



Naturally Supernatural

A 42 Day Devotional

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A Life Group Series

42 Day Devotional

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This devotional is intended to be a companion to “Naturally Supernatural” – the teaching and Life Groups series at Oxford Vineyard Church in the Spring of 2023. Keep this book, make notes in it, and refer back to it at any time. It stands alone as a great devotional to deepen your journey into the pursuit of living in step with the work of the Spirit and the values and core tenets of the kingdom of God as we understand them.

This book contains six weeks of a guided devotional for six days each week (Monday-Saturday). The seventh day is intentionally left blank. There is no devotional content for Sundays, just space for you to make notes in the book during the talks that correspond with each week of the series at the Vineyard. Each day of the devotional will include a scripture or two, some thoughts from each week’s author, a prayer, and journaling prompts for each day. Our hope is that 10-15 minutes daily in this material will make way for some significant encounters with God and result in your growth as a disciple of Jesus in community with others.

Each week’s material looks forward to the talk that will be given at the Vineyard on Sunday. Here’s an example of how this will work:

Week one is intended for February 20-25. Those days of the devotional will correspond with the teaching on February 26. Then, during the week of February 26, your group will discuss the material you studied on your own from the week prior.

Participating in a Life Group will enhance your experience with this book! For six weeks beginning February 27, 2023 groups will meet weekly in and around Oxford to discuss the contents of the study from each day, ask deeper questions, share meals, worship, and pray together. It’s our deep desire and sincerest hope that you’ll join one of the groups and challenge yourself to engage with friends and strangers in a meaningful way around the idea of participating with God’s supernatural rule and reign in the world around us in natural, good sense, down-to-earth ways we can share with our neighbors.

Week 1:
February 20-26, 2023
"Knowing God"
Deb Anderson

The Invitation to Know God February 20, 2023

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

James 4:8 (ESV)

God not only created us, He longs to be near to us. The God of the Universe invites each one of us personally into a relationship with Him. Like a gentleman, He waits for us to take a step toward Him. Draw near to Him. Open your heart to Him. As we move closer to Him, He draws near to us!

God's story is a great love story. He has a place reserved for you in the pages of His story. You are the object of His great love. He loved you so much that He gave himself for your sake!

His invitation is clear and intentional. He offers His presence. While the troubles of this world are many, we never have to face them alone. David spoke of His presence in Psalm 23: 4. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." And Romans 8: 38-39 speaks of this unbreakable promise, "Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God."

Once we are in the family of faith, we can walk deeper in our relationship with Him. We can grow in dependence, intimacy and friendship with Him as we learn to trust in His love. The more we know Him, the more we want to know Him.

Prayer:

Lord, I want to know you. I want to understand who you are. I want to know your plan and purpose. I want to trust you with my life. Show me that you are near. Help me to see how you are working in my life, in my circumstances and in my world. Thank you for wanting to know me too. Amen.

Journaling Prompt:

Identify barriers to getting to know God more in a journaling prayer.

- Lord, I want to get to know you more but these things seem to get in the way:

Identify your dream of knowing God more.

- Lord, knowing you more would look like:

Say "Yes" to God
February 21, 2023

"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Luke 1:38 (ESV)

When God called Mary to become the mother of Jesus, she didn't hesitate. She didn't have a committee meeting or ask five friends to pray about it; she responded immediately. Her heart said, "YES" to the living God. Mary's "yes" is a bold picture of unreserved obedience and faith in action. That is "knowing God."

Saying "yes" to God can be compared to when an individual says "I do" in marriage. When the bride and groom pledge faithfulness at a wedding, it is meant for keeps. Saying "yes" to God or "I do" to a life partner, is for the long haul - "for better or worse" - "in sickness and in health", etc. Unlike human love, God will always be perfectly faithful to us. The question is, can our "yes" be for a lifetime? The answer is - YES!

A key is believing that God is good even when circumstances are difficult, even when people fail us or even when there is financial hardship. Let the focus be on His presence, His provision, His protection, and so forth. Mary did not have "grace" to witness Jesus' death on the cross when she first said "yes" to God's plan to bear His son. But God gave her grace when the time came to "release" Jesus to the purposes of God to become Savior of the world.

You don't have to avoid saying an unconditional yes to God because of a fear of some unknown hardship in the future. Hardship is part of the human experience. But God will give "grace", strength and courage to walk through any difficulty. The question is, is He worth our wholehearted "yes"? The answer is YES wholeheartedly.

Prayer:

I declare that God is trustworthy. I declare that He is worth my "Yes". I commit my life to knowing Him deeply and wholeheartedly serving Him. I accept His grace to live day-by-day looking to Him for all I need. I long to be a part of the building the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Journal prompt:

Identify any hesitancy you might have about a wholehearted "Yes" to God.

Give God your best "yes" right now. Commit your life to Him. What does that look like?

Expect Daily Bread
February 22, 2023

"...give us this day our daily bread."

Matthew 6:11 (ESV)

After getting to know God and saying "yes" to Him, faith is the next step. We need Him daily. We need both nutritional and spiritual bread. This bold verse uses command language. Is it disrespectful, or is it coming from a place of confidence in the heart of God? We also need confidence that God's plan is to give us daily bread. Let us trust Him wholeheartedly.

Does God really want to communicate with us? John 1:1 (ESV) reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Clearly, communication is part of God's DNA. And from the Lord's Prayer, we clearly need daily doses of His communication.

What is the purpose of God's communication? Psalm 23:3 (ESV) says, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." God leads us through communication. His guidance will direct us in the best way to keep communion with Him and accomplish His will. He instructs us through the curriculum of the Holy Spirit. "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Jn. 14:26, ESV)

He equips us and provides for us through His word. His words bring healing, direction, freedom, courage, repentance, obedience, deliverance and increased love for God, self and others. He deposits understanding and training in our spiritual gifts and confirms our unique callings through His communication. God is constantly communicating with us! The question is are we expecting Him to speak and are we listening? Is there quiet space in our day to hear His voice?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to grow in expectation that You desire to speak to me daily. Enlarge my vision to see and interact with You daily. Guide me as I grow more dependent on your voice and direction. Let your word come alive to me as I seek you.

Journal prompt:

How confident am I that God wants to communicate with me on a daily basis? What is the reason for my confidence or lack of confidence?

How has God spoken to me/ how do I expect God to routinely speak to me?

How Does God Speak? February 23, 2023

"My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me."

John 10:27 (ESV)

Sheep recognize the shepherd's voice. He has earned trust over time as a result of His faithful service of leading, defending, providing and caring for the sheep. Sheep are naturally wayward. They need a shepherd who is present and alert to their whereabouts. The shepherd also needed to be "within earshot" to be heard. Are we in earshot of the Shepherd's voice today?

God uses both spiritual activity and regular life to speak to us. God speaks to us through the scripture, devotionals, literature, music, prayer, preaching & teaching, podcasts and emails. God speaks to us through others in a church, small group, prayer ministry, family or friendship setting.

God also speaks to us in the mundane. Much of our day takes place at work or school, engaging in daily tasks such as housework, laundry or grocery shopping. God speaks to us throughout our day; morning, noon, and night. God knows our coming and going and speaks to us while we are in motion too. God speaks to us throughout our moods or states of consciousness. We can be happy or sad, thankful or mad. We can be fully awake or asleep in our bed. We can be in conflict with a child or co-worker or at peace in a quiet place. We can be walking on the treadmill or driving in the car or sipping hot tea. Nothing limits where He will speak except for one thing: our listening. It helps to be expectant and tune in to His voice whenever possible.

Prayer:

Lord, I invite you to speak words of life to me. Let me consistently hear Your voice. Thank you for your care. Thank you for Your moment-by-moment direction and provision. Thank You for Your leadership. Thank you for the works that You have prepared for me to carry out and the training You have given me. Thank You for Your protection from the evil one. Thank You that goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life.

Journal prompt:

In what ways does God usually speak to you?

How else would you like Him to speak to you?

Discerning His Voice
February 24, 2023

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

We need to utilize discernment while hearing God's voice. How do we sort out a true word from a false one? How can we be sure that God is speaking to us? How can we know if it is an accurate word?

First, go back to the beginning of our week. If you know God, you will understand that His voice will not tell us to lie because He hates a false balance (Proverbs 11: 1). His voice will not contradict His character. To spot a counterfeit bill, study a real twenty-dollar bill. Knowing God helps us to know if a word is God-ordained or not.

Secondly, while God corrects us, He does not shame or belittle us. The Holy Spirit may highlight a wrong motive or action but He will always deliver hope with the correction. Thirdly, when promises are given, have faith but also hold it in "an open hand". We are human and can hear what we want to hear. (Once two women thought God said that they were to marry the same man - but he did not marry either of them.) Don't be confused. Test the word against scripture and over time. He will be faithful. Finally, test the words given to you. Hold to what is true but let go of any words that are "off" or don't pertain to you. Communicate what does not resonate with the one sharing so all can learn to discern.

Prayer:

Lord, teach me to discern Your voice from my own self-talk or any other voice. Let me see clearly who You are and Your heart for me and those around me. Help me to gain wisdom as I walk on this journey called life. I love You and declare my need for You.

Journal prompt:

What has been a clear word that God has spoken to you that has come to pass?

The Blessing of Obedience

February 25, 2023

"Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord Your God."

Deuteronomy 12:28 (ESV)

Blessing follows those who simply love God and obey Him. The double blessing is knowing His love and experiencing His favor by walking in His ways. God created us. He has a heart for us. He proves His love over and over. Even so, some struggle to believe His goodness. The more you know God, the more you want to know Him. Studying His many names from scripture is a good way to know Him more. For example El Shaddai means "All Sufficient One". He knows our need and seeks to fill it even before we may realize that we have a need.

God's provision and favor come to us in diverse ways. Through God's amazing design, mother's milk changes consistency such as fat content with the changing needs (age/size) of the baby. Does the baby have a cold? The milk produces more immunity. No computer program made those changes. That is the nature of El Shaddai, the All Sufficient One! Knowing God is life's greatest privilege. Knowing His voice keeps us close to Him and on His path. That is the best place to be in the world. We cannot escape all hardship in this life, but walking through life with His support is the best way to live. That is the blessing of obedience. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." (2 Chron. 16:9 ESV)

Prayer:

Lord, I want to know You and know Your voice! Open my eyes to see You more clearly. Remind me of You in mindless moments. Show me Your presence as You walk with me throughout my day. Show me Your way to peace in the midst of chaos or panic. Lead me in Your ways and help me to hear Your shepherd's voice.

Journal Prompt:

In what way have you recently experienced His favor by walking in His ways?

DAY 7: (SPACE FOR SUNDAY'S SERMON NOTES)

Week 2:
February 27-March 5
“Practicing the Presence”
Kathy Bolduc

Practicing the Presence of God
February 27, 2023

"Just one day in the courts of Your temple is greater than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather serve as a porter at my God's doorstep than live in luxury in the house of the wicked."

Psalm 84:10 (The Voice)

What does it mean to "practice the presence of God?" Many have found the answer in a book written in the 1600's by a monk named Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God*. The book was written as a series of letters to a friend, sharing the practices that helped him into a deeper experience of God's abiding presence.

Brother Lawrence was a soldier before he joined a religious order in France. On the battlefield he had a direct experience of God's grace that filled him with a deep yearning for God's continual presence. Wounded in battle he became lame, and found work in a monastery kitchen. Most of us would find a kitchen to be an unlikely place to find God's grace-filled presence! He writes, "In the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees in the Chapel."

Brother Lawrence found God's presence through simple conversations with God throughout his day. "Together, God and Brother Lawrence cooked meals, ran errands, scrubbed pots, and endured the scorn of the world."

Prayer:

Lord, may I, like Brother Lawrence, find you in the mundane tasks that fill my days. Remind me to talk to you as I do the dishes, go to work, check emails, and pay the bills. Remind me of the value of all I do with you beside me. And help me remember to leave spaces in the conversation for You to answer, that I may hear you speak.
Amen

Journal prompt:

1. What does it mean for you, personally, to practice the presence of God?
2. What spiritual practices help you to do this? For Brother Lawrence it was carrying on a perpetual conversation with God. What works for you? How can you deepen this practice?

Cultivating an Awareness of God's Presence

February 28, 2023

"Be still and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

We live in an age of information overload, gushing 24/7 through our devices. How do we become still enough to truly know God when we're just trying to keep our heads above the deluge?

Centering Prayer is an age-old tool to find the quiet center within where the Holy Spirit dwells. I love this definition from Contemplative Outreach: This is a silent prayer "in which we can experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself."

To begin we choose a sacred word or phrase as a symbol of our intention to consent to God's presence. This helps us move from a busy mind to a centered heart. Find a quiet spot, close your eyes, and silently repeat your word. When you're aware of other thoughts, simply observe them like pictures rolling across a movie screen, gently bringing your mind back to your word without judgment. Some people practice this with their breath rather than a sacred word: pay attention to your breath as you inhale and exhale, and when other thoughts take over, gently bring your mind back to your breath. Begin with five minutes a day, and gradually expand.

With practice, the centering word/breath brings you into a place of deep silence where thoughts fall away, and you're aware only of deep peace and love. This is the Presence that is with us always, hidden under the noise of life.

Prayer:

Lord, still the noise inside my mind, which can be as loud as a construction zone. Give me a word or phrase to center myself, a word that will bring me into the quiet where I can truly be with you—not only when I take time to pray, but throughout my day, and even when I sleep. Amen

Journaling prompt:

You may want to give this practice a try today and for the remainder of this week. It sounds easy, but can be frustrating at first, as our thoughts are constant and insistent. Remind yourself, each time that you have to bring your mind back to your centering word, that you are building muscle in your intention to come to the quiet center where the Spirit dwells.

The Mundane Becomes Supernatural

March 1, 2023

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

I can't think of any chore that is more boring or repetitive than doing the dishes.

At the beginning of the pandemic, in the spring of 2020, dishes piled up in our sink non-stop. I didn't realize how much we had been eating out until we were at home, 24/7, making three meals a day. I complained about it quite a bit, until I read this quote by St. Teresa of Calcutta: “Wash the plate not because it is dirty nor because you are told to wash it, but because you love the person who will use it next.”

Wow. That gave me pause for thought. What if I did all of my boring, daily chores with that mindset? Make the bed for the love of the person who will next sleep in it. Do the laundry with love for my husband. Pray for the people who will eat the food while buying groceries.

Again, Brother Lawrence comes to mind. He writes: “We should not become weary of doing little things for the love of God. God regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which the work is done.” He reminds us to do every little thing for the love of God.

It's easy to become weary of doing the mundane tasks that fill our days. Cleaning the house, mowing the grass, weeding the garden. What if we were to change our mindset and do everything for the love of God, and for the love of the people around us? How might that open a door for the supernatural power of God to flow through us?

Prayer:

Lord, help me learn to do even the little things in life simply because I love you, and for the love of the people I serve. Amen

Journaling prompt:

1. What mundane daily tasks get under your skin?
2. Choose one for this week, and ask God for the grace to help you do it for the love of God and the love of the people around you

Walking in the Spirit March 2, 2023

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 NIV

To walk in the Spirit, we must walk in the gifts the Spirit gives. 1 Corinthians lists some of them, as does Romans 12:6-8: "...If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

Paul puts it succinctly: whatever your gift, *do it!* First of all, we have to discern what our gifts are. Three ways to do this are: 1. Ask the Spirit 2. Pay attention to what you're drawn toward 3. Ask friends and family what gifts they see in you. If our gift is teaching, where in the Church and community can we use this gift? If exhortation, how can we more consistently encourage those around us? If mercy, how can we grow in showing mercy? Like building muscle through exercise, we grow in the gifts when we take time to practice them regularly. It's easy to fritter away time, multi-task, and slide through our days with our regular routine. What has the Spirit gifted *you* to do for the common good?

Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, show me what you planned for me from the very beginning of time. Remind me of the gifts you poured out upon me. Unique gifts, gifts that are crucial to the functioning of the Body of Christ. Help me focus my energies on what you have for me to do. May I walk in your Spirit day by day. Amen

Journaling prompt:

1. What are the gifts the Spirit has given to you and how are you using them in this season of your life?
2. What blockages do you experience, and how might those roadblocks be removed?

Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit: Love

March 3, 2023

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you...This is my command: Love each other."

John 15:5, 9-12, 17 (NIV)

Before we walk in the Spirit, we abide in Jesus. In John 15, Jesus makes this very clear. He is the vine, we are the branches. A branch that is not connected to the vine withers and dies. This has everything to do with love. As the Father loved Jesus, so Jesus loves us. This is a supernatural love, not a love we can conjure up on our own. We abide in his love by choosing to "be" in Jesus' presence throughout our days.

When we abide in Jesus' love, we bear much fruit. Our lives begin to naturally overflow with his power and presence. His presence shines through us everywhere we go! The love of Jesus flows through us, and we become healthy branches on a healthy grape vine, bearing plump and juicy grapes. Throughout the scriptures, Jesus shows us how to cultivate this supernatural love: wash one another's feet. Forgive seventy times seven. Love our neighbor as ourselves. Spend time with unbelievers, sharing the love of God. Spread the Good News wherever we go. Heal the sick and cast out demons. Can we do any of this on our own? No. Can we do it if we are intimately connected with the vine, Jesus' love flowing through us? No doubt!

Prayer:

Jesus, what an amazing picture you paint in this Scripture. I am intimately connected with the vine that is you. Your power flows through me to do what I could never do alone. Teach me how to abide in you, Lord. Show me ways to walk with you throughout my days, that I might pour out your love on those around me.

Journaling prompt:

1. What does abiding in Jesus look like for you?
2. Where are you bearing fruit and sharing the love of Jesus?

Transformed from the Inside Out
March 4, 2023

"Whenever, though, they turn to face God as Moses did, God removes the veil and there they are—face-to-face! They suddenly recognize that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiseled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognized as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him."

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 (MSG)

I'm sure you've heard the saying, "They are beautiful from the inside out." These are the people who glow with a certain something that has nothing to do with what is culturally beautiful or pleasing. They have been transformed, the image of God shining through them – they might not win a modeling contest, but they are supernaturally beautiful! Jesus turns the cultural definition of what is bright and beautiful upside-down. Our transformation in Christ has nothing to do with outer beauty and everything to do with an inner beauty that shines through—a reflection of the beauty of the Lord.

This is not an overnight transformation, it is the process of a lifetime. We accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and repent of our sins and we're forgiven. We're baptized and spend time with him, coming to know his unconditional love. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. The amazing transformation process speeds up as we surrender those things of the ego that we've been holding on to, so that we can walk in obedience to the Spirit. We begin to walk in supernatural power. We're gradually transformed—beautiful from the inside out.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me set down my ego so that I may experience your very real and personal presence. Help me set down my own agenda, and open myself to all you have set before me. May I decrease that you may increase, until it is you, dear Lord, that is shining through me. May I become more and more like you. Amen.

Journaling prompt:

1. Who do you know that is beautiful from the inside out? What is different about their life that they've become this beautiful?
2. Take some time to notice your own journey of transformation. What are the changes you have seen in yourself over the years of your walk with Jesus? Celebrate these!

DAY 7: Space for Sermon Notes:

Week 3:
March 6-12
“Power Tools”
Josh Jones

The Promise of God!
March 6, 2023

“For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants...”

Isaiah 44:3

One of my favorite things in the world is seeing the ways in which Scripture is one complete, unified story. In the above verse, Isaiah is telling us that God will pour out his Spirit and his blessing on us, which we see come to pass in Acts 2. Let’s look at a few more examples of scripture being fulfilled.

In Genesis, God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises to bless the earth, “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” (Gen 12:2-3) The prophet Joel also affirms this promise in Joel 2:28, “...and afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” Jesus promises in Luke 24:49, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

We can also see the beginning of the fulfillment of these prophecies in Acts as the Spirit comes upon the disciples. Peter affirms that the Spirit is not just for the disciples but for all who God calls to himself in Acts 2:38-39. Now, why is all of this important?

1. The unity of Scripture. It’s beautiful. In these few verses we see prophecies from Genesis, Isaiah, Joel, and John be fulfilled in Acts.
2. The Spirit is for us! The promise is that the Spirit will be poured out on *all* people!

Prayer:

I encourage you to pray and ask the Father to pour out His Spirit upon you to empower you afresh today!

Journaling Prompt:

Have you ever been “baptized” in the Holy Spirit? Write down some experiences.

Power Tools
March 7, 2023

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8

Jesus empowered his disciples with the power of the kingdom of heaven by the Holy Spirit! Those disciples saw this power at work in ways that no one had seen before – three thousand people in one day turning in repentance and being born again by the Holy Spirit. Then the apostles went out and put the power of the Spirit to the test. The dead were raised; the deaf, blind, and crippled restored to full health; multitudes turned to Christ and a new thing arose in the world: the Church!

The time we live in is the power age. Pentecost is the giving of the Holy Spirit to the world in manifest form. It is God at work in the physical and material world. The essence of Pentecost is the moving of the Spirit — the mighty wind from heaven and the flaming tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is only known at work. Where the Spirit is there is action, the miraculous — God in operation! The Spirit is sent to work in this world. He is the seal to the faith we have in Christ and a gift to every believer to cooperate in the work of the kingdom. The gifts and manifestations of the Spirit are the tools for the job and they are power tools!

Prayer:

God, I want to see your kingdom come in power today. Thank you for your gift of the Holy Spirit. Now let me get to work partnering with you to bring life and truth into the lives of the people around me!

Journaling prompt:

Write down some thoughts about the power of the Holy Spirit in regards to the Kingdom of God on display.

Power Demonstrated

March 8, 2023

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

The power of the gospel is manifest power – the Spirit’s power should be seen! There should be effects that can be attributed to the power of God. People’s lives should be affected in some tangible way. The Holy Spirit is not a theory, or a statement about what goes on in some distant world, of which we are not aware. His power is power made manifest. “Dunamis” is the Greek word Paul uses when writing about the power of the Spirit. We can identify with that word because we use it so much in English: dynamo, dynamite, dynamics. Those words express “power under wraps.” Paul also uses “energema”—energy. When the power of dynamite is released, it becomes energy.

Christianity is either supernatural, or nothing at all. We have a supernatural Jesus, with a supernatural ministry, creating a supernatural church, with a supernatural gospel, and a supernatural Bible. Without the miraculous, the church becomes an ethical society or a social club, but it’s intended to be the grid system for transmitting the power of God into this world. You and I are conductors of God’s power to the world!

Prayer:

God, remind me that in everything I say, in everything I do, I represent You to a world in need of You. You are not a powerless God but the most powerful. You are also powerfully personal. You know exactly what every person needs. Help me speak Your words of life everywhere I go. In Jesus name, amen.

Journal prompt:

How have you seen the power of God demonstrated in your life recently?

Pursuing A Life of Open Communication With God
March 9, 2023

God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand. I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking. You know when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight. You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence. I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too—your reassuring presence, coming and going. This is too much, too wonderful— I can't take it all in! Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight?

Psalm 139:1-7

The manifestations of the Spirit as we have discussed are tools for the job. The job itself is the work of restoration and the transformation of humanity in relationship with God. To grow naturally supernatural is to grow in this relationship with God, pursuing a life of open communication with God. To grow in our experience of the revelatory tools (words of knowledge, words of wisdom, discernment of spirits) starts with knowing that He knows every part of our lives. A lifestyle of open communication with God is about sharing the deepest parts of our life with him and asking him about the things that are on his heart. From this relationship grows the ability to minister to others by asking God what's on his heart for another person and then sharing it with them.

Hearing His purpose for our lives and the lives of others cause moments of wonder and awe as we witness the nature of God's love and nurturing care put on display for people to see. When the God of all creation speaks to you, life changes. The most powerful One in the universe knows you and loves you. He cares for you. As David says in Psalm 139, it is "too much, too wonderful." The world inside you changes. We get to carry a loving approach to these revelatory gifts of the Spirit.

Prayer

Pray Psalm 139 today!

Journal prompt:

Meditate on this portion of scripture. Read it over and over. Write it out. Say it out loud again and again. Sing it back to God.

Write down any thoughts or things God shares with you as you meditate on the psalm.

Tools of Revelation & Discernment pt. 1

March 10, 2023

"Blessed be the name of God, forever and ever. He knows all, does all: He changes the seasons and guides history, He raises up kings and also brings them down, He provides both intelligence and discernment, He opens up the depths, tells secrets, sees in the dark—light spills out of Him! God of all my ancestors, all thanks! all praise! You made me wise and strong. And now you've shown us what we asked for."

Daniel 2:19-23 2:3-4

These manifestations of the Holy Spirit are tools of supernatural insight. They give us understanding of the way God thinks and sees things. Speech is required to communicate these discernments. These gifts meet our need for having God's insight into our circumstances.

When we receive revelation from the Holy Spirit, the goal is to connect God's heart and mind to the world around us. Today's scripture is a prime example of this on display. In this story Daniel gets a message, revelation, from the mind of God to solve the king's mystery. Can you imagine if we pursued intimacy with God that produced the solutions to the most critical problems or mysteries in society today? Daniel knew that God showing up through him living naturally supernatural, provided many Babylonians with an invitation to connect to this amazing God. When we operate in the Spirit of wisdom and revelation we receive words of wisdom and words of knowledge that baffle the world around us – not by their complexity but by demonstration that God is real and loves them.

Declaration:

"I am created to connect with the heart of God."

Journal prompt:

Ask God to share with you a word of knowledge or word of wisdom for a family member today and then write those things down and share them with them.

Tools of Revelation & Discernment pt. 2

March 11, 2023

God called again, "Samuel!"—the third time! Yet again Samuel got up and went to Eli, "Yes? I heard you call me. Here I am." That's when it dawned on Eli that God was calling the boy. So Eli directed Samuel, "Go back and lie down. If the voice calls again, say, 'Speak, God. I'm your servant, ready to listen.'" Samuel returned to his bed. Then God came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen."

1 Samuel 3:8-10

Discernment of Spirits is a tool of supernatural insight partnered with the truth of scripture. It gives us understanding of the way God is moving.

Discernment of Spirits can be understood as the supernatural capacity to judge and identify, from spiritual insight, whether the source of something is divine, human, or evil. In today's verse we see an example in the call of Samuel. Eli eventually discerns that it is the Lord speaking to Samuel. Here we see the discernment between the human and the divine. Samuel himself did not at that stage know how to discern the voice of God from other voices.

Discerning the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in the room and on people is part of our naturally supernatural lifestyle. As we see where and how God is moving we get to partner with Him in bringing the kingdom into people's lives and providing a landing space for His power.

Prayer:

God, help me distinguish between the accuser's voice and the Advocate's voice. I know I have a choice when it comes to whom I listen to: condemnation or correction. Thank You for Your great love that never condemns, but lovingly corrects. Increase my wisdom and let my mind and soul be enlightened by the gift of discernment. I want to see where you are moving and what you are doing so I may join you.

Journal prompt:

Meditate on Jesus' words in John 14:25-27 "I'm telling you these things while I'm still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I'm leaving you well and whole. That's my parting gift to you. Peace. I don't leave you the way you're used to being left—feeling abandoned. So don't be upset. Don't be distraught."

Journal any thoughts that come.

DAY 7: (SPACE FOR SUNDAY'S SERMON NOTES)

Week 4:
March 13-19
“Revelatory Tools”
Parker Frey

Not “Super” – Just Natural
March 13, 2023

“So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Colossians 3:1-3 (NRSVUE)

This might seem counterintuitive, but I don't really like the word “supernatural”. To me, “supernatural” invokes the television show from The CW - campy, ridiculous, and outlandishly impossible. That's far from the truth about our life with God. Obviously this series is titled “*Naturally Supernatural*,” so stay with me for a moment... Living in America means you and I have been influenced by dualism. In part, dualism is the thought that we live in a split-level world with a ‘god’ who is mostly out of the picture. In other words, there is the “natural” that we experience all the time, and the “super-natural” that is practically never experienced.

Being Christians in a culture shaped by naturalism means “to speak in the modern way of “natural” and “supernatural,” where the supernatural is what happens when the normally absent god reaches in, does something peculiar, and then goes away again. That is not how ancient Jews or early Christians would have thought.”¹ As followers of Jesus, we are meant to think of God's kingdom as the very real activity of God overlapping with our very real everyday lives. No need to separate the two! That's at the heart of what we mean by “naturally supernatural” – the things we've relegated to far-out and distant spiritual forces in our thinking are actually just as real as the computer I'm using to write this. God's activity should be “natural” for the Christian. It's not an exception from the norm; no need to call it “super”-natural!

Prayer:

Lord, open the eyes of my understanding to see how you are at work in every aspect of my life and the world around me. Help me to understand your kingdom as a natural, everyday part of my life – the rule, not the exception!

¹ Wright, N. T. (2020, February 1). Loving to know: N. T. Wright. First Things. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/02/loving-to-know>

Journaling prompt:

How might your life with God be different if you lived with a greater expectancy for the Spirit to intervene in your day-to-day life? If you're honest with yourself, do you find yourself thinking of God's activity on your behalf as the exception rather than the rule? Why?

“Especially That You May Prophecy”

March 14, 2023

“Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts and especially that you may prophecy...”

“But those who prophecy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation...” “Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues but even more to prophecy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.”

1 Corinthians 14:1,3,5 (NRSVUE)

As we go on studying and discussing the charismatic gifts of the Spirit found in 1 Corinthians, we come to a clear instruction from the apostle Paul; “strive for the spiritual gifts and *especially that you may prophecy.*” The implication is clear – Paul is encouraging *all* believers to pursue and desire to receive prophecy as a gift from the Spirit. In the introductory talk I gave the week before our small groups started, I explained our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 as “situational.” In other words, the Spirit gives these gifts on a situational basis as is fit, not necessarily as a lifelong gift you “possess.”

When Paul encourages us to pursue and strive for prophecy, he does so for a crucial reason; every one of us needs to hear from God in order to be encouraged and built up in this life. Prophecy today is different from prophecy in the Old Testament. It’s simply to hear and communicate the heart of God for others in such a way that leads to their instruction and encouragement.

Prayer:

God, I long to hear your voice for myself and for the people around me. By the power of your Spirit, I pray that you would make me more aware of what you’re saying to me about my life and your world. Give me wisdom in discerning what is your voice and wisdom in sharing what I hear.

Journaling prompt:

What are some situations in your life right now that would benefit from a word from God? Take some time to write down the areas of your life where you need direction and guidance, and ask God to speak about them to you and to anyone else in your life who might listen and help.

Remember Who You Are
March 15, 2023

“But those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church. Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. So with yourselves: since you are striving after spiritual gifts, seek to excel in them for building up the church.”

1 Corinthians 14:3-5,12 (NRSVUE)

In the second act of the Lion King, Simba is shirking his duties as the rightful leader of a pride of noble lions as they are manipulated and abused by his evil uncle, Scar. Simba has a vision of his late father in which James Earl Jones’ velvety voice can be heard exhorting, “Simba, remember who you are!” Obviously the Lion King isn’t scripture, but there’s a point to be taken. Folks in the church with prophetic giftings must remember who they are!

Folks who are inclined to prophecy tend to love what we call the “supernatural.” Spiritual dreams, visions, pictures, words; they’re all in. If you’re someone who hears the voice of God for others frequently or even infrequently, it’s crucial to remember that we do not pursue spiritual gifts for their own sake, but for the sake of our fellow believers! Paul is reluctant to recount his own spiritual experiences in 2 Corinthians because he knows the risks. In recent years, we’ve seen prophets use their gifts in an attempt to predict sports and political contests, the weather, and all sorts of other extracurriculars. Paul teaches us about the gift clearly—prophecy is for *upbuilding and encouragement in the church*. To all who flow in the gift of prophecy to any extent: remember who you are!

Prayer:

Lord, if I’ve lost sight in any way of the purposes for your gifts, give me wisdom to understand how to serve your church in partnership with the Spirit. Give me wise discernment to know the prophetic voices in the church to follow, and help keep my focus on serving the church with the gifts you give.

Journaling prompt:

Think about some sages you know in the church—wise, older folks who have faithfully served the body of Christ for decades, unwavering in faith and consistent in their service. These might even be people you remember from childhood, or an earlier stage of life. Take some time to list the qualities of a person who lives to build up, encourage, and bring consolation to Jesus' church.

Ask God to grow you up in those qualities, and ask the Spirit for the gift of prophecy so that you might build up, encourage, and console the way these powerful witnesses have.

Different Kinds of Tongues

March 16, 2023

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

Acts 2:4-6,12-13 (NRSVUE)

What an incredible passage of scripture! At Pentecost, the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in different known languages in the ancient world such that everyone present "heard them speaking of God's deeds of power." In charismatic circles, much attention is paid to the gift of tongues as an unknown prayer language, and we'll get to that. It's also good to stop and marvel at this story. I've known friends to have experienced something similar—English speakers visiting other nations and communicating flawlessly to speakers of other languages only to find out later from others that, by the Spirit's power, they had preached or carried on a conversation in a language completely unknown to them!

There's a principle here that reaches beyond even the gift of tongues. The Spirit loves the nations! Cross-cultural ministry is a blessing, and even more so when empowered by the Spirit. A prayer of mine is that the Vineyard would become more and more multicultural and come to look more like Revelation 7:9 (go read it!) Here's an idea that might sound outrageous, but I want to dream big; our city is full of students from other nations who speak other languages and live on your street. What if God got you into a situation where a gift of tongues to speak a language unknown to you could facilitate a powerful proclamation of the gospel?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts the Spirit brings. I pray now for the boldness to ask for the gift of tongues to speak other languages the way I read about in the Bible for the sake of proclaiming your powerful works.

Journaling Prompt:

At the Vineyard, we want to be a church that pursues mission work both near and far. Take some time to pray this morning for the missionary families our church supports in the Dominican Republic, Morocco, and Malawi. Pray that the Spirit would give you (and them) the gift of tongues to connect with speakers of other languages both in Oxford and abroad, and pray for our church to grow in hospitality for non-native residents of Oxford who come to our city from the corners of the earth!

Praying in Tongues

March 17, 2023

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Romans 8:26-27 (NRSVUE)

"For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God, for no one understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit."

1 Corinthians 14:2 (NRSVUE)

In light of yesterday's devotional, there are clearly two sorts of tongues going on here. While speaking in different known languages was the phenomenon that took place at Pentecost, when Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians, he seems to be speaking of a different sort of gift. One of the first times I received prayer in a charismatic meeting, the guy praying for me was shouting ecstatically in tongues for several minutes. He eventually had some helpful things to pray and share, but in hindsight, it's a wonder I didn't just leave!

If tongues as an unknown prayer language is new to you, here are some helpful guidelines to think about this gift. If it's old hat, these are important things to remember! The gift of tongues as an indiscernible prayer language is for your personal edification. The scriptures make no reference to laying hands on other people and praying for them in tongues. The Spirit can bring incredible consolation and encouragement to you when you pray in tongues. This truly is the Spirit of God praying *for you, through you*. The gift of tongues is an incredible gift! This week's sermon will discuss at even more depth the crucial nature of the gift of tongues.

Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I ask for your help cultivating the gift of tongues in my life to help me when I do not know how to pray. Even now, Lord, baptize me in your Spirit and give me the gift of tongues for my own encouragement and upbuilding.

Journaling prompt:

One or more of the following might apply to you:

- Have you ever had an experience like mine, where the gift of tongues was used in a way that was a bit cavalier and turned you off to receiving it? Was it confusing, weird, or even scary?
- Have you desired the gift of tongues, but never received it in a genuine way and as a result, you've counted yourself out from experiencing it?
- Have there been times when you have been a bit... overzealous with your personal prayer language?

I believe the Spirit is eager to give this awesome gift to each of us. Reflect on those experiences and journal your thoughts. Ask God to help you to view this gift rightly, remove judgment and hardness of heart, and practice it in a way that builds you up and helps to advance the kingdom.

Interpretation of Tongues

March 18, 2023

'If, therefore, the entire church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three and each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. '

1 Corinthians 14:23,27-28 (NRSVUE)

The proper use of the gift of interpretation of tongues is probably the rarest manifestation of the Spirit in the worldwide church. I believe this is because of the nature of the church meeting in general—Christian communities who elevate order at the expense of the gifts close themselves off to the experience of public tongues and interpretation altogether. Christian communities who elevate the supernatural at the expense of an orderly meeting close themselves off to experiencing a proper interpretation of a tongue, because everyone is already shouting in indiscernible tongues!

There are a few things we can interpret from the way Paul discusses interpreting a tongue. First, if someone is addressing a group in a tongue, the group must wait for the interpretation for the tongue to be of any value. Second, Paul stresses, “let there be only two or at most three...” suggesting that this should not be a major focal point of the gathering. He also goes so far as to say, “if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent.” Interpretation of tongues is also differentiated from prophecy. In other words, a public tongue should sound more like a praise (think, a psalm) than a prophecy (“thus sayeth the Lord...”). A public tongue will feel resonant with the whole gathered group of believers—a praise that is on our hearts collectively and spoken back to God.

Prayer:

Lord, make me open to receiving a public tongue or interpretation. I do not want to be closed to any gift you might give any group at any time! I long to receive your gifts and pray for wisdom for my church community about the gift of tongues.

Journaling Prompt:

Similar to yesterday's prompt, if you have had any experiences with public tongues or interpretation that were mishandled and even closed you off from receiving the gift, reflect on those here. Ask God to help you see the gifts of public tongues and interpretation rightly.

DAY 7: (SPACE FOR SUNDAY'S SERMON NOTES)

Week 5:
March 20-26
“Demonstration Tools”
John Richter

Power Without Love is Nothing!

March 20, 2023

If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, my words would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal. And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing."

1 Corinthians 13:2-3 (TPT)

This week we will be studying the three power gifts or demonstration gifts—faith, healing, and miracles. Before diving into these manifestations of the Holy Spirit, I want to step back and remind us of the purpose behind all the gifts of the Spirit; to demonstrate His love to the world! I love how the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to place the “love chapter” (1 Cor. 13) right between the “power chapters” of 1 Cor. 12 and 14. Without love seated in the center of His power, then we are “clanging cymbals” and worth “nothing.” Those are strong statements!

Without love at the core of our motivation, then all that we do is for nothing. All the manifestations of the Holy Spirit through Jesus' ministry were motivated by the purest of love—not for show, not to make a point, but pure, unadulterated *love*. We lay hands on the sick because we love. We pray and believe for miracles because we love. We take great risks of faith because we love. Our lives are nothing without love! Godly love is willing to sacrifice, to look like a fool for the sake of delivering His good news to the world. Let us throw off all fear and clothe ourselves with the love of Jesus!

Prayer:

Take a moment and repent of any motives that you sense inside you that do not align with love. Father, I love you. Please forgive me for _____ which does not agree with love. Holy Spirit, fill me now with your love, grace, and boldness toward others!

Journal Prompt:

Describe in your own words what “being motivated by love toward others” looks like for you. How do you feel? What do you think about the other person? How would you speak to them? How would you act toward them?

Be Natural
March 21, 2023

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

John 2:6-10

Did you notice the phrase, "and did not know where it came from?" Jesus turned the water into wine with no one knowing except the servants who helped him. How natural and quiet was that! Being natural when moving in the gifts of the Spirit is crucial! Healings and miracles are extraordinary enough on their own! It is important that we learn as believers to operate in a natural, winsome way so that others can receive what the Lord is doing.

Always use your natural conversational tone of voice when praying. If a person looks uncomfortable, ask them if they would prefer to sit or move to a different place. Pray short prayers with your eyes open using simple, everyday words and language (no "Christianese") Avoid phrases like—"the Lord told me", "God says", and replace them with phrases like "I could be wrong but..." Prayer and conversation *can* go together. Feel free to ask questions and talk to folks while you pray. If someone becomes uncomfortable, learn to stop and not push them. Jesus stands at the door and knocks—He does not break the door down! Always thank the person for allowing you to pray for them.

Prayer:

Father, I thank you that the same Holy Spirit that worked through Jesus to heal the sick and raise the dead, lives inside of me! I am truly a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am a child of the King of Kings! Holy Spirit, help me to be natural, real, honest, and humble as I love people and minister Your Gifts to those around me!

Journal Prompt:

Write down any fears that you have about ministering the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Be thorough. Then pray and offer these fears to the LORD and ask for His power to overcome these fears.

“Eagerly Desire...”

March 22, 2023

“...eagerly desire spiritual gifts”

1 Corinthians 12:31

Another way to say this is to passionately pursue spiritual gifts or to make spiritual gifts something we strive for—to greatly want them and to even chase after them. What you and I know of God, would you think that He would command us to chase or pursue something that we would not successfully achieve? Of course not! If He commands us to do something He believes and knows that we will attain and achieve it. The key is to eagerly desire these gifts in your life. This is an interesting Kingdom principle.

If a child comes to a parent and eagerly desires a new car for Christmas and even goes so far as to demand that gift, we would be offended and view the child as entitled or arrogant. But God instructs us to eagerly desire the very best gifts of the Spirit. Another way of looking at this is that those who do not eagerly desire the gifts will not receive them. The gifts of the Spirit flow through those who desire, long for, and pursue them with all their heart. Finally, notice that this command is not directed to the pastor, teacher, or apostle. It is directed to all believers! Everyone gets to play in the kingdom! In fact Jesus said that it is the childlike who will receive the kingdom of God. Let’s make a commitment to be childlike in our pursuit of the gifts of the spirit in our lives—not just a few, but *all of them!*

Prayer:

Pray now using your own words to express to God how you long for and desire to move in all the gifts of the Spirit.

Journaling prompt:

Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Prophecy, Words of Wisdom, Words of Knowledge, Discerning of spirits, Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healings, Gift of Miracles.

On the left side of your page list all the gifts that you have experienced at least once. On the right side of the page list the gifts that you have not yet experienced. Finally, list some sources that you would like to seek out concerning spiritual gifts to learn more about them.

Gift of Faith
March 23, 2023

Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.

Mark 11:22-24 (NRSV)

Many translations of this verse have the phrase "Have faith in God" but I believe based on the original Greek that a better translation is "have faith of God". This is important when studying the gift of faith because we are commanded to have faith or the confidence of God. That is what the gift of faith is, it is when we have the confidence of God that heaven is breaking into a situation. This is a gift of the Holy Spirit that is given to us on behalf of someone's situation. It is an overwhelming feeling of confidence that God is touching or moving on a person or situation. But remember that faith always requires risk to declare what God is doing! I have found it very helpful in growing in the gifts of the Spirit to read and watch others who are experienced in it.

Brian Blount is one of those people for me. I watched videos on Facebook where he prayed for people and would tell them before praying that they would start to feel warmth or tingling in the area where they feel pain. Every time I saw him do this it made me feel anxious and I would say, "I can never do that." But then I thought, if God can do it through him, He can do it through me. So I decided one day to give it a try when I prayed for someone. The first three times they did not experience anything, but I kept trying. Eventually, someone said, yes I am feeling the warmth! I became so excited! Remember that all of the gifts are for everyone—we just need to "eagerly desire" each gift and begin to take risks. Do not be afraid. He's got us!

Prayer:

Lord, I want to move in the Gift of Faith. Lord give me confidence that Your Kingdom truly is at hand and within reach. Holy Spirit, teach me to walk in this important gift and help me to overcome any fear of failure or stepping out.

Journal Prompt:

Take a few moments and think back on a time or event in your life that you felt great confidence in yourself or in an outcome taking place. Write down the event or situation. How did you feel? How did you act? Why did you feel so confident? This feeling is what the gift of faith “feels” like.

Gifts of Healing

March 24, 2023

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

Mark 16:17-18 (NIV)

In Jesus' approach to ministry, *all* believers minister healing. It is a sign of those who believe. The Holy Spirit loves to heal and we are commanded to eagerly pursue this gift. For some of us the idea of supernatural healing taking place is a foreign idea because we have grown up with a worldview that healing only takes place naturally through doctor's assistance. Because of this, maybe you have never eagerly desired this gift. Others of us have tried to pray for healing and haven't seen much happen yet. Everyone I've studied who has successfully partnered with God to heal has started to pray with little success and experienced disappointment when they prayed and a person did not get healed. As they persevered, they experienced breakthrough.

If it was like this for modern heroes in the faith like John Wimber, Bill Johnson, Diane Leman, Smith Wigglesworth, and Brian Blount, why would we think it would be different for us? We must each learn to persevere in faith and obedience to "lay hands on the sick." The best way to learn is to try and try again and again. Brian Blount once prayed for the same man 42 times before healing finally took place. That is persevering faith! Let each of us embrace the process of learning to walk in faith for healing.

Prayer:

In the name of Jesus I rebuke disappointment in the area of praying for the sick. Even though I have prayed and have not seen breakthrough I commit to praying for the sick because You, Lord, purchased healing on the cross and have told me to do so. I will commit to praying and I leave the results to you. You are the healer!

Journal prompt:

If you or someone you know has experienced a supernatural healing, journal about it. It is important to reflect on these times when the healing power of Jesus has broken in. If you do not know someone or experienced this, then take a few minutes and journal any questions that you have about healing and praying for the sick and take time to talk with someone who has had some of these experiences about your questions.

Gifts of Miracles

March 25, 2023

"...he instructed them to organize the crowd and have them sit down in groups on the grass. So they had them sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, gazed into heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the bread and the two fish and distributed them to his disciples to serve the people—and the food was multiplied in front of their eyes! Everyone had plenty to eat and was fully satisfied."

Mark 6:36-42

A miracle is an event that defies the natural laws of physics, such as metal dissolving in a person's body, the multiplication of food, or Jesus, turning water into wine. This is probably a good time to reinforce that everyone gets to play in the kingdom! In 1 Corinthians, Paul commands us to pursue all the gifts of the Spirit. Many times it is common for the gift of miracles to be preceded by a gift of faith or confidence in what God is about to do. Jesus promised that signs and wonders will follow those who believe. We can grow in moving and partnering with the Holy Spirit and we can practice before we ever get it perfect.

With God, it's truly not about perfection—it's about faithfulness and obedience. I've never multiplied food, but I'd like to have an opportunity to try! Remember the parable of the mustard seed; it gets planted in the ground and initially there is no life or fruit that can be discerned. But eventually over time and through consistency, a mighty tree can grow up in the kingdom. We don't necessarily see fruit instantly when we practice moving in the gifts. We try and try again, but as we persevere and remain obedient to what the Lord has put in front of us, eventually, we will see fruit. We will see miracles occur in our lives.

Prayer:

Building on the theme of naturally supernatural, let's take a moment and repent of areas in our lives where we are focused more on the natural, and we have forgotten that we serve a supernatural God who wants to work in and through us.

Journal prompt:

Pick an area of your life or someone around you who needs a miracle. If a miracle were to take place in that situation, what might it look like? What would occur? How would people respond? How would you feel? Write about this and be descriptive.

DAY 7: (SPACE FOR SUNDAY'S SERMON NOTES)

Week 6:
March 27-April 2
“Taking it to the Streets”
Pam Knudson

Remembering Our Source in the Supernatural

March 27, 2023

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

John 4: 13-15 (NIV)

As we enter the last week of our devotions on the subject of becoming naturally supernatural, let's remind ourselves of how becoming supernatural is even possible. What is our source? Come with me for a few moments to Jacob's well where we see Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman. Imagine her empty vessel beside her as she lowers a rope-wrapped jar to reach the water deep below. She is at the well because of her natural thirst, but it doesn't take long for Jesus to point to the thirst of her soul. He takes a conversation about something natural and turns it into something supernatural - living water.

At the start of their conversation, Jesus asks the woman for something natural: a drink of water. She is painfully aware that coming from her, the water isn't enough. But He offers her something beyond the physical. He speaks deeply to her heart, and gives her soul a taste of His living water. Watch her run off, leaving the emptiness of her earthen vessel at the feet of Jesus. Her spirit has been filled, and she splashes this living water everywhere she goes as she tells others to come to Him. Her source is clearly Jesus.

Prayer:

Jesus, as one who is in relationship with you, I have free access to this living water. Remind me to come to the well of your presence daily and keep my earthen vessel empty of my own efforts to fill my spirit. Expand my capacity to drink deeply from your presence. Empower me to splash your living water on my life, and to extend it to all who are thirsty and invite them to the source. Amen.

Journal prompt:

Think of something particularly frustrating in your life. Are you remembering your source, who is Jesus ,and moving past the natural (water/ your own efforts) and inviting His supernatural help (living water) into the situation? What would it look like to do that?

His Supernatural Love March 28, 2023

"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake."

Psalms 23:1-3 (NIV)

God's supernatural love beckons the souls of humankind in the natural, every-day world. He is our shepherd, and He leads us beside the living waters of his love. What do you do with that? Is He just showing you the scenery or is He beckoning you to drink. This scripture holds an invitation to let God lead you into the refreshment of the supernatural that can't be found in just observing.

For the next few minutes think prayerfully about God's love for you and these waters. Let your mind relax into what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Picture yourself being led by the hand of Jesus to quiet waters. He explains to you that this water is living water, the fullness of His love for you and you belong here.

What does this water look like for you? Is it a large lake with clarity to the bottom, or a different body of water, possibly an ocean. Or is it simply a puddle?

What does God say to you about His love for you? What does the area around the water look like? Is it inviting to you? Do you feel like you could sit and rest here? Do you take a drink? Do you get in? Do you have a sense of peace beside these still waters of His love?

Declaration:

My Shepherd, keep my heart teachable as you guide me to come daily to a place where I engage in your love. Thank you for refreshing my soul with your presence. Show me how to carry your supernatural love to those around me in my every-day life. Amen

Journal prompt:

What is God saying to you about His love for you? How does this refresh you? How can you carry this supernatural love to those around you?

The Supernatural Flows Through You

March 29, 2023

“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”

John 7:38 -39 (NIV)

Water makes up every cell of your body. In fact, you are around 60% water and your brain is 85% water. Still this very essential natural compound holds a great mystery for scientists for many reasons. Water is unexplainable, but it doesn't need to be fully understood for it to be a part of who we are and a driving force in our lives.

Read the verse again, the Holy spirit brings rivers of living water flowing from within us! I don't know about you, but that is a supernatural picture that holds lots of mystery for me. What does that even mean and what do I do with that? But just like natural water, this concept doesn't fully need to be understood for it to be true and a part of who you are.

As a believer you have living water flowing out of you. You may find this mystery hard to believe, especially if you don't have experiences that line up with that, but God calls us to act on His word, not our experiences. The Bible also tells us that the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you—talk about living water! (Romans 6:10-1)

Prayer:

Jesus, stir my heart with the quiet waters of your love so I see your heart for people. Help me to trust your word, not my experiences. May your word make me brave so that I engage in bringing supernatural breakthroughs into this natural world. Amen.

Journal prompt:

What do you think about the idea of rivers of living water flowing from within you? How does knowing that change your inner dialog, or the things you say or think to yourself? How does it change your interactions with others?

Go With His Flow
March 30, 2023

"...the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mathew 28:16-20 (NIV)

In the past few days, we have seen that Jesus is the living water, that He invites you daily to the quiet waters of His love, and that you carry living water. So what is next? What does he desire of you? Jesus wants you to do what rivers do, and that is flow.

All rivers lead to the ocean. In fact, every place on Earth has a connection to the ocean through a river. Even the highest mountain in the world is connected to the sea by flowing water. The image of an ocean is a good starting point when thinking about his love and it fits with the idea of rivers flowing through us.

Often the love of God is likened to the ocean because it seems deep and endless. Yet God's love is immeasurably bigger than we can imagine because God IS love. (1 John 4:8) In the scripture above Jesus tells you to go and take this river to all nations. He says He is with you and his spirit will flow through you. He is literally telling you to "go with His flow". And just as in the natural world all rivers lead to the ocean, so also these rivers of living water flow to the ocean of his love. It is this love that leads to repentance and salvation.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for always being with me. Help me go boldly in your power with the good news of your gospel. Amen.

Journal prompt:

When you read the scripture above from Matthew does it feel like a call of action for you? Or do you doubt? If you doubt, why is that? Ask God from where the doubt stems. In what way would you like to see the supernatural flow through you to others?

The Signs and Wonders of His Love

March 31, 2023

“So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands”

Acts 14:3 (NIV)

Many moons ago, I was newly engaged and starting my first-year as a special education teacher in an inner-city school. To say it was challenging would be an understatement. I remember traveling with my fiancé for a weekend trip to my parents' house. He drove while I worked feverishly on lesson plans for the coming week. When we arrived I walked upstairs to the bedroom, collapsed onto the bed, and began to weep. It all felt impossible. I doubted my capabilities as a teacher in such a strained educational situation. My fiancé came in and sat beside me on the bed. He reached over and lifted my head. He listened to me, prayed for me, and reminded me that Jesus is my source. I felt deeply seen, heard, tended to, and loved.

Our loving Father is the lifter of our head and reminds us of our salvation in Jesus. He extends his love to us through signs and wonders. Jesus modeled this through his encounters with people. He heard and saw them, and the signs and wonders he performed were his way of tending to their individual needs. Jesus encourages this same approach in us, as we share the gospel. God confirms the words we share about His grace with the signs and wonders He performs through us.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for being present with me in every situation. Open my eyes to see the needs of others and give me the courage to engage with those needs through your supernatural power. Amen

Journal prompt:

What signs and wonders has God performed in your life to confirm His words to you? Is there someone you have encountered that needs to feel seen, heard and tended to by God? What step is God asking you to take to reach out to them with the wonders of His love?

Making Space for the Supernatural in Your Everyday Life

April 1, 2023

"Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

Acts 3:6-8 (NIV)

In this scripture Peter was walking by a beggar as he was going about his day. But when he saw the beggar he was willing to be interrupted, and saw beyond the man's request to what Jesus wanted to supernaturally provide.

Be encouraged to do the same. In the Vineyard we spell faith... R-I-S-K. Take the risk, make space for the supernatural in your day. Below are a few ideas. Give them a try!

- After ordering at a restaurant tell your server that you are going to say a prayer over your meal and ask them if there is anything you can pray for them about.
- Ask God if there is an area of your life into which you haven't invited his supernatural power, then do it and cooperate with any steps he asks you to take. (Finances, relationships, repentance, freedom, direction, health... etc.)
- Before going to the store, pray about a way the Holy Spirit can use you to reach others. Listen for any words or pictures he may be giving you. Act on what He tells you to do.
- As you go about your day be on the lookout for anyone in obvious pain and ask if you can pray for them. Pray for them on the spot.

Prayer:

Jesus, interrupt my day with opportunities to share and demonstrate your concern and love for the people you put in my path. Give me boldness to act in faith. Amen

Journal prompt:

Pick one of the ideas above or one of your own. Go in faith-take the risk-and then journal about your experience.

DAY 7: (SPACE FOR SUNDAY'S SERMON NOTES)

