

OFFERING MINI SERMON

Before we receive the offering today I felt convicted that I haven't done a great job in making it clear how giving financially is a vital part of our discipleship.

So some pastors will avoid the subject all together

I don't avoid it but I haven't taught on it as much as I should.

Giving our finances - our tithe but then growing in our percentage of giving annually - that is a part of discipleship - of following Jesus.

Jesus taught on money more than ANY other subject. More than heaven and hell. More than spiritual gifts. More than any other subject - why? He knew that the way we handle our money is so connected to what we value and what we worship - what we truly trust as our source and our Lord. This is why he put a contrast up once saying you can serve God or money but you can't serve both.

Money is a tool in which we honor God.

Paul is teaching on generosity and he says this in 2 Co 9:6-15

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”

So as your pastor I just want to encourage you, one of the best ways you can start to truly trust God is with your finances. If you're not tithing yet, I know that's a big step. What I've encouraged before is to start with 2% of your income and make a plan. Next month, go to 4% the following month, give 6%. In 5 short months, you'll be at 10% and you just watch God fulfill His promise to bring blessing. The most notable blessing is not financial. The most notable blessing you will have is a heart that is truly untethered to money - a heart that is truly trusting God and not trusting in money.

That is the heart that is FREE and full of joy.

Then, if you're like Danielle and I, you'll start to ask God how you can give above that - Danielle and I are like many pastors where we're following in Robert Morris' example

trying to give away more of our income each and every year. The last 3 years we gave away more of our income than ever before and it was A BLAST!

Let's pray and let's ask God to do a new work in us in the area of giving. It really is a matter of discipleship - it's a matter of our hearts trusting God.

When we pray over the offering, we're also going to pray for Ukraine.

Take a few minutes to pray for the people of Ukraine and our missionaries there

Provide link for giving.

*P Mark and Pam are helping a church for a season - that's going thru a very delicate and difficult time right now. My parents are there to bring some order and peace and ministry to them in that hurt. In fact, can we stop and pray for them also right now?

CONNECTED FOREVER

God of the Unexpected

02.24.22 | JORDAN BIEL

OPEN WITH A STORY

You've heard me use this quote before but I just love it and it works really well with this series.

You can't change the whole world but you can change one person's whole world. Your impact on one persons life could be the domino effect for their entire family. Those kids, their kids, their grandkids...

We often stop at doing anything because we feel we can't do everything when in reality we just gotta do *something*. There's someone I can influence for Christ.

There's one co-worker that I know I could befriend. I could pray with them. I could reach out and give them the Gospel.

What is the Gospel? A short way to remember it is the acronym for the word GOSPEL

- G God loves everyone
- O Our sins deserved death
- S Sin separates us (just like a tattered relationship - trust is broken)
- P People know eternity is real
- E Everyone is offered grace through Jesus' cross
- L Life comes through Jesus alone

When we follow Jesus, His Spirit fills us Scripture says. In that filling of the same Holy Spirit, we are then led by the Holy Spirit.

We're led to the job we have, the people we meet, the stores we visit, we are truly led by God's Holy Spirit with the goal of bringing heaven to earth - God's kindness - his love and power - to people everywhere we go. It's like this yarn.

Yarn - thrown to them - surprised

Whole congregation connected

You don't know when God's Spirit is going to speak and lead you, you just know when it happens. Again, you don't often know when it's about to happen, but you know once it happens!

Like this yarn, you feel it, you sense it. You share that word of encouragement. The other person says "WOW You can't imagine how bad I needed to hear that today." And suddenly you feel it - this connection - this Holy Spirit - spirit to spirit - connection from you, to them.

God does these *unexpected things* in our lives, connecting us to others, revealing His glory on the earth. We are more connected forever than we ever thought. We will be more connected and more encouraged and filled with “righteousness, peace and joy” if we are open to being connected and being led by God’s Holy Spirit.

God of the Unexpected

In our culture, we like to know what we can expect. Most of our restaurants are chain restaurants now so we know what to expect. When we sit down and order, we’ve got a very good idea of what’s coming.

When we order something online not only do we expect to get what we ordered in the like new condition, we also expect it to show up the next day due to Amazon’s innovations.

What happens when God, Creator God, the One outside of our timeline and trappings of time itself, does something we don’t expect? Do we belittle it? Do we welcome it? Are we entertained by it? Do we embrace it? I think we are, at times, too quick to judge something - labeling it right or wrong, moral or immoral, accurate or heresy, often from a distance or a place of ignorance. I just think we could use a good dose of humility in how we approach things we don’t understand - whether that’s a ministry we don’t understand or a movement we don’t understand or a miracle we don’t understand ...

A few things that God did that we (humans) didn’t expect but turned out to be ... GOD.

Jesus spit in the dirt, made mud and put it on a blind guy’s eyes. Yup, that’s strange.

God (Jesus’ Father) asked a prophet (His voice on the earth) to marry a prostitute to illustrate His undying love for His unfaithful bride.

God had a giant inferno above a tent that represented His guidance and favor on certain people. Yup... strange.

>Just because it's strange doesn't mean it isn't God.

I've seen God ask an Accountant to become a pastor - someone good with numbers not people.

I've seen God call a Dr and Ivy League teacher to the struggles of missions work - forced to learn their language and love them in their culture. Strange. Why wouldn't God just use the man where he's already trained and gifted? Why uproot him? Strange... but God.

I've seen God finally get ahold of a person's heart and save their eternal soul after they've been in a temporary physical pain. Strange... but still God.

> Just because you can't explain it doesn't mean it isn't God. (It may BE God's work being you can't explain it.)

To assume that for something to be God's doing it must be explainable by you is quite an assertion. You're putting yourself on the same level as God. This arrogance is not recommended. Again, a dose of humility will go a long way here.

> Just because you haven't experienced it, doesn't mean it isn't God (or isn't true)

Many will use this philosophy as the premise for cessation, the ending of healing or prophetic gifts given by the Holy Spirit "died with the apostles..." But we don't take that philosophy to our belief in God in any other fashion. That's an atheist' form of thinking. The atheist says "I haven't personally experienced God therefore God isn't real." We tell the atheist that it takes faith and that if he reaches out to God, he too will then experience Him but his feelings don't negate God's reality. Well then how is it that Christians today apply that form of thinking to the gifts and move of the Holy Spirit? It doesn't make sense. We can't say "If I haven't experienced the prophetic, it isn't true." Or rather "Because I had a bad experience with someone who claimed to be prophetic then the prophetic isn't a work of God on the earth now" Or "If I haven't seen a healing then healing can't exist" We wouldn't apply that theology or way of thinking on other issues. Many of these same Christians have no problem believing in Christ's second coming without experiencing such an event. Many have no problem believing in a virgin birth - also a *strange* miracle that they didn't *personally* experience.

My point? Your experience and your intellect is not the measure of God's power. God is His own measuring stick. He can do whatever He wants whenever He wants through whomever He wants. Let's be open to miracles - to the God of the impossible - to the God of grace who for some strange reason, decides that He, a perfect Creator, wants to work with us, broken clay vessels.

Paul's break out of prison. Notice the connection to the guard.

Ac 5:12-42

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³ None of the rest

dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

The Apostles Arrested and Freed

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸ they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” ²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ²³ “We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” ²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. ²⁵ And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” ²⁶ Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for

the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 5:12–42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Isaiah 42:6-7

I the Lord have called you in righteousness I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make YOU to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles. (WHY?) to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness!”

Did you hear that?!?!?

I the Lord will make YOU to be a covenant. I will make YOU a light to the Gentiles.

Yes, the beginning of Is 42 is a Messianic prophesy meaning it's about Christ Jesus. BUT did you know that CHRIST is living in YOU and now YOU are bringing light to darkness, freedom to prisoners and hope to the hopeless?!? YOU are! Jesus said YOU are the light of the world.

It's important that you know the age of grace that we're in right now. For the first time since the fall of man in the garden the coming of the indwelling Holy Spirit empowered people to walk righteously on this earth. We know that Jesus came to make us righteous *positionally*; in other words, His death and resurrection put us in right standing with God. But we often miss the fact that...

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live in a way consistent with our righteous position in Christ. His grace empowers us for right standing and right living and furthermore, we're empowered and INSPIRED by His breath to change others from death into life - to bring courage and peace to anxious people!

When the law was given through Moses no one could keep it. The law gave Israel an understanding what pleased God but it was unable to help actually live it in obedience. With their fallen natures they simply had no power to keep the law. But when the Holy Spirit fills a person, amazing things happen! A previously dead human being is made alive as it is made NEW as God's breath enters them! The "Law" becomes the LAW of LOVE Jesus spoke about often. **Now, with the help of**

God's Spirit, we can love the Lord with ALL our heart and love people too! We truly begin to feel connected forever to other humans. We no longer live through self-seeking lenses; isolation isn't an option. Serving others and bringing them to life becomes our passion.

There's a constant renewal and refilling of the Spirit that's needed for us as believers. Scripturally speaking, we don't need the Holy Spirit baptism to be saved. We confess that Jesus is Lord and repent of our sins believing that He died to forgive us of our sins and rose from the dead to give us power over sin and death - believing that is the FAITH needed for salvation.

By grace through faith we are saved.

But we need the Holy Spirit filling to become all that God intends!

We need Holy Spirit filled and renewal TODAY! Acts 19:6

Acts 19:1-7

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."

⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ac 19:1–7). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

So this is the people of Ephesus and much like many cities across our globe today, they believed in the repentance given in the name of Jesus but hadn't yet even heard of the Holy Spirit. I know if you've gone to church here for some time, you know I've taught a lot about the Holy Spirit and who He is. But in case you're new, in short, the Holy Spirit is the voice of God on the earth, He is the comforter bringing comfort and edification or encouragement to God's people. He speaks through people 24/7 inviting people into a relationship with Jesus.

Paul was with them for 3 years teaching them in Ephesus about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit's empowerment. He saw many conversions and planted a church there.

The other aspect of Paul's ministry in Ephesus involved the miracles God worked through him. Luke described these as being "extraordinary," which is something of an understatement. The people would take cloths Paul had touched and carry them to the sick for healing. These cloths refer either to handkerchiefs or to "sweat bands" tied around the head. The other word used here means an apron like one you would tie around the waist

The people believed that even the cloths that had touched the apostle's body had healing power. This practice often strikes us as too close to idol worship that plagued the medieval church. It is, however, present in other New Testament miracles—the healing hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:27–34; 6:56) and the healing shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15). Can I just say again - God can do whatever He wants through whomever He wants whenever He wants and **HOWEVER** He wants. Look what the result was - revival! The power of God manifest in Paul's miracles ultimately led to the Ephesians' overcoming their superstition and trusting in Jesus for salvation.

Now this same group of People - the Ephesians - Paul wrote a letter to them. They had historically had a problem with getting drunk. It'd be like what's going on in Seattle right now. In the last few years, many denominations are dealing with a growing number of pastors and Christians who've deemed it ok to be drunk with alcohol.

This was one of the issues of the time that Paul faced so in his letter to them, he contrasts being drunk with alcohol with being drunk with the Holy Spirit.

Eph 5:18...

Ephesians 5:14-21 *Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*" ¹⁵ **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,** ¹⁶ **making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.** ¹⁷ **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** ¹⁸ **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,** ¹⁹ **addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,** ²⁰ **giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,** ²¹ **submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

Be filled with the Spirit! God's Word says.

- Being drunk with alcohol inhibits your ability

- Being drunk with the Holy Spirit enhances your ability
- Being drunk with alcohol causes you to say things you regret
- Being drunk with the Holy Spirit causes you to say encouraging things people will never forget - life-giving things!

God wants to bring unexpected miracles into your life. Sometimes you will miss out on a miracle GOD wants to do because you've closed yourself off from a PERSON God wants to use.

Paul Addresses the Areopagus

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for

" 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, " 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to

repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Paul is so wise in using quotes from their own leaders.
Paul uses an idol set up among the other that has no name.
Every other god had a name and a purpose.

They were a polytheistic culture - poly - many gods.
There was a god for the sun - providing warmth and light.
A god for the land providing vegetation and food to eat.
A god for relationships and so forth.
Hundreds and Hundreds of God in Athens!
Hundreds and Hundreds of ways to “know God”

Yet Paul refuted this idea by stating that there is only ONE God, Creator of Heaven and Earth and HE is the one who gives us breath. He is the one who put the SPIRIT of man into man - in HIM we live and move and have our being...”
In other words, He told them “Look if it wasn’t for GOD, the ONE true God, you wouldn’t be standing here right now. You’d be prostrate on the floor dead as a door knob.

This SAME SPIRIT this ONE SPIRIT is this ONE GOD the God who is the author of life itself. He inspires true life to take places.

God’s ONE SPIRIT breathes new life into ALL who are open to it.

First of all, It is JESUS who keeps you alive.
Second of all, it is JESUS who can give you TRUE LIFE and breathe His Spirit into you!

The same is true today.

There are churches on street corners in every city in America. Some of them have the presence of Jesus and the LIFE of Jesus INSPIRING NEW LIFE in them. Some of the churches do not.

Wonder why there's no mess? No crying at the altar? No life.

No transformation - no miracle stories - no stories of hope and recovery and renewal - because the Spirit of Life the HOLY SPIRIT who inSPIRES new life isn't honored or welcomed.

Wonder why there's no testimonies of miracles? No life. No Holy Spirit.

Wonder why there's no

A church without the Spirit is like Constantine's cathedrals, ornate and expensive but lacking life itself. When religion became institutionalized it lost it's life and purpose - it's organic, life-giving power which comes only from the Spirit

I have 5 kids and trust me there is ALWAYS a mess. There are 7 lives being lived out in my home and in my car so it is in constant need of cleaning.

Why? There's life. There's a lot of life happening.

I want to encourage you today. If there's been some messes lately to clean up - some reconciliation, some forgiveness, some hurt then more forgiveness, that's a good thing. That means there's LIFE! If you don't let anyone in, there won't be need for messes to be cleaned but then again, where's the life?

So we know that life is messy but when it comes to our relationships and the way we speak to one another - our coworkers, our friends and our family, God's Word gives us instruction in how to STAY CONNECTED in a healthy way - how to speak - how to live.

Romans 14:17-19 ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸because anyone who serves Christ in this way is *pleasing to God* and approved by men. ¹⁹Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to *mutual* edification."

When we aim to be pleasing to God, when we aim to have peace and JOY in the Holy Spirit, we are pleasing to God and the result of that is edifying or encouraging to people.

In the class on prophecy taking place on Monday Nights here Pastor Kris is doing a great job reminding us of what prophecy is for - over and over we're learning that prophecy is for the edification or the building up - the encouragement of the believers.

When we daily invite the Holy Spirit to inspire us - to breathe new life into us - we are inviting HEAVEN to invade earth. We're inviting GOD to step into our humanity and bring courage and wisdom and LIFE where there is sadness, depression, anxiety and simply death.

Our speech matters.

God's Spirit wants to have control over our tongue. We either bring life or bring death with our words.

Too many Christians still don't surrender their mouth to Jesus. When we are callous or condescending, quick with our tongue to make someone feel less so we can feel more - it's a sign of the heart - it's a sign that we need to let God do a work in our heart.

On the other hand, when we are encouraging people, when we are like Proverbs says "slow to speak and quick to listen" we are pleasing to the Lord.

When we are given opportunities to speak blessing and encouragement to someone and we take that opportunity - we encourage them, we lift them up, we remind them of God's promises - that God is with them - that God can give them strength - that God can give them favor - when we pray with them - in all of these moments, God is using our mouth to bring blessing.

God wants to use our words to bring blessing and encouragement to people who you don't realize need it. This is a crucial way that we are connected forever.

The Holy Spirit is creative and inspiring. He wants to do the unexpected miracles in your life!

Satan is jealous of that as he can NOT create; he can only manipulate. I think it took God about 2 seconds to kick Satan out of Heaven. Some people paint this big cosmic battle taking place in heaven when Satan rebelled. I don't think so. Isaiah says that Satan said "I will rise above the heavens. I will be like the Most High. I will be worshiped" and what does Jesus say? "I saw Satan fall like Lightning"

I think that battle lasted about 2 seconds.

Because Satan can not create, he will try to manipulate - to control.

Anytime you're trying to control someone - by the words you're saying - you can be sure that you are not being led by the Spirit of God. That's a wrong and immoral motive and thought process. The Holy Spirit will never cause you to try to control someone - only to bless and maybe to lead them - lead them towards trusting God - lead them towards serving God - but never to control them or convince them to do something for *your* benefit - that's manipulation and that stinks!

Who knows the people that the Holy Spirit is INSPIRING you to be connected to? Whether that's for a weekend or for life.

Invite the Holy Spirit to breath new life into YOU today!

What will the Holy Spirit create you as He breathes fresh life in you!

CALL TO ACTION

BALL OF YARN

Toward the end 'Do you you genuinely know the story of someone in this room?'

2 Co 13:11-14

¹¹ Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints greet you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.