2004), p. 9*

If this is a problem in your life or mine, we need to go to God and say, “God, my attitude stinks. Please help me, by the power of the Holy Spirit to become a new person. Show how to look at you, and at other people, through your eyes instead of my own.”

3. GOD, GIVE ME A NEW DESIRE

²In 1999, for the first time in 47 years, local fishermen discovered that tuna were running only thirty miles off Cape Cod, Massachusetts – And they were biting! You didn't have to be a professional to catch them; all you needed was a sharp hook and some bait. And the rewards for doing so were substantial – Japanese buyers were willing to pay \$50,000 for a large blue-fin. As a result, many ignored Coast Guard warnings and headed out to sea in small, unequipped boats. What these new fishermen didn't realize was that the problem isn't catching a tuna—it's getting them into the boat. On September 23, the *Christi Anne*, a 19-foot boat, capsized while doing battle with a tuna. That same day, the 27-foot boat *Basic Instinct* suffered the same fate, while *Official Business*, a 28-footer, was swamped after it hooked onto a 600-pound tuna. The tuna simply pulled it underwater. These fishermen underestimated the power of the fish they were trying to catch.

Something very similar happens to us when we give into sinful desires. A small indiscretion appears to be worth the risk. It's only after we give in that we discover its true strength.

Wouldn't it be great if after we became Christians, all that we would desire would be the things of God? That we would never be pulled in by sin, that we would never look back at our life before Christ longingly, and that all we would want are things that are pure, holy, true, and just? But you and I both know that's not how it works – it seems like only moments after we accept Christ we find ourselves desiring the old sinful nature again.

I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires.

² *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Zondervan, 2005), pp. 59-60

These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. – Galatians 5:16-17

“Your choices are never free from this conflict,” Paul says, but he began by telling us that we can rely on the renewal of the Spirit during these times of temptation. Have you ever, in the midst of being drawn into a sinful desire, stopped and prayed, “God, I am failing here...I am tempted by sin and I feel myself giving into it. Please empower me by Your Spirit to overcome.” I’ve done that many times, and every single time God has answered that prayer. It is only when I don’t pray that prayer, and ignore the promptings of the Spirit, that I give into the desire that I have. If we will only stop ourselves before sin takes over, and pray, the Spirit will renew us and give us the power to overcome whatever Satan is throwing at us.

4. GOD, GIVE ME A NEW HOPE

³Barb Clark said her grandson Josh, 4-years-old, was visiting with her one day. She told him he could have cereal, pancakes, or waffles for breakfast. He thought a moment, looked up at her, and asked, "Did you say cookies?" Now that is hope!

For some of us the problem is that when we started our Christian adventure, we were filled with hope, but something has happened to change all that. Perhaps it is just life in general, or maybe something traumatic has happened to challenge our belief system, or maybe we just forgot to focus on the future God has planned for us. But somewhere along the line, many of us have lost our hope.

I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. – Romans 15:13

What kind of prayer is that Paul? A prayer for power...yes! A prayer for strength...yes! A prayer for comfort...okay! But a prayer for hope? Is that really something we need? You bet that it is! Because until we experience a renewal of hope, the other things aren’t going to matter all that much.

Until we believe in God’s preferred future, until we understand that a better day is coming, and until we begin to see things through the eyes of heaven, we’re

³ Barb Clark, "Kids of the Kingdom," *Christian Reader* (July/August 2000)

not going to be able to overcome in these other areas. You see, we need to know that God is real, and that heaven is just down the path of life, if we are going to be able to deal with the life that is here and now.

As human beings we are created to look toward the future, and if we are not convinced that that future is something much better than what we have now, we are going to give up. Through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit that kind of hope can be ours. We need to pray, along with Paul; “God, give me a new hope. One that is sure, and exciting, and real. Give me an assurance of the future. Help me to believe that everything that you promised me is going to come to pass.” And God will give you exactly what you ask for, if you’ll only trust Him.

THE FILLING OF YOUR LIFE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

A cowboy walked into a Texas bar, ordered three bottles of beer, and sat in the back room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finished them, he came back to the bar and ordered three more. The bartender told the cowboy, "You know, a bottle goes flat after I open it. It would taste better if you bought one at a time." The cowboy replied, "Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in Australia, the other is in Dublin, and I'm in Texas. When we all left home, we promised we'd drink this way to remember the days we drank together, so I drink one for each of my brothers and one for myself." The bartender admitted this was a nice custom and left it there. The cowboy became a regular in the bar and always drank the same way. But one day, he ordered only two bottles. All the regulars took notice and fell silent. When he came back to the bar for the second round, the bartender said, "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your loss." The cowboy looked puzzled for a moment, then a light dawned and he laughed. "Oh, no, everybody's just fine," he explained. "It's just that my wife and I joined the First Christian Church in Longview, and I had to quit drinking. It hasn't affected my brothers though."

Some of us are like that with our sin, aren't we? We find ways to get around the truth of who we are and often find excuses for what we've become. And we either continue living the lifestyle we lived before becoming Christians, or fall back into it after awhile. And then we wonder why God isn't blessing our lives any longer.

We need to know what to do when, after living for God, we find ourselves entangled in sin and need to be filled with the Holy Spirit all over again. We also need to understand that when we talk about the filling of the Holy Spirit, we are simply talking about coming under the full control of the Spirit in our lives.

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. – Ephesians 5:18

We are all under the control of something, whether it be our sinful nature, or the Holy Spirit who indwells all who are Christians. I don't know about you, but I'd prefer to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. In this session, I want us to look at three steps King David took as our example, and see how he chose to be controlled by the Spirit of God.

1. SPIRIT, EMPTY ME OF ALL THAT IS UNHOLY

Some of you are familiar with the story of David's fall into sin, but some are not, so let me briefly retell the story. David was a man who had been mightily used by God. In fact, the Scriptures teach us that David was a man after God's own heart. But like many of us, David found that there were times in his life when he gave into temptation and sinned against God. His relationship with God was then fractured, and found himself in need of spiritual healing.

The most famous case in David's life had to do with him lusting after a woman, Bathsheba, who was bathing on her rooftop where David could see her. David inquired about her, and discovered that she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's soldiers who was off to war fighting on David's behalf. Even after discovering that Bathsheba was a married woman, David sent for her, and had sexual relations with her. When he later found out she was pregnant, he called her husband home from the war, thinking he would sleep with his wife, and cover up David's sin. But Uriah didn't sleep with Bathsheba, so David sent him to the front of the battle lines, and instructed the other men to pull back, and Uriah was killed.

So here on David's list of sins, we have lust, adultery, deceit, and murder. In time, he was brought under heavy conviction for what he had done wrong. He knew that his relationship with God wasn't right, and he also knew that to make that relationship whole again, he needed to be emptied of his transgression against God – fortunately for us, we have his prayer recorded in Psalms 51.

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my shameful deeds— they haunt me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the heart, so you can teach me to be wise in my inmost being. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. – Psalms 51:1-7

Have you ever prayed like that? “God, I recognize my sin, and I know what I have done is wrong, but I ask you to purge me of all wrong-doing.” That is about as honest of a prayer as you're ever going to find. It's the kind of prayer we need to pray when we have sinned against God. It's the kind of prayer we need to pray when our relationship with Him is not what it once was, and we find ourselves drifting away from Him. It is this kind of prayer that is necessary so that we can

remove all of the disobedience, all of the sin, all of the rebellion that we have stored in our hearts against our Heavenly Father.

You might not have blown it as bad as David did, but you know and I know that there are times in our lives when we have willfully disobeyed. And it is in those times that we sense the lack of God's Spirit more than any other – and it is in those times that we must listen to the conviction He is bringing to our hearts and repent of our wickedness if we hope to be filled with the Holy Spirit again

2. SPIRIT, FILL ME WITH YOUR PRESENCE

I imagine most of you are familiar with bulimia. You've either read about it, known someone who was suffering from it, or perhaps fell into this dangerous behavior yourself. The bulimic is a binge eater, who soon after filling their stomachs with food takes laxatives, or forces themselves to vomit in order to not gain any weight. It's obviously a very serious disorder that can lead to some extreme consequences, including death. The bulimic empties him/herself of what is good, nutritious, and beneficial and ends up sick, unattractive, and unhealthy. And they repeat this behavior over and over and over again.

Now, the person who wants to be filled with the Spirit also empties himself or herself, but they empty themselves of something negative, namely sin. And if this person wants to be filled with the Spirit he/she will put a stop to the ungodly behavior and replace it with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, with God's help we break the pattern of sin that has us in its grasp. The Spirit filled person has gotten rid of what is bad and spiritually unhealthy, and has replaced it with what is ultimately good, powerful, and righteous.

When David sinned he not only told God He was sorry for what he had done wrong and ask for forgiveness. He took the next step, which is saying, "God, please don't just remove what is wrong with my life, but fill me back up with what is good."

Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. – Psalms 51:8-12

FOUR REQUESTS IN THE SPIRIT-FILLED PRAYER

These four requests summarize what will happen to you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit of God:

➔ I NEED TO REJOICE AGAIN

David, like us, found out that when he ran away from God, the joy he had once experienced went away. It is impossible for us to rejoice with God, and run from God at the same time. When the Spirit fills us, that joy is renewed.

➔ I NEED MY GUILT REMOVED

Now, I think it is important to note that David had already requested that his sins be forgiven, and I believe that he knows that they have been. But guilt is something different entirely – we can be forgiven and still suffer from feelings of guilt from something we have done wrong in the past. When we are filled with the Spirit, the Spirit gives us the assurance that not only are our sins erased from our record, but that we no longer need to feel guilty about those sins ever again.

➔ I NEED MY SPIRIT RENEWED

At this point David is not speaking of the Holy Spirit, but of the human spirit. He needed to be lifted back up to the point that he was at previous to his sin. When you have sinned against God, it takes something out of you whether you recognize it or not. You begin to experience a level of withdrawal from what had been the norm, and you need to return to the spiritual life you once had led. The Holy Spirit will fill you and give you that renewal you so desperately need.

➔ I NEED A RESTORATION OF JOY and OBEDIENCE

David prayed that there would be a restoration of the joy of his salvation. Have you ever felt that way? Like the salvation you experience in Christ is no longer all that joyful to you any longer. That the things of Christ that once excited you and made you look forward to each passing day, now have become routine and boring? If that is happening to you, it is not what God wants for your life. Through the filling of the Spirit He can bring back the satisfaction of salvation you once enjoyed.

But David also asks for a restoration of a desire to obey God. He knew, and we should know, that even after we are filled by the Spirit of God, it is very easy to fall back into the lifestyle we are repenting of. The Spirit will enable us to stay on the right track. If we can pray in these four areas, we will begin to understand and experience the filling of the Spirit of God.

3. SPIRIT, USE ME TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR WILL

When we are filled with the Spirit of God, we are not just wanting to get some warm, mushy, spiritual feeling – we desire to be used to accomplish God’s will. David knew that once the filling took place, God would have expectations for his life, and so he continued by praying this way:

Then I will teach your ways to sinners, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. Unseal my lips, O Lord, that I may praise you. You would not be pleased with sacrifices, or I would bring them. If I brought you a burnt offering, you would not accept it. The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you will not despise. – Psalms 51:13-17

David is going to use his life from this point on, to lead others who have strayed back into the fold. He promises to teach God’s way to sinners – He promises to sing of God’s forgiveness – He promises to praise God with lips that have been unsealed.

David, filled with the Spirit of God is going to bring the most important sacrifice of all – He is going to offer Himself, wholly and completely to Almighty God. Have you ever prayed like David prayed?

“Lord, I will give of myself to You. I will turn over my mind, heart, soul, and strength, for You to use in Your service from this day forward. I will not hold back, I will turn away, I will not return to the life of sin. With the filling of Your Spirit, I am capable and willing to do Your will in my life.”

God will honor a prayer like that, and He will fill you with His Spirit to overflowing, if you’ll only turn it all over to Him.

THE POWER AND GIFTING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

In 1935, Blasio Kugosi, a schoolteacher in Rwanda, Central Africa, was deeply discouraged by the lack of life in the church and the powerlessness of his own experience. He followed the example of the first Christians and closed himself in for a week of prayer and fasting in his little cottage. He emerged a changed man. He confessed his sins to those he had wronged, including his wife and children. He proclaimed the gospel in the school where he taught, and revival broke out there, resulting in students and teachers being saved. They were called *abaka*, meaning “people on fire.” Shortly after that, Blasio was invited to Uganda to share with the Anglican Church there. As he called the leaders to repentance, the fire of the Spirit descended again on the place, with similar results as in Rwanda. Several days later, Blasio died of fever. His ministry lasted only a few weeks, but the revival fires sparked through his ministry swept throughout East Africa and continue to the present. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been transformed over the decades through this mighty East African revival. It all began with a discouraged Christian setting himself apart to seek the fullness of God's Spirit.

And that's what it takes in every generation – men and women of God to experience a holy dissatisfaction with the way things are, and with the faith to become everything God wants them to be. There have been great revivals throughout the world since the church began, with many here in the United States led by people like Finney, Moody, Torrey and others. But each of these revivals began with a personal revival of the heart, which then spilled over into other people's lives, and the next thing you know, the entire church was on fire with power from on high.

That power for revival and renewal finds its source in one place, and one place only – it comes from the Holy Spirit when we allow ourselves to be filled with His presence. If you are looking for that Holy Spirit power today, I encourage you to listen up, because I want to tell you how to possess that power from God's Word. If you are a Christian, the following three things are true about you:

IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN...

1. GOD HAS GIVEN YOU HIS INDWELLING SPIRIT

Before Jesus was crucified and risen from the dead, He made a wonderful promise to His disciples.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.” – John 14:16-17

Prior to Jesus' ascension into heaven the Holy Spirit worked with His disciples, but Jesus said there was coming a time when the Spirit would be “in” those who are Christians. Just before Jesus left the earth He gave this promise:

“When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8

And on the Day of Pentecost, after having received this gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter got up and preached a sermon where this Spirit was promised to others:

“Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” – Acts 2:38

And of course, the “gift of the Holy Spirit” is the Holy Spirit Himself. In other words, God Himself has promised to literally indwell those who place their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple. – 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Now the reason this is so important is because you and I need to know that God is fully and completely available to us 24/7. And the reason we know this is because He is with us, in us, literally living within us right now, at this very moment. You do not need to go searching for God, because God is within you.

Now notice that I didn't say that you are God, because you're not, but God the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your body. Everywhere that you go, God goes with you – everything that you say, God hears – every action that you take,

you are inviting God to join you in it. The power of God is available to you, because God is literally here, present, with us each and every moment of our lives.

2. GOD HAS GIVEN YOU SPIRITUAL POWER

Eriwin McManus, in “Seizing Your Divine Moment” tells about his son, Aaron. “One summer Aaron went to a youth camp. He was just a little guy, and I was kind of glad because it was a church camp. I figured he wasn't going to hear all those ghost stories, because ghost stories can really cause a kid to have nightmares. But unfortunately, since it was a Christian camp and they didn't tell ghost stories, because we don't believe in ghosts, they told demon and Satan stories instead. And so when Aaron got home, he was terrified. ‘Dad, don't turn off the light!’ he said before going to bed. ‘No, Daddy, could you stay here with me? Daddy, I'm afraid. They told all these stories about demons.’ And I wanted to say, ‘They're not real.’ He goes, ‘Daddy, Daddy, would you pray for me that I would be safe?’ I could feel it – I could feel warm-blanket Christianity beginning to wrap around him, a life of safety, safety, safety. I said, ‘Aaron, I will not pray for you to be safe. I will pray that God will make you dangerous, so dangerous that demons will flee when you enter the room.’ And he goes, ‘All right. But pray I would be really, really dangerous, Daddy.’

Isn't that the kind of prayer we should be praying? That in God's power we would live lives that would make demons tremble? While it is great to know we are safe in God's arms, it's just as important to know that God has empowered us to be spiritually dangerous to the opposition. We need to understand that with God literally living within us, and by having a gift supernaturally given to us by God, that we have the power to become everything God's wants us to become, and that makes us spiritually dangerous to our enemy. But that kind of power does not come by approaching God from a position of strength, but rather, from one of surrender.

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. – Ephesians 5:18

Just as alcohol can control you in a negative way, the Holy Spirit can control you in the most positive way imaginable, but only when we surrender our lives to Him. And when we surrender our lives to Him, He promises us fullness of power. That surrender involves a putting away of sin, of repenting of things that are displeasing to God, and living a life of obedience.

Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. – Romans 8:10-11

God promises us the same type of power that was used to raise Jesus from the dead. It is the power that allows us to live holy lives – it is the power that gives us the strength for the journey – it is the power that gives us the boldness to tell others about our faith in Christ – it is the power that grants us victory in spiritual warfare. This is the kind of power that you and I need to live the type of lives that are pleasing, satisfactory, sufficient, and dedicated to God.

Early in the history of the church, the church had come under persecution, so they gathered together to pray to God – and look what happened:

After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness. – Acts 4:31

Notice that they were “filled” with the Holy Spirit. That only happens when we first empty ourselves of ourselves, and we replace our selfish desires with God’s. And when we are filled with the Spirit, we will begin to see some phenomenal things beginning to take place in both our lives and the life of the church. I hope you’re ready to experience the power of the Holy Spirit today.

3. GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A SPIRITUAL GIFT

⁴Max DePree, CEO of Herman Miller, Inc., describes a simple, but profound, incident that altered the culture of his organization:

“In the furniture industry of the 1920's, the machines of most factories were not run by electric motors but by pulleys from a central drive shaft. The millwright was the person on whom the entire activity of the operation depended – He was the key person. One day, the millwright died. My father, being a young manager at the time, did not know what to do when a key person died, but thought he ought to go visit the family. He went to the house and was invited to join the family in the living room. The widow asked my father if it would be all right if she read aloud

⁴ Peter Grazier in "Work and Spirituality" on teambuildinginc.com; reprinted in Homiletics (September 2001), pp.13-14

some poetry. Naturally, he agreed. She went into another room, came back with a bound book, and for many minutes read selected pieces of beautiful poetry. When she finished, my father commented on how beautiful the poetry was and asked who wrote it. She replied that her husband, the millwright, was the poet. It is now nearly 60 years since the millwright died, and my father and many of us at Herman Miller continue to wonder: Was he a poet who did millwright's work, or was he a millwright who wrote poetry?

That's how it is in the church, isn't it? We have factory workers who are teachers, computer people who are elders, homemakers that work with our youth, and so on. The beautiful thing about having God's Spirit inside you is that He not only gives you the gift of Himself, but He supernaturally empowers you by giving you a spiritual gift you did not have before you became a Christian.

We are not talking here about a natural talent, but about God giving you a gift to do something for His glory in the church – something that you did not have the ability to do before.

Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Now I want you to notice that you are specifically given this spiritual gift as a means to assist the church. There are various lists of ministry gifts that we find in the New Testament, including leadership, hospitality, faith, giving, and so on – and I don't believe these lists are exhaustive. But what is necessary for us to do is to discover what our particular gift is and begin using it for ministry.

God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. – 1 Peter 4:10

The four major lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, 27-31, Eph. 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 4:9-11 but there are other passages that mention or illustrate gifts not included in these lists. All gifts are given to help the church fulfill its purposes.

You can discover and implement your spiritual gift in several ways:

1. Use the Spiritual Gifts Guide Software

We have a software program available for you with 100 questions that will help you to determine what your spiritual gift is. To take this spiritual inventory, please set up a time to come in and complete it. It will normally take about 30-60 minutes to complete. When you are finished we will discuss with you how your spiritual gift will best fit in with what we are doing as a church. Not every gift is listed, but they are summarized into categories that best define church ministry.

Note to Teacher: We recommend that you have everyone in your class use the software. It is up to you to decide how to schedule this. You are given permission to install the software on multiple computers if you would like to have more than one person do this at once. They will be given the option to print or save their results. We would advise you to have them print out their results and to give you a copy so you can follow-up with helping them to use their gift in a particular area of church ministry.

2. Begin to ask your friends and family members what they believe God has gifted you to do.

You can show them the results of your Spiritual Gifts Guide Inventory and see if they think it is accurate compared to what they have observed in your life. Often a spouse or friend will recognize your giftedness before you do!

3. Start using your spiritual gift in the church and in other situations.

Take the results of your Spiritual Gifts Guide Inventory and then start ministering in that area of the church in which you are most gifted. God wants you to lead a fulfilling, spiritually successful, and powerful life, but that will not reach its fruition until you begin using the gift He has given to you. Many people are dissatisfied because they find themselves working in areas that they are not gifted in. When your gift matches your “job description” you will find fulfillment like you’ve never experienced before.

Thank you for being with us during this course. I hope that it has helped you to better understand your role as God’s child and as His servant.