

Wine & Bread

Our Life Source Connection—John 15:4-5

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Early Church Inspiration—

Priesthood of all believers,

Spirit-filled, gifted and led,

Spirit-sharing His word to all the world!

By Jose Alfonso Sierra, courtesy Unsplash



Pastoral Perspective

The Purpose for the Power

by Pastor Mercado

As a child one of my favorite comic book heroes was “Spiderman.” I am not sure why, perhaps it had something to do with the way Peter Parker became Spiderman. He was bitten by a radioactive spider and became a hero. In the 2002 movie Peter is told “With great power comes great responsibility.” These words were borrowed from Voltaire, the famous French author and philosopher who, being discontented with the politicians of his time, uttered those words.

Last month I talked about the missing power. The power I was referring to was the Holy Spirit. Many are wondering why we aren't seeing today the miracles and conversions that took place in the early church as told in the NT. Well, the reason is that we are missing the Holy Spirit. Jesus said something similar to what Voltaire said and we find it in Luke 12:48, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” Jesus is saying that there is a power available to us as we receive the Holy Spirit; however, with great power, must also come great responsibility.

Much is said about the need for the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians today, but I believe that many do not know the what the purpose is for that power. After His experience in the desert, Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and started His ministry by going to church,

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:16-19, emphasis supplied).

It should be noticed that the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do ministry. The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to carry out His mission. It is the same for us today. Yes, we need the Holy Spirit, but not so we can sit in our pews and enjoy a good worship service. The power we need is so we can preach, heal, proclaim, and help

set at liberty those that are oppressed. Jesus said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, emphasis supplied). The reason God is willing to give us the power of the Holy Spirit is for us to become His witnesses in the world. No power will come from the Holy Spirit to our lives if we are not willing to become His witnesses.

Do you want the power? If so, remember, you have a great responsibility!



Busyness in the King's business is no excuse for neglecting the King

Anonymous

Inspiration

The Holy Spirit's Continuous Inspiration

By William Law

The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Without the present illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God must remain a dead letter to every man, no matter how intelligent or well-educated he may be. The things of God "are spiritually discerned" (2:14), and therefore "the natural man receiveth them not. . . but God reveals them unto us by his Spirit" (2:14, 2:10). This is telling us in the plainest terms that it is just as essential for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of Scripture to the reader today as it was necessary for Him to inspire the writers thereof in their day. For without the same inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit, it is no more possible for man in any age to experience the reality that is promised in Scripture, than it would have been possible for "holy men of God" to write the Scriptures without being "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). Therefore to say that because we now have all the writings of Scripture complete we no longer need the miraculous inspiration of the Spirit among men as in former days, is a degree of blindness as great as any that can be charged upon the scribes and Pharisees. Nor can we possibly escape their same errors; for in denying the present inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have made Scripture the province of the letter-learned scribe.

The Holy Scriptures are an infallible history of God's dealings with men, and also an infallible guide for the seeking heart to that salvation which a Holy God offers to sinners. But the Scriptures themselves can go no further than to direct men to a relationship with God which only the Holy Spirit can give, since there is a vast difference between the Holy Spirit's actual workings in the heart of man, and reports about these workings. This is plain from the words of our Lord, "When the Comforter is come, He will guide you into all truth, for he shall take of mine and show it unto you; and he shall teach you all things" (John 16:13, 15). Therefore the Scriptures should only be read in an attitude of prayer, trusting to the inward working of the Holy Spirit to make their truths a living reality within us.

Jesus Christ, who is the one and only Savior of mankind, said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). What a delusion, however, for any man to think that he has this life from God and is on this straight and narrow way, simply because he makes a mental assent to these words or preaches eloquently in their favor. "I know you not" (Matt. 7:23), says Christ to those who have not been born through this seed of the Word being brought to life within them by the Holy Spirit. Since a birth is only the beginning of life, the Word of God through which we are begotten becomes the necessary food that nourishes the Christian. Even so the Holy Spirit must continue His work within those who are born of the Spirit, illuminating and applying the Word to men's hearts for Christian growth.

Christ's words to Nicodemus tell us plainly that none may have eternal life except those who are born from above. This is a full proof that the continual inspiration of the Holy Spirit is essential; for we are born of the Spirit to the end that we might live and walk in the Spirit. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25), wrote Paul, "for as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). Are we not here plainly taught that to be led of the Spirit is just as vital as to be born of the Spirit? Therefore the necessity of a continual inspiration by the Holy Spirit, as the only possible power and preservation of a divine life in man, stands upon the same ground as the new birth.¹



Endnotes

¹Excerpts from *The Power of the Spirit*, William Law, Chapter 5, paragraphs 1-4.

VEGETARIAN

Recipes

Selections by Charlotte Hardy. Send recipes to charlottehardy@comcast.net, or, text (615) 974-0191 by 3rd Sunday of each month. Thank you.

From Marjie John's Kitchen

Beet & Mint Salad covered with an Orange Dressing

Ingredients for the Salad

- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 medium sized raw beets
- 2 large carrots
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- 10 mint leaves finely sliced

Ingredients for the Orange Dressing

- ¼ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp honey
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp oil

Directions

- Place the raisins & boiling water in a bowl to soak for 5 minutes
- Grate the beets & carrots
- In a small bowl, mix the ingredients for the orange dressing
- Drain the water from the raisins.
- Combine all the ingredients in a serving bowl & mix gently
- Garnish with additional mint leaves & sunflower seeds

Broccoli w/Cheesy Cashew Sauce

Ingredients

- 2 Heads of broccoli florets
- 1 ½ cups of water
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp Tumeric powder
- 1 tsp corn starch
- 1 Tbsp nutritional yeast flakes

Directions

- Combine the sauce ingredients in a blender & blend until smooth
- Pour into a frying pan & cook for 3 minutes, stirring as it thickens.
- Put the broccoli in a medium-sized pan with boiling water & cook for 3 minutes or until tender.
- Put the broccoli on a plate and drizzle sauce over it and serve.

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By joshuemd, courtesy Pixabay

Parent Connect

Building Faith in God

Children's Ministry

BIBLE PASSAGE: MARK 5:21-43

We are going to learn about 2 people who came to Jesus with a need that only He could help them with. Let's turn in our Bibles to Mark 5:21.

Jesus was in a boat with his disciples and He had arrived on the shore of Capernaum. Crowds of people saw Jesus on the shore and they gathered together to see Him. Have you ever been in a large crowd to see someone important? It is hard to get close to that person isn't it? Imagine being in the crowd on that day.

In our story the 2 people I mentioned earlier desperately needed to get to Jesus. They both had needs that they believed He could meet. The first person is a man. Let's find out who this man is. Read Mark 5:22. As a synagogue ruler maybe it was easy for this man to make his way through the crowd because he was considered important by the people. Perhaps when the people saw this man, they moved out of the way whereas if it were just an ordinary person trying to squeeze through the crowd, they wouldn't have been so nice.

When Jairus came to Jesus he fell at Jesus' feet and began to plead with Him. Let's read in verse 23 what Jairus asks Jesus to do. He said, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."

As Jesus walked in the large crowd of people, He felt power go out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" The disciples must have shaken their heads as they too were squished in among many, many people. Peter answered Jesus and said, "You see the crowds of people pushing in around You, and You ask, "Who touched Me?"

In the meantime, the woman who had touched Jesus'

clothes was very fearful. As Jesus stopped and looked around in the crowd, she came trembling and fell down before Him. She spoke to Jesus and all who were around and said, "I have been sick for 12 long years. I have spent all of my money on doctors who could not make be better. I was getting worse and I wanted to be made well. I wanted to touch You because I believed You could make me well. When I touched Your robe, immediately I was healed. I am no longer sick!"

Jesus loved this woman. He was not upset that she had touched His clothes. He was pleased in her faith. It was not the act of touching His garment that healed her it was her trust that Jesus could heal her.

Jesus' great power was shown to this woman and to the crowd when she was healed. Let's read what Jesus said to this woman in [Mark 5:34](#).

This woman had a very private need that she needed Jesus to help her with. She came to Him by faith believing that He could heal her. She probably would have been uncomfortable shouting in the large crowd, "Jesus, please heal me of this disease I have had for 12 years." She acted on her faith by believing if she could just touch Jesus she would be made well.

Her faith was rewarded and she was completely healed. This was a wonderful miracle that had happened and Jesus showed love and compassion by taking the time to care for this woman's need.

Sometimes we have needs that we don't feel comfortable sharing in a crowd of people. We can be comforted to know that God knows every need we have and we can talk to Him about it and pray for Him to help us. God hears and answers when we pray.

We may not be able to touch Jesus' garment as this

Parent Connect (cont.)

woman. We can get close to Jesus by spending time alone with Him in prayer and reading His Word. We can feel His presence when we are alone quietly with Him. If we are feeling sad or scared but are too embarrassed to share that with anyone, by sharing those feelings with Him, we will feel His comfort and encouragement.

We cannot forget Jairus. Remember his need? His 12-year-old daughter was very sick and she was dying. He needed Jesus to hurry to his house and make her well. I wonder what Jairus must have been thinking when this woman was taking precious time away from Jesus who was on His way to heal his daughter. It may have been hard not to be frustrated with the interruption even though a great miracle took place for this woman. When we are waiting for Jesus to answer our prayers, we need to be patient and wait for Him to work even in the times when He is delaying the answer to our prayer.

Just then someone from Jairus' house came and spoke to him. Let's read what this person said in Mark 5:35. "Your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher any more?"

That phrase, 'why bother' made me think about how sometimes in our lives if we need something from someone we may be afraid to ask because we think we are bothering them. Do you think when we have a need, no matter how big or small we are ever bothering God?

Let's see how Jesus responds as he heard what the men just told Jairus. (Mark 5:36 "Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe.")

How do you think Jairus must have felt when he heard the news from these men? I was too late. If this crowd hadn't been in the way, or if that woman hadn't stopped Jesus, we could have gotten to my daughter in time. We don't know what Jairus was thinking but we can imagine he was very disappointed with the news about his daughter's death.

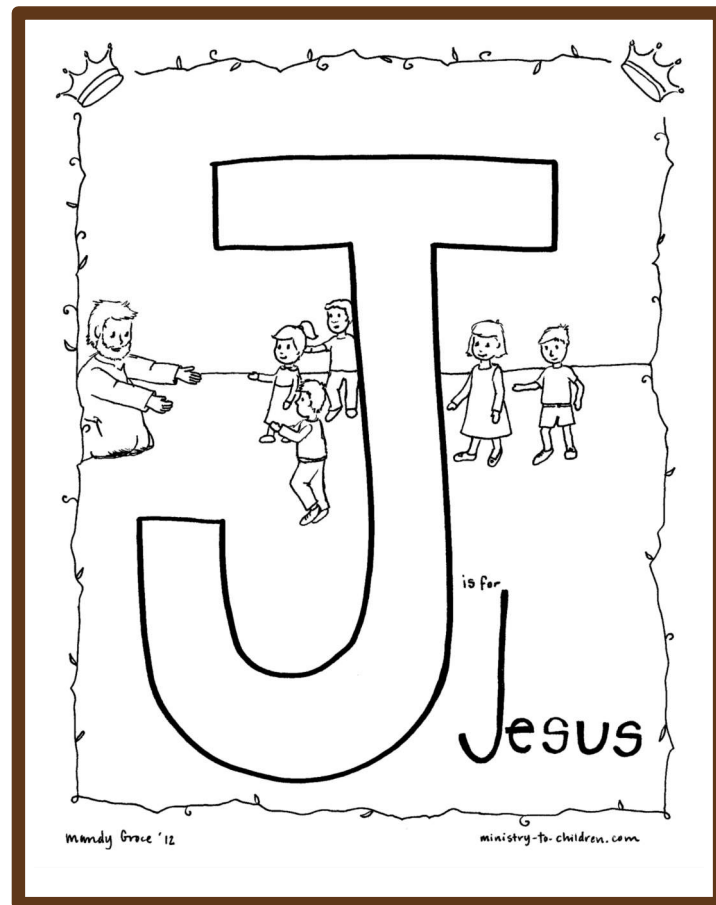
Sometimes when we pray it feels like Jesus hasn't heard our prayer or that maybe we didn't pray the right way. We need to hear the words spoken to us that Jesus spoke to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe." You see Jesus can do anything for a person who will believe. We are never bothering Jesus when we have something that we need help with.

Jesus told the crowd not to follow Him. He said that only Peter, James, and John could come with Him to Jairus' house.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house there was loud weeping and wailing by the many people who loved Jairus' daughter. When Jesus entered the house He said, "Why make this much commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

The people in the crowd laughed at Jesus and made fun of Him. They had seen the daughter's dead body. What was He talking about saying she was only sleeping? They must have thought Jesus was crazy.

Jesus didn't let what they thought of Him bother Him or keep Him from showing His great power and love for Jairus and his family. He sent all the people out of the house except for Jairus and his wife and Peter, James, and John.



Parent Connect (end)

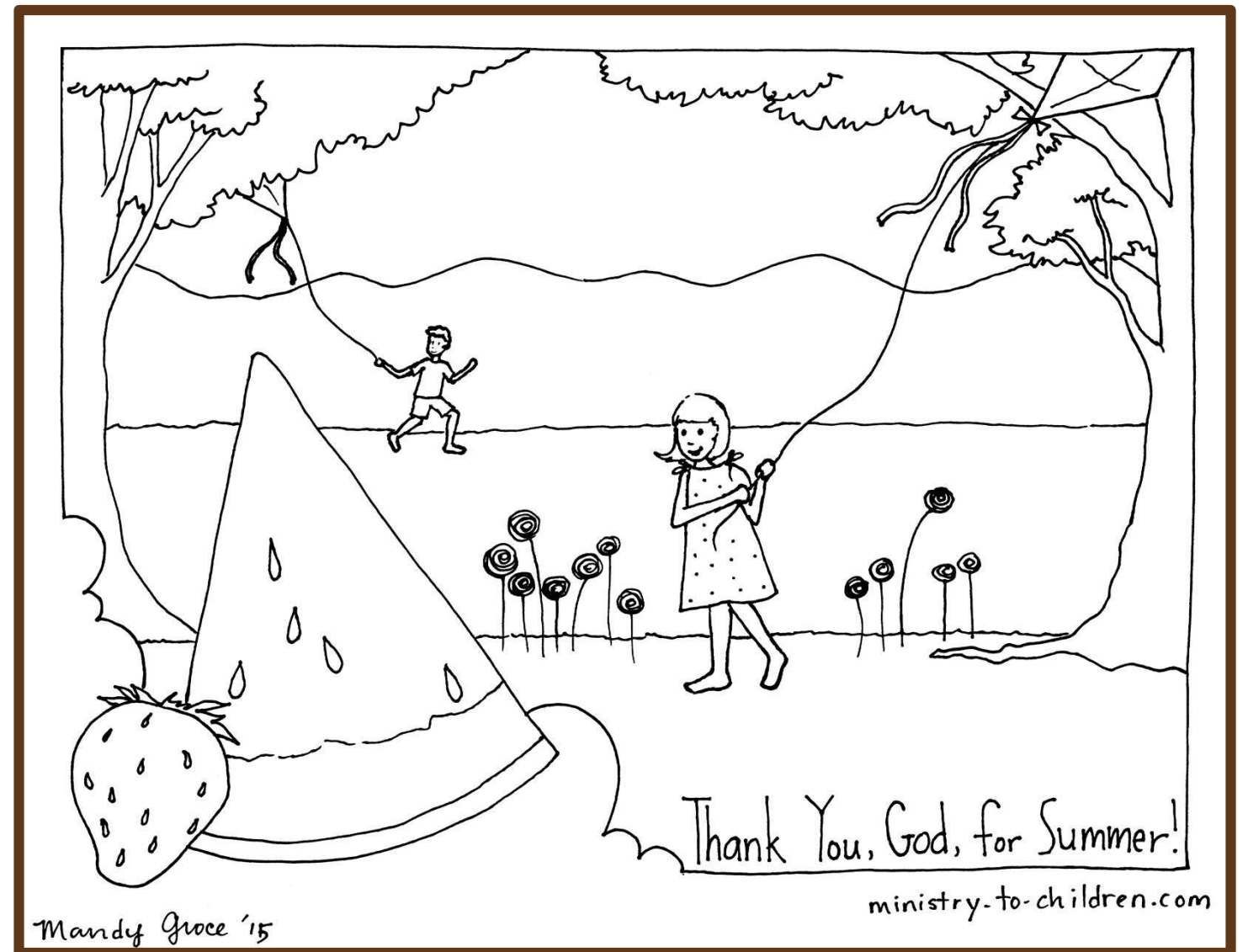
They went to the place where the daughter's body was lying. Jesus reached out and took the girl by her hand. He spoke to her and said, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl got up and walked around the room. Jesus said to give the girl something to eat. Jairus and his wife were amazed! Their daughter who was dead was now alive!

Jesus showed His great power and love by healing a woman who had been sick for 12 years and by raising a 12-year-old girl back to life. Jesus cares for you and me and we need to have faith that He hears our prayers and He will answer them in His way and in His time. He will show us His great power and love each time He answers our prayers.¹

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Endnotes

¹from *Sunday School Works*, June 27, 2021.





Ministry of Intercession

From *The Power of Prayer* (Chapter 6)

by R. A. Torrey

The religion of Jesus Christ is a supernatural religion from start to finish, and we should live our lives in supernatural power, the power of God through Jesus Christ, and we should perform our service with supernatural power, the power of God ministered by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. You say, "I have no natural gifts." Then get supernatural gifts. The Holy Spirit is promised to every believer in order that he may obtain the supernatural gifts which qualify him for the particular service to which God calls him. "He [The Holy Spirit] divideth to each one [that is, to each and every believer] severally even as he will" ([Corinthians 12:11]). It is ours to have the power of God if we will only seek it by prayer in any and every line of service to which God calls us.

Are you a mother or a father? Do you wish power from God to bring your own children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord?" God commands you to do it and especially commands the father to do it. God says in Ephesians 6:4: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Now, God never commands the impossible, and as He commands us fathers, and the mothers also, to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it is possible for us to do it. If any one of your children is not saved, the first blame lies at your own door. Paul said to the jailer in Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

Yes, it is the solemn duty of every father and mother to have every one of their children saved. But we can never accomplish it unless we are much in prayer to God for power to do it. In my first pastorate I had as a member of my church a most excellent Christian woman, but she had a little boy of six who was one of the most incorrigible youngsters I ever knew in my life. He was the terror of the community. One Sunday, at the close of the morning service, his mother came to me and said: "You know-?" (calling her boy by his first name).

"Yes," I replied, "I know him." Everybody in town knew him. "Yes," I replied, "I know he is not a very good boy." Indeed, that was a decidedly euphemistic way of putting it; in point of fact he was the terror of the neighborhood.

Then this heavy-hearted mother said, "What shall I do?"

I replied, "Have you ever tried prayer?"

"Why," she said, "of course I pray."

"Oh," I said, "that is not what I mean. Have you ever asked God definitely to regenerate your boy and expected Him to do it?"

"I do not think I have ever been as definite as that."

"Well," I said, "you go right home and be just as definite as that."

She went home and was just as definite as that, and I think it was from that very day, certainly from that week, that the boy was a transformed boy and grew up into fine young manhood.

Oh, mothers and fathers, it is your privilege to have every one of your children saved. But it costs something to have them saved. It costs your spending much time alone with God, to be much in prayer, and it costs also your making those sacrifices and straightening out those things in your life that are wrong; it costs the fulfilling the conditions of prevailing prayer. And if any of you have unsaved children, when you go home today get alone with God and ask God to show you what it is in your own life that is responsible for the present condition of your children. Straighten it out at once and then get down alone before God and hold to Him in earnest prayer for the definite conversion of each one of your children. Do not rest until, by prayer and by your putting forth every effort, you know beyond question that every one of your children is definitely and positively converted and born again.¹

Endnotes:

¹R. A. Torrey, excerpts from *The Power of Prayer*, Chapter 6, paragraphs 3-16.



Bible Study

Fruit of the Spirit, Part 3

by Richard Dickens

We end our journey into spiritual fruit with two characteristics that are indispensable—brotherly affection and love.

Brotherly Affection (2 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; Rom. 12:10; 1 Th. 4:9; Heb. 13:1).

Having human siblings does not necessarily qualify us to truly understand the spiritual experience that Peter and Paul admonish us to exhibit and pursue. One remembers David and his brothers, but it was with Jonathan that he finds that closer bond he should have found with his siblings. Joseph seemed to care for his brothers but most of his siblings did not reciprocate, to say the least. Later years would see it change somewhat. Rivalry, competition, challenge the sibling "love" experience.

This "brotherly love" is the same word that is found in Revelation 3:7ff., addressing the church named for brotherly affection, Philadelphia. Though it seems gender specific, one should understand it to include sisters as well.

1 Peter 1:22 tells us that purification of the life comes from obedience to the truth with the end result being a sincere, authentic, or unhypocritical, brotherly love that is earnest.

This is what, in this context, authentic means, without pretense, genuine. And that life can only result from the work of the Spirit, with us earnestly cooperating with Him. You have to desire something strongly, passionately to invest energy into obtaining it. Earnestness takes commitment, investment of the life in obtaining something valuable, like brotherly love. And that takes a pure heart. And a pure heart is achieved by single mindedness to Christ. What is pure is undiluted, unmixed. Single mindedness is purity of motive, direction, thought, the whole life directed solely in Christ, for Christ, toward Christ. Purity is so much more than mere morality. John says in 1 Jn. 3:3,

"Everyone having this hope in himself, purifies himself, as Jesus is pure."

So the standard of purity for us is Christ's life. Single-mindedness of relationship inspires and motivates purity of thought and action. Jesus was always about His Father's business. Every aspect of our lives, even our leisure is to be in the companionship of the Spirit.

It is the natural expectation of the Spirit's growth process for us.

Just as the individual believer is to be one in Christ, so is the church. 1 Peter 3:8 says,

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

The bond in the Spirit is greater even than our own family in the flesh; greater than a bond with the culture we grew up with and with whom we may most easily identify. The Spirit's voice beckoned Jew and Gentile Christians to live as one in Christ. By His power they were called to overcome their cultural differences.

One asks, "won't I lose my cultural identity?" The Spirit will only purify what is not like Christ and enhance what remains. Another says, "I like who I am." But you will love what becomes like Christ even more.

The best description I have found for friendship, especially Christian friendship, is by C. S. Lewis.

Lamb say somewhere that if, of three friends (A, B, and C), A should die, then B loses not only A but "A's part in C," while C loses not only A, but "A's part in B." In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him "to myself" not that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth, if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend. . . . In this, Friendship exhibits a glorious "nearness by resemblance" to Heaven itself where the very multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition which each has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to all the rest. That, says an old author, is why the Seraphim in Isaiah's vision are crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, to one another (Isaiah VI.3). The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us, the more we shall all have."¹

It is this kind of friendship that gives rise to true worship.



Bible Study (cont.)

Love, (1 Pt. 4:8; 5:14; 2 Pt. 1:7; Gal. 5:6, 13, 22).

The Greeks used 4 basic word families to describe the experience of love, although two received extensive treatment by Greek philosophers (eros and phileo). Of the four, only two are used in the Bible, phileo and agape.

Phileo, in common Greek usage, was used broadly of the love or affection between siblings, or friends and meant “to treat somebody as one of one’s own people.” It is used for the love of spouses, of parents and children, of employers and servants, of friends, and of gods and those favored by them.² Finally, agape, which also is used broadly, even more than phileo. Thus, it was used more generally to describe other “loves” or preferences and sometimes it was used in lieu of the other more specific experiences of love.

The etymology of ἀγαπάω cannot be determined. This vb., which appears freq. from Homer onward, has a broad range of usage in general Gk. Lit. When applied to things, it may mean “to value highly, prefer, be content with”; when used of persons, the sense is “to love, treat or regard with affection, be fond of.” The term can be applied to children, and the adj. ἀγαπητός (“bringing contentment, cherished, beloved”) is sometimes used in particular of an only child. A few times the vb. refers to sexual love. In some instances it is applied to someone favored or preferred by a god. . . The noun ἀγάπη is only a late construction and occurs very rarely outside the Bible. . . (p. 102).

In addition to the relationship between the sexes, family ties as well as the spiritual bond between friends can be described as love. Thus, when the affection of Jonathan and David for one another is spoken of, it is expressed in terms of a communal fellowship deeper than the romantic or physical love between the sexes: “Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women” (2 Sam 1:26, where the LXX uses ἀγάπησις; ἀγαπάω is used in 1 Sam 18:1. . . (p. 104).

One should not infer that this word group has some kind of intrinsic “divine” meaning, as though the terms by themselves indicate selfless, sacrificial, pure love. In the LXX, for example, the vb. is used of Samson’s attraction to Delilah (Judg 16:4), of Saul’s initial liking for David (1 Sam 16:21), of King Hiram’s political friendship with David (1 Ki. 5:1), of Solomon’s attachment to his numerous pagan wives (1 Ki. 11:2), of the people’s devotion to vain things (Ps 4:2 [LXX 4:3]), of the wicked’s love for unrighteousness, evil, and cursing (11:5 [10:5]; 52:3–4 [51:5–6]; 109:17 [108:17]), of the love for death that characterizes those who hate divine wisdom (Prov 8:36), of greediness for money and wealth (Eccl 5:10 [5:9]), of the rulers’ passion for shameful behavior (Hos 4:18), of the desire for a prostitute’s wages (9:1), of the

craving to oppress (12:7 [12:8]), of the inclination to swear falsely (Zech 8:17), of greediness for bribes (Isa 1:23), of passion for the adulterous bed (57:8), of the tendency to wander away from God (Jer 14:10), and even of Amnon’s lust for his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15 [where both the vb. and the noun are used]).

Negative uses are found in the NT as well: of the Pharisees’ desire for places of honor in the synagogue (Luke 11:43, where the parallel has φιλέω, Matt 23:6 [cf. 6:5]), of the world’s preference for darkness (John 3:19), of the Pharisees’ longing for human glory (12:43). (p. 107).³

So, how are we to understand the fruit, agape, that Peter and Paul admonish us to cultivate? The context in which the word agape is used determines our understanding. This applies to all words we study in the Bible. Different authors, even the same author, may nuance a word differently depending on the context in which he uses it. Let’s take a look at some of the contexts.

In 2 Peter 1:7, Peter admonishes them to exhibit love in their brotherly (or sisterly) affection. Peter mentions it last and Paul begins with it but love is to be present in all the fruit. And not just any love. Jesus’s love manifested toward us is to be the standard of love we show to each other (John 13:34). That is the contextual variant that is crucial. It isn’t the word agape that implies Christ or God anywhere it is used but the sentence and paragraph that describes His love. And His love toward us personally is how we show our love toward each other. How is this possible? (See Rom. 5:4–8; 8:3–16; 1 Cor. 13).

It is the one test that non-Christians are allowed to apply to our Christian experience, even our legitimacy as a Christian church (John 17:21–23). When the world sees it, it can be transforming, evangelistic. If the world doesn’t believe we are Christian, is it because of our lack of love for each other? Our “mission” within the church is to be more than mere friends but Spirit-filled family.

Community, true community is built on our Christ-like love for each other. If they were to see us treat one another with disrespect and unkindness, why would they want to ever join us in fellowship? They can get indifference, social snubs, racism, avoidance, rejection, put-downs, character assassination, rudeness and ridicule easily enough where they are. Superficial “friendliness” is not Christian friendship. Smiling faces sometimes pretend....

Fortunately, I don’t believe the above is us—that’s why I framed it as a contrary to fact conditional sen-



Anniversaries & Birthdays			
Anniversaries			
Thomas & Charlotte Hardy			8/4
Karl & Sherri Bohnert			8/15
Ty & Renee Carver			8/17
Ric & Pam Andal			8/18
Birthdays			
Venetia-Ann Bignall	8/1	Jesse Walters	8/15
Stephanie Mazza	8/3	Mae Copeland	8/20
Ryan Poffenberger	8/3	Hamilton Small	8/21
Michael Reeves	8/3	Mina Angwenyi	8/23
Deborah Caesar	8/9	Hayley Pitt	8/25
Ruth Caesar	8/9	Kenna Pitt	8/27
Kwabena Addison-Amponsah	8/12	Cheryl Nolan	8/30

By Mel Poole, courtesy Unsplash

Bible Study (end)

tence. If it does happen, it is not the norm. I may not be perfect, but that is no excuse I can make. Keeping daily in the communal love of the Spirit of Christ is the power to live out the love of Christ daily. Evangelism is always going on—in and out of the church worship experiences. We don’t believe in a presumptuous salvation experience, so how I treat you impacts on your continuing in the faith and love of God. We don’t want it to be even an occasional accident at Nashville First. We strive by the Spirit to reach the finished “man” in Christ (Eph. 4:11–16).

Notice how Peter describes love and what it isn’t—1 Pet. 1:8, 22, 2:17; 3:10; 4:8; 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:7; 2:15. What do you take away from your reading? What is the Spirit saying to you?

Paul’s use of the agape word family is 136 times. Obviously, I won’t list them here but several are worth studying: Rom. 5:3–8; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 2:20; 5:6, 13–14, 22. What are your thoughts?

I want to leave you with an insightful passage from Andrew Murray:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Why? Because nothing but love can expel and conquer our selfishness.

Self is the great curse, whether in its relation to God, or to our fellow-men in general, or to fellow-Christians, thinking of ourselves and seeking our own. Self is our greatest curse. But, praise God, Christ came to redeem us from self. We sometimes talk about deliverance from the self-life—and thank God for every word that

can be said about it to help us—but I am afraid some people think deliverance from the self-life means that now they are going to have no longer any trouble in serving God; and they forget that deliverance from self-life means to be a vessel overflowing with love to everybody all the day.

And there you have the reason why many people pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, and they get something, but oh, so little! because they prayed for power for work, and power for blessing, but they have not prayed for power for full deliverance from self. That means not only the righteous self in intercourse with God, but the unloving self in intercourse with men. And there is deliverance. “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” I bring you the glorious promise of Christ that He is able to fill our hearts with love.

A great many of us try hard at times to love. We try to force ourselves to love, and I do not say that is wrong; it is better than nothing. But the end of it is always very sad. “I fail continually,” such a one must confess. And what is the reason? The reason is simply this: Because they have never learned to believe and accept the truth that the Holy Spirit can pour God’s love into their heart. That blessed text; often it has been limited!—“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5:5). It has often been understood in this sense: It means the love of God to me. Oh, what a limitation! That is only the beginning. The love of God is always the love of God in its entirety, in its fullness as an indwelling power, a love of God to me that leaps back to Him in love, and overflows to my fellow-men in love—God’s love to me, and my love to God, and my love to my fellow-men. The three are one; you cannot separate them.

Do believe that the love of God can be shed abroad in your heart and mine so that we can love all the day.

“Ah!” you say, “how little I have understood that!” Why is a lamb always gentle? Because that is its nature. Does it cost the lamb any trouble to be gentle? No. Why not? It is so beautiful and gentle. Has a lamb to study to be gentle? No. Why does that come so easy? It is its nature. And a wolf—why does it cost a wolf no trouble to be cruel, and to put its fangs into the poor lamb or sheep? Because that is its nature. It has not to summon up its courage; the wolf-nature is there.

And how can I learn to love? Never until the Spirit of God fills my heart with God’s love, and I begin to long for God’s love in a very different sense from which I have sought it so selfishly, as a comfort and a joy and a happiness and a pleasure to myself; never until I begin to learn that “God is love,” and to claim it, and receive it as an indwelling power for self-sacrifice; never until I begin to see that my glory, my blessedness, is to be like God and like Christ, in giving up everything in myself for my fellow-men. May God teach us that! Oh, the divine blessedness of the love with which the Holy Spirit can fill our hearts! “The fruit of the Spirit is love.”⁴

Endnotes:

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 92, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, inc. NY, 1960.

²TDNT, (Little Kittel) p. 1262.

³NIDNTTE, Vol. 1, excerpts pp. 102, 104, 107.

⁴Andrew Murray, *The Fruit of the Spirit is Love*, “Love Conquers Selfishness” para. 1–8. (from assorted addresses in Accordance Electronic software).



Stewardship

by Brian & Raylene Wilcox

How to Give Without Running Out

We know that the best attitude for giving is sharing that with which God has blessed us with a cheerful and grateful heart. The best plan for giving is, well, to plan ahead.

The Bible tells us that Paul advised, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper,..." 1 Cor. 16:2.

Far from being an argument for having church on Sunday, this passage encourages Christ's-followers to plan their giving before we find ourselves in the pew with the offering plate approaching closer and closer.

That pay stub you receive with your check from work is for more than simply making you depressed about how much goes to taxes and government. We

Report for June 2021

Recommended Giving Percentage 3-5%

Income	\$8,855.19	Income to Date	\$68,727.47
Outgo	7,736.11	Outgo to Date	53,271.75
Balance	\$1,119.08	Balance to Date	\$15,455.72

are asked to return 10% of our increase to God's work. Originally, it was for the Levites who did not receive a portion in the promised land. Today's "Levites" are those who choose ministry as their vocation, such as our own Pastor Mercado.

Over and above the tithe, we are also admonished to give additional offerings.

While you and I can give after hearing a particularly moving special appeal in church, I encourage you not to be the one who looks in the wallet to see what is there to give on Sabbath morning. Before I pay any bills, I set aside both the 10% tithe and an additional portion for the local church offering and/or other offerings. God says we can afford it! And Raylene and I have never been without our needs being met. Almost always, God has blessed far beyond just our basic needs.

I like to use the online giving option. It gets the money out of our account and off to the church. Do we have to do all this on Sunday? It's not a bad idea, but my plan uses the notification we receive from our employers to prompt me to enter the deposit and set aside the tithe and offerings BEFORE I pay any other bills. God has always provided for us, and I'm sure that He can take care of you, too.

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Church News

July Decisions

Outreach to Nashville Firefighters

Honoring the 20th anniversary of 9/11, we are giving each firehouse a gift box of Panera bagels & copies of *Steps to Christ* on 9/11.

Audio Department Change

Due to Brian's recovery process, Vic will now be heading up our audio work during church. Thanks to both Brian for the years he led out and for Vic's willingness to serve.

Upcoming Events:

VBS August 6-8

Watch for upcoming details.

Grief 101 (date unknown)

ALIVE Hospice will be offering a Grief 101 class in our church in the near future. It will be a basic class helping attendees become aware of the resources available in our community. This is at no cost to our church. Date and time will be forthcoming.

Lifeline Screening Oct. 13

More details to come (Oct. 13 is a Wednesday).

Family Retreat Oct. 15-17

At Cedars of Lebanon and led by Pastor & Lucy Mercado. More details on rates and particulars to follow.

Madison Academy Nov. 6

The academy will have our worship service on November 6.

International Sabbath November 20.

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