

P R A Y E R G U I D E

FORGED IN FIRE

G I F T S O F T H E S P I R I T

February 2019



MEMORIZATION

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:11

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

January 26th & 27th

John 15:8 & 11 - *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

When two Christians marry, we say they are no longer two, but one flesh. They no longer move through the world as individuals, but as a united pair in accordance with one another. Imagine a church that understood its role as Christ's bride so deeply that on-lookers could barely tell the difference between what He did and what they do. What if we were so in sync with Jesus, His ways, His hopes and desires, that our interactions with people were almost indistinguishable from His because we were "one" with Him (1 Peter 4:11). 1 Corinthians 12 takes this idea of oneness with Christ even further by calling the church Christ's body. The collective efforts of believers everywhere represent the current ministry of Jesus on earth. What He started at His first coming, the church now continues. So, why aren't more people mistaking us for Jesus? What would have to happen? For starters, the faith of every believer would need to bear fruit within a meaningful and fulfilling place of service. To be the body of Christ, all of us would serve in our unique ways while working in harmony with the other parts of the body. This grand orchestration of individuals acting together in unity would occur because we'd be surrendered to the leadership of Christ. His perspective, as revealed in Scripture, would set the agenda. Our job would be to have faith in His perspective, trust that He is working all things toward the good, be understanding and patient with others' gifts, and know that our small contributions are being weaved together by God to make an eternal difference in His kingdom. We can praise God today that His Spirit does live inside of us, leading us. And, we can thank Him for giving each of us a unique gift with which to glorify Him and edify others. Ask God to reveal or confirm the place within His body that He has prepared in advance for you to serve.

Personal Reflection: _____

February 2nd & 3rd

Matthew 22:37-40 - *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

The Holy Spirit has gifted each one of us uniquely in accordance with the work He is accomplishing in the world. As part of this series, each one of us has the opportunity to assess our spiritual gifts if we don't already know them. But, as unique as we all are and as different as our service may look, all of our gifts share two common bonds. Every gift will glorify God, and every gift will edify others. In fact, this is what separates our natural gifts from spiritual gifts. If we have a talent that doesn't glorify God, it's not a spiritual gift. Likewise, if we want to serve in a way that is not affirmed by the rest of the body of

Christ, it's not a gift of the Holy Spirit. In times of doubt, we can ask ourselves: will this gift, together as part of the larger body of believers, help accomplish God's redemptive plan in the world? If we can emphatically answer yes, then we ask: will my individual act of service be fulfilling and meaningful while also building others up? According to Scripture, service is worship—it's surrendering to the mind, the perspective and the will of Christ (Romans 12:1), so it should bring attention to God, not ourselves. And, service is also love—it's designed to uplift and improve one another (Ephesians 4:11-12), so it should make others happy as much as it does ourselves. Praise God for His ability to take dissimilar, fallen and selfish individuals and create a united, redeemed and giving group. Thank Him for how He's gifted you, and ask Him to show how your gifts can bring further glory to Him and encouragement to others.

Personal Reflection: _____

February 9th & 10th

1 Corinthians 12:11 - *All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.*

The Holy Spirit has given each of us at least one special ability, or divine endowment, that fits into God's design (which is what will make it meaningful) and according to His grace (because He's so generous). Since these gifts are distributed to us by the Spirit, we will be held accountable for how we use them or not (remember the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30). Likewise, we will only be accountable to what God gave us—nothing more—which guards us from spreading ourselves too thin. But, by discovering our spiritual gifts, many questions about our spiritual life get answered. For example, our spiritual gifts help determine what we should do to serve because we will be competent and empowered to do it through the Spirit. Gifts show us how we can make our unique contribution in fulfilling Jesus's mission because they reveal a part of God's purpose for our existence. This purpose provides confidence. Spiritual gifts also identify where we should serve within the body. Getting the what, how and where lined up keeps us motivated in our area of service and appreciative of the service of others. Throughout Scripture, we are able to identify over 20 different gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it's not an exhaustive list. By identifying our own gifts and growing in understanding of others', we are able to become the interdependent community God intends for His church, where diversity doesn't lead to division and unity isn't confused with conformity. Praise God for His wondrous, creative design of the body of Christ. Thank Him for creating a special place where you belong. Ask Him to help you grow in wisdom and sensitivity about your interconnectedness within the body.

Personal Reflection: _____

February 16th & 17th

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - *If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

Spiritual gifts without love are meaningless. Since God is love, any gifts that are exercised in the absence of love can't reflect God. If they don't reflect God, they don't have eternal impact. We've learned that God designed the church to be the body of Christ whose individuals would work together in interconnectedness to fulfill Jesus's mission to the unsaved world. Interestingly, John 13:35 tells us that the world will know we belong to Jesus by our love. Our gifts and our special contributions will not be what we'll be known for. It's the visible love with which we serve that makes the kingdom difference. This truth reveals another significant one. Serving out of love, using a gift affirmed by the body, cannot be done in secret (Matthew 5:16). For others to glorify God through our service, they have to be able to see it. If we can reach the place where we want to serve over feeling like we have to serve, we'll know we're on the right track. When our service is to please God with an attitude of doing whatever it takes to complete His mission, we'll be well on our way. Give God the glory today for your gifts. Reject any inclination to use them for self-seeking reasons or to keep them hidden. Pray that your love through service would grow in increasing measure as the Spirit continues to guide and hone your unique contributions.

Personal Reflection: _____

February 25th & 26th

Psalms 37:4 - Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Over the course of this series, we've learned why God distributes gifts of His Spirit to His people. We've learned how to discover our unique abilities, how they fit into the workings of the whole church, and the importance of serving—and serving with love. While all of these things are foundational to putting our spiritual gifts to work and may excite us to get involved, we must not get discouraged if the process doesn't unfold for us easily. The truth is: identifying how God made you and where you fit in to His overall plan is more art than science. Spiritual gift tests are wonderful tools, and having places of service within the church identified is helpful. But, factors like time availability, spiritual growth and ministry passion all play a role, too. The secret sauce is found in our personal desire for God. The more we love Him, the better we serve Him. As our delight in Jesus alone grows, a heartfelt desire to make a difference in His kingdom will compel us. So, if you're unsure about where you fit today, start by kneeling at the feet of Jesus. Once there, you can root out hindrances to your clarity. Talk to Him about any feelings of unworthiness to serve Him, or pride issues that keep your talents from being used for spiritual purposes. Confess any unrepented sins and ask God deal with any fears of rejection, failure, success or accountability. Then, pray for the courage to step out in faith that you will excel at your gift the more you use it. He will show you, through direction and feedback you'll receive from the body, the place where your gifts and passions and availability and spiritual maturity all come together for His glory and His purpose. Isn't God great?

Personal Reflection: _____

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