



Big Bethel A.M.E. Church

Discipleship

New Members Class



Where “Jesus Saves”

Reverend Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine, Senior Pastor
220 Auburn Avenue, NE ~ Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 827-9707-Office ~ (404) 223-3060-Fax
REVISED NOVEMBER 2025

Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Church Office Hours:	Monday: 10:00 AM– 2:00PM. Tuesday – Friday 10:00AM. – 4:30PM
Address:	Big Bethel A.M.E. Church 220 Auburn Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Phone Number:	(404) 827-9707
Fax Number:	(404) 223-3060
E-Mail:	jesus.saves@bigbethelame.org
Web:	www.bigbethelame.org
Senior Pastor:	Rev. Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine - Ext. 111 – jaugustine@bigbethelame.org
Special Assistant to the Pastor:	Sis. Arial Nash - Ext. 105 – anash@bigbethelame.org
Admin. Asst. to the Senior Pastor:	Phyllis Smiley - psmiley@bigbethelame.org
Business Mgr./Church Administrator:	Ed Jones - Ext. 109 – erjones@bigbethelame.org
Christian Education Director:	Rev. Monica Jones, Ph.D. – Ext. 100 – mjones@bigbethelame.org
Graphic Specialist:	Martinique Mix – Ext. 103 – marmix@bigbethelame.org
General Information:	jesus.saves@bigbethelame.org

SERVICES:

Sunday Worship 10:00 AM and 2:00PM

Youth Church 10:00 AM

Next Shift College/Young Adult Service 2:00 PM

NEW MEMBERS CLASSES 8:45AM - (1st -3rd Sundays)

CHURCH SCHOOL & BIBLE STUDY:

Sunday	Church School	8:45 AM		
Wednesday	Noon Bible Study	12:00PM	Evening	6:00PM

Lesson One
~God's Plan of Salvation~

God's Plan of Salvation

Recognize that you are a sinner. **Romans 3:23**

Repent of your sins. "Lord I'm Sorry"

Accept God's forgiveness. **I John 1:9**

Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. **Romans 10:9**

Believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. **Romans 10:9**

Receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of your life.

Prayer of Salvation

Dear Lord, I recognize that I am a sinner. Lord, I am sorry for my sins and I am ready to change my life. I accept your forgiveness. I confess with my mouth that you are Lord and I believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead. Therefore, according to the word I am saved. The Bible says "if any person be in Christ he or she is a new creation, the old is passed away and behold all things become new". Lord, I thank you for my salvation.

Scripture References

Romans 3:23; Romans 10:9-10, 13; I John 1:8-22; II Corinthians 5:17; John 3:16-17

Important Terminology

1. **Saved/ Salvation** – experience of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior.
2. **Born Again** – new birth experience when we receive Jesus Christ. **(John 3)**
3. **Conversion** – a change that occurs when God changes our lives.
4. **Justification** – being made right with God
5. **Sanctification** – the process after salvation where we grow in the Lord.
6. **Filled with the Holy Spirit** – being controlled or directed by the spirit of God in Christ that lives in the believer.
7. **Baptism** – initiation into the family of God (God's Church). Outward sign of God's presence.

A Prayer of Pattern

These suggestions provide you with guidelines for your prayer time. This pattern in no way exhausts the possibilities. Use this as a starting point and then go forward as the spirit leads you.

"In the Morning" - 15 Minutes:

Be still. Find a quiet place. Get seated comfortably. Relax. Take a few deep breaths. Remind yourself: I am here to meet God. No appointment competes in importance. Read a bible verse for the day.

Adoration: Think on the greatness of God. How incredible it is that He knows you and desires to have fellowship with you. He is eager to encourage you. Adore Him.

Thanksgiving: Name the things God have given you which you are grateful: family, friends, health, work, recreation, food, clothing, home car, church, etc. Picture these gracious gifts and thank God for each one.

Dedication: Review the large vows you have taken as a Christian, church member, spouse, and employee. Reaffirm these things but also focus intently upon this day. Offer your life to God for joyful service today.

Guidance: Envision your day with God. Foresee Him in each task, each relationship, each opportunity, each member of your family...and in the unscheduled events and encounters. Ask for His guidance in each aspect of your day.

Intercession: Make a list of the names of persons who need a relationship with Christ. Resolve to pray for them daily. Also, include in your intercessory prayers those who suffer, in whatever way. If our imagination could grasp

the effect of prayer on others, we would all pray more often and with more assurance. In addition, pray for the country, that the kingdom of Christ may come in national affairs.

Here are four ways to pray for persons you've named:

1. Call their names in God's presence, asking him to fulfill their needs.
2. Picture each person in the transforming presence of God.
3. Write a prayer letter to God in which you express your concerns and hopes for each.
4. Offer a prayer of presence by deliberately being with the person for whom you pray.

Petition: Tell God what you most deeply desire in your life. **(Mathew 21:22), Mark 11:24).** Don't be fooled by the blank-check appearance of this promise. As you spend time in God's presence, your desires change. So persist in asking for what you really want until you know what it is.

Act of Trust: Intentionally release your prayers to God and trust Him to answer them. **(Hebrews 11:16)**

Wait: In silence, wait to hear what God wishes to say to you. "Speak Lord, your child listens." Repeat the verse of the day and reflect on it. Write it on a slip of paper and carry it with you throughout the day.

"In the Evening" - 5 Minutes:

Review the day: Identify the places God has been at work in your life and give thanks,

Confession: Note your feelings, actions, and choices which have been contrary to God's will in Christ. Be specific. Acknowledge those and accept His forgiveness.

Commitment: Release yourself to God for the night. Ask Him to let you drift into sleep, conscious of His loving presence.

This information on prayer was taken from Dr. Ben Johnson's book "An Adventure in Prayer".

Ten Rules for Worship

I

Worship begins at home. On my way, I will pray for my church, for my pastor, and for those who lead and participate in worship.

II

Before I enter the house of God, I will pause for a moment to cast off all thoughts and actions unbecoming a child of the Lord. I will shake off all hates, grudges, frettings, worldly cares, and sinful thoughts.

III

I will enter the house of the Lord with reverence and a spirit of worship, praise and thanksgiving. I will enter expecting God's blessings.

IV

As soon as I am seated I will bow my head in prayer. I will pray that the presence of the Lord will be felt as we worship this day.

V

I will participate in worship and praise. I will be open to listen as the pastor delivers the word of God. I will think about how God's word will empower me to live closer to God and my fellow person.

VI

I will bring my tithes and offerings to the Lord in thanksgiving for all the Lord has done for me. I will thank the Lord for the window of heaven blessing, rebuking the devourer, and for making me a blessing to the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

VII

Throughout worship I will meditate on the power, grace, and love of God through Christ. I will bless the Lord for the presence of the Holy Spirit within me.

VIII

As I listen to the pastor deliver the word of the Lord, I will apply the message to my life. I will pray for the pastor as he/she preaches. I will be in a spirit of prayer during the invitation to Christian discipleship that worshippers will be led to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and will lead those without a church to unite with our church fellowship.

IX

When worship has ended, I will fellowship with my fellow members and with visitors I do not know and welcome them to the Lord's house. I will work with my fellow members to create a friendly environment.

X

As I leave the sanctuary, I will be ever mindful that I enter to worship so that I can depart to serve. Lord, I dedicate my life to you and your service this week.

Lesson Two ~A.M.E. History~

African Methodist Church History

The A. M. E. Church did not start as a separate denomination but it started as a protest against discrimination. Our Church started in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at Saint George Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787. The custom was that whites sat down front and all African Americans sat in the balcony. Other discriminating practices were also kept. On this particular Sunday morning, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were kneeling in prayer in the “wrong section” of the church and were asked to move. There was some commotion and passing of words, and then resolutely, these two African American preachers led some African American worshippers across the street and decided never to worship in a church where they were not accepted as equal citizens and brothers and sisters in Christ. After many efforts to get the Methodist Episcopal Church to recognize the discrimination practices and realizing their protest had failed, Richard Allen and others were forced to organize their own church so they would worship in their own Zion. In 1816, the church became incorporated and Richard Allen became the first consecrated Bishop.

Richard Allen, through Bethel, conducted many community projects for African Americans in Philadelphia, such as night classes for illiterate blacks. They not only taught the three R's but also the philosophy of self-help. Bethel first existed in an old blacksmith shop and then moved to a lot on the corner of Sixth and Lombard Street, where mother Bethel now stands. Allen also spent much of his time taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to people of African decent in Philadelphia.

Richard Allen, the founder of the A. M. E. Church was born a slave in 1760 in Philadelphia. He was converted in 1777 at a Methodist meeting. Of his conversion Allen wrote “my dungeon shook and my chains flew off and glory to God I cried”. Allen saved up \$2000 to buy his freedom from his Methodist master. He spent the revolutionary war years traveling and preaching. In 1786, he returned to preach at Saint George's Church in Philadelphia. Saint George is the Mother Church of American Methodism. As stated above, Richard Allen and others walked out of Saint George's Church in Philadelphia in 1787. From 1787 to 1815 were years of struggle for the Free African Society, out of which the A. M. E. Church evolved. Allen and his followers set out to build a new church and were faced by problems. In addition to discrimination, they were faced with resistance from white Methodist leaders who were trying to control the new congregation. In 1816, following a decisive court victory, representatives from five African American Churches met and formed the A. M. E. Church.

The A. M. E. Church was founded to meet the spiritual, material, educational, and cultural needs of African Americans. It was also organized to encourage African American independence, dignity, self-reliance, and development.

What is the significance of the name African Methodist Episcopal Church?

African – signifies that the A. M. E. Church was founded by people of African decent. Even so, our church is open to people of all races.

Methodist – means that the A. M. E. Church teaches plain gospel and follows orderly rules. We are part of the Wesleyan tradition started by John Wesley in the 18th Century.

Episcopal – means that the Chief Executive Officers are Bishops chosen by the General Conference.

Church – lets the world know that we are a part of the whole body of Christ.

In the history of the A. M. E. Church, there are four horsemen:

Richard Allen – the apostle of freedom and founder of the A. M. E. Church.

William Paul Quinn – started the A. M. E. Church west of the Mississippi.

Daniel Alexander Payne – who started Wilberforce University, the first black college organized in America. Payne also organized the ministerial education system in the A. M. E. Church.

Henry McNeil Turner – was responsible for much of the growth of the A. M. E. Church in Georgia. He was also an advocate for African American freedom and liberation.

In the year 2000 at the 46th Quadrennial Session of the A. M. E. Church General Conference, **Bishop Vashti McKenzie** became the 117th bishop and the 1st woman bishop in the history of the A. M. E. Church. The A. M. E. Church has over 120 bishops.

Big Bethel A.M.E. Church
1847~ 2012
Celebrating 165 Years of Service
A Historical Snapshot of Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

First and foremost, Big Bethel A.M. E. Church has been a house of worship, spiritual guidance and refuge for believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. But secondly, throughout its history, Big Bethel has proven to be an important community institution that has served in roles as leader, innovator, advocate and convener. Below is a snapshot of Big Bethel's evolution as a church and as a cornerstone in Atlanta.

Big Bethel's Early History

1847 – Union Church, the first congregation in Atlanta, was established. Located on Peachtree Street near the current Georgia Pacific headquarters, the church was established for whites who allowed their slaves to attend the services.

1855 - White members of Union Church granted a petition of the slaves to have their own church. The new congregation was named Bethel Tabernacle and located on Jenkins Street (now Auditorium Way on the Georgia State University campus).

1865 - Bethel Tabernacle joined the Connection of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

1868 - Bethel Tabernacle members, under the leadership of Rev. Wesley John Gaines, built a new church on Old Wheat Street (Auburn Avenue). It became one of the largest black owned buildings erected in the country that year.

1890s – The church purchased land to expand its foot print. After numerous construction setbacks, a new Big Bethel was erected on Auburn Avenue. The entire project spanned 30 years, from 1891 – 1921.

Big Bethel as a Meeting House

1911 – President William Howard Taft was a guest speaker at the church.

1917 – Marcus Garvey was a guest speaker at the church.

1917 – A fire in the Old Fourth Ward destroyed most of the neighborhood buildings. Big Bethel becomes the primary gathering place for political and civic community events.

1919 – The national convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was seated at Big Bethel.

1929 – The national convention of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was seated at Big Bethel.

1990 – Nelson Mandela was a guest speaker at the church.

1991 - Prior to his election to the Presidency, Governor Bill Clinton was a guest speaker at the church

Big Bethel as a Leader in Education

1864 – Following the Union Army’s occupation of Atlanta, Bethel Tabernacle served as the first school in Atlanta for Black children. Classes were conducted by two former slaves, Grandison Daniel and James Tate.

1881 – Morris Brown College was founded at Bethel Tabernacle during the proceedings of the North Georgia Annual Conference. The original board of trustees included Bethel’s pastor Rev. R. A. Hall and three former pastors, William D. Johnson, Wesley J. Gaines, Joseph Wood, and a member, Dr. J. R. Porter.

Big Bethel as community organizer and advocate

1871 - Under the leadership of Rev. F. Jesse Peck of Bethel Tabernacle, the Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Free and Accepted Masons - Saint James Lodge #4, was established; the first in the state of Georgia.

1930 – “Heaven Bound” a morality drama was written and produced by Big Bethel members. This unique pageant was the vehicle that brought together large groups of diverse populations to Big Bethel Church throughout the years. “Heaven Bound” was the opening feature at the premiere of “Gone with the Wind”.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the **1950’s and 1960’s**, much effort was made to protect Black citizens whose employment was endangered, as they exercised their right to vote. John H. Calhoun, a Big Bethel member spearheaded the “Protective Strategy” that saved many jobs for African Americans in Atlanta during those years.

Big Bethel as a leader in Economic Development

1870 - Rev. Peck created the Daughters of Bethel beneficial society. It operated in a manner similar to health and life insurance by providing financial assistance to sick members and to families of deceased members. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois called it one of the earliest examples of economic cooperation among Blacks.

1968 - Big Bethel Towers purchased to provide affordable housing to low income residents

1995 - The Nehemiah Project, the precursor to the PROCEED Initiative, was launched to Prayerfully Reclaim Our Community through Economic Development.

2003 - The Big Bethel Village, an independent living facility, was built to provide housing options for active, aging adults.

2004 - Bethel Trinity House established as a transitional housing and rehabilitation program for men recovering from drug addiction.

2006 - The “Renaissance Walk” a community of upscale condos and retail establishments are being built in correlation with Integral Group to revitalize “Sweet Auburn Avenue”.

Big Bethel has had 35 pastors appointed by the AME Church since Brother Wood was the first lay pastor. Of the 35 pastors, 7 have become bishops:

Wesley J. Gaines – 16th Bishop

Joseph Simeon Flipper – 33rd Bishop

Isaac N. Ross – 41st Bishop

Harold I. Bearden – 83rd Bishop

McKinley Young – 109th Bishop

James L. Davis – 123rd Bishop

Gregory V. Eason – 148th Bishop

*In June 2025, **Rev. Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine** became the Senior Pastor of Historic Big Bethel A.M.E. Church.*

Lesson Three

~A.M.E. Church Doctrine and Discipline~

What We Believe as A. M. E's

1. We believe that all people are sinners.
2. We believe that The Lord loves all people and hates sin.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ died to save all people.
4. We believe that the Holy Spirit is given to all people to guide them in the will and way of the Lord.
5. We believe that all that repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will receive forgiveness of their sins.
6. We believe that all who receive forgiveness of sin are at the same time made new creatures in Christ Jesus.
7. We believe that all that are made new creatures in Christ are accepted as children of God.
8. We believe that a person that is born of God is consecrated and set apart for divine service.
9. We believe that all who are accepted as children of God may receive inward assurance that they are saved and are part of the family of God.
10. We believe that all that seek to do so may love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and their neighbor as themselves.

The Apostles Creed

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son and our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: from thence He shall come to judge the quick (living) and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

The Articles of Religion

1. We have faith in the Holy Trinity. God is manifested in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that God became human and lived among us in the person of Jesus the Christ “the word made flesh.”
3. We also believe in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ.
4. We believe in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son, and is of one substance with Father and Son.
5. We believe that the Holy Scripture (The Bible) contains all that is necessary for salvation.
6. We believe that the Old Testament is not contrary to the New Testament, that both work together to give us God's plan for our lives.
7. We believe in the doctrine of original sin. As spiritual offspring of Adam, we are all born with a sin nature that cannot be redeemed except through the saving blood of Jesus Christ.
8. We believe in free will. We do not believe that some people are destined to hell and others are destined to heaven before they are born. We believe that everyone has a free will to choose to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord or to reject Him.
9. We believe that we are justified by faith alone. There is no amount of good work that can save us. Good works does not produce salvation but it follows salvation.

10. After we are saved, we may still fall into sin. Sin after salvation is not unpardonable. According to I John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
We believe that the visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful people where the pure word of God is preached and sacraments are duly administered.
11. We observe two sacraments: The sacrament of Baptism and The Lord’s Supper.

The Mission and Purpose of the A. M. E. Church

“The mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed. At every level of the connection and in every local church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society out of which A. M. E. Church evolved: that is, to seek and save the lost and serve the needy through a continuing program of:

1. preaching the gospel;
2. feeding the hungry;
3. clothing the naked;
4. housing the homeless;
5. cheering the fallen;
6. providing jobs for the jobless;
7. administering to the needs of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums and mental institutions, senior citizens’ homes, caring for the sick, the shut-in, the mentally and socially disturbed; and
8. encouraging thrift and economic advancement.

The Discipline

There is a book published every four years by the A. M. E. Church called the “Doctrine of the African Methodist Episcopal Church” or “The Discipline.” The first edition was issued in 1817 by Bishop Richard Allen, Elder James Tapisco, and others in Philadelphia, and is one of the oldest books published by American Blacks.

A. M. E. Church Emblem



The emblem displays characteristics which can be equated to a significant aspect of the African Methodist Episcopal doctrine and belief. The shape of the emblem is in the form of a three pointed shield; the three points being symbolic of the official motto of the A. M. E. Church. “God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, Man our Brother.” An anvil and cross occupy the center of the emblem. The anvil represents the blacksmith shop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where the founder, Richard Allen, with a few followers, established the first African Methodist Episcopal Church and the cross represents the Church.

A. M. E. Church Colors

The Basic Colors are **White** and **Purple**.

White represents Purity; that states which all True Christians constantly strive to achieve.

Purple represents Christ's Blood on the Cross.

The A. M. E. Connection

When we speak of the A. M. E. Church as a "connection", we mean that all of its parts are connected to one another and to the whole. There are no isolated parts and no independent parts. Each local church is a part of the connection. Each member is a part of the connection.

The connection of which each member and each local church is a part and is organized and governed as follows:

1. The General Conference
2. The Annual Conference
3. The District Conference
4. The Quarterly Conference
5. The Church Conference

The General Conference

The General Conference is the supreme legislative body at the A. M. E. Church. The General Conference meets every four years for the purpose of evaluating the work of the connectional church, determining the course of action for the next four years, electing and assigning bishops, electing general officers, making revisions to the doctrine, and discipline of the A. M. E. Church.

The Annual Conference

The Annual Conference meets every year to receive reports of pastors, presiding elders, and various conference committees. It is composed of ministerial members and one lay member from each local pastoral charge. The Annual Conference is presided over by the bishop assigned to the Episcopal District which the Annual Conference is a part.

Some of the other duties of the Annual Conference are as follows:

1. Elect ministerial delegates to the General Conference.
2. Examine candidates for ministry.
3. Assign pastors and presiding elders to appointments.
4. Receive all funds for connectional purposes and send the same to the treasurer of the connectional church.
5. Attend to all other connectional and Annual Conference business.

The District Conference

Just as each Episcopal District is divided into a number of Annual Conference, each Annual Conference is divided into a number of districts. Presiding over each of these districts is a presiding elder appointed by the bishop of the Episcopal District. The presiding elder district is made up of a number of churches. Every year the presiding elder calls together all the pastors and delegate from each local church for the district conference.

The Quarterly Conference

The Quarterly conference meets every 90 days. This meeting is presided over by the presiding elder of the district where the local church is a part. The Quarterly Conference is made up of all ministers, stewards, class leaders, trustees, stewardesses, and presidents of all organizations of the local church.

The Quarterly Conference has supervision of the temporal and spiritual interests of the church. It receives reports from all local organizations; inquiries into the financial condition of the church. It licenses and renews the license of local preacher's exhorters, and missionaries, and is a court of appeals for church members. It passes the religious, moral, and official character of its members.

The Church Conference

The Church Conference is a meeting of the pastor and the members of a local church for consideration of local church business. This business included the following: Updating the membership roll; recommending persons to the presiding elder and members of the Quarterly Conference for license to preach; and adopting petitions to the bishop, district and annual conference for the ordination of deacons and elders for use in the local church. It is also called to encourage love and loyal support of the totals work and ministries of the church.

Other Important Connectional Groups

The Bishop's Council

Bishop's Council meeting is when all the bishops of the church meet together to hear each other's reports, review their work, and plan for the good of the connection. The bishops being chief executives of the church are responsible for making all necessary adjustments in the assignments of bishops in the interim of the General Conference.

The General Board

The General Board is the chief administrative connectional agency of the A. M. E. Church. The General Board is charged by the General Conference with the responsibility for supervising the financial program of the connectional church by hearing reports from all agencies and persons receiving monies form the General Budget Fund. It has the authority to take final action on any action or any matter pertaining to the welfare of the A. M. E. Church, and to deal with any salaried servant of the A. M. E. Church. The actions of the General Board are subject only to the General Conference and to the Judicial Council in the interim period. The members of the General Board are elected by the General Conference. All educational work of the A. M. E. Church is supervised by the board.

Connectional Departments

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Department of Publications | 5. Department of Research and Scholarship |
| 2. Department of Missions | 6. Department of Christian Education |
| 3. Department of Church Growth and Development | 7. Department of Finance and Statistics |
| 4. Department of Employee Security | 8. General Secretary /CIO |

Connectional Commissions

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Social Action | 4. General Conference |
| 2. Health | 5. Chaplains |
| 3. Educational Institutions | 6. Richard Allen Youth Council (R.A.Y.C.) |

Official Church Publications

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. The Christian Recorder | 5. The Journal of Religious Education |
| 2. The A. M. E. Church Review | 6. The Secret Chamber (Daily Devotional) |
| 3. The Voice of Missions | 7. The YPD Gazette |
| 4. The Missionary Magazine | |

Episcopal Districts

For convenience and administrative purposes, the A. M. E. Church as a whole is divided into areas called Episcopal Districts. One bishop is assigned over each Episcopal District. Each Episcopal District is composed of a number of Annual Conferences.

Ordained Ministry in the A. M. E. Church

Bishops – are the chief pastors of the A. M. E. Church. They are responsible for appointing pastors and presiding elders to their yearly appointments. They also preside at annual and general conferences. They are the general superintendent, chief executive officer, and administrative head of the A. M. E. Church. They are itinerant elders who when elected and consecrated to the office of bishop.

Presiding Elders – are officials of the A. M. E. Church charged with the responsibility of seeing that each local church under his or her supervision understands and comply with the policies and program of the connection. He or she presides over the Quarterly Conference sessions at which time he or she gets all the information necessary to inform him or her that the local congregation is operating in harmony with the laws of the A. M. E. connection, and meeting all of its obligations to the connection.

Pastors – are the official head of every local congregation. He or she is appointed to this position by the presiding bishop of the annual conference where the church is located. The pastor is responsible for the total program of the church to which he or she has been appointed.

The Process of Becoming A Minister in the A. M. E. Church

The Call – is received from the Lord. The call comes to each individual in a different way. When a Christian member of the A. M. E. Church receives his or her call, he or she sets up an appointment to meet with the local church pastor.

Church Conference – is the next step for the person who is called to the ministry. After the pastor confirms God's call in the person's life, the individual is brought to the church conference to be recommended to the Quarterly Conference for license to preach.

Quarterly Conference – is the next step in the ministry process. At this point, the candidate is examined by the presiding elder and the members of the Quarterly Conference. If the candidate gets a favorable recommendation, he or she receives his or her license to preach at this meeting. The Quarterly Conference then recommends the candidate to the District Conference.

District Conference – is where the candidate is examined by the committee of ministers to the Annual Conference. The candidate is then voted on by the entire District Conference which recommends them for admissions to the Annual Conference.

The Annual Conference Board of Examiners – instructs the candidate in the "Class of Admissions." The "Class of Admissions" prepares the candidate to meet with the presiding bishop and the members of the Annual Conference. When the candidate is admitted to the Annual Conference, they are instructed, interviewed, and evaluated by the conference. After successful completion of two years, the candidate is elected and ordained deacon. When the candidate successfully completes four years, he or she is elected and ordained elder. After the elder's ordination, the candidate is dismissed from the board of examiners and becomes a full member of the annual conference. If a candidate is over the age of fifty, he or she receives local deacon and elder orders. Local deacons and elders serve under the direction of the local church pastor and do not travel as an itinerant minister in the A. M. E. Church.

Lesson Four

~Christian Growth and Development~

FAITH

FAITH

ASK: What is Faith?

ANSWER: It is believing in something that is greater than ourselves. Confidence that God will do what He has promised. It is trusting God to do what we cannot do with no expectations of how or when it will occur.

Scripture: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.” Hebrews 11:1-2

There is no clearer explanation of faith in all the Scriptures than the one found in Hebrews 11:1

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The two key words here are **sure** and **certain**. Faith is about being sure of something. So then one might ask sure and certain about what? When can we be sure and certain God is going to act? When can we know for sure He is going to do what we ask?

The author of Hebrews (whose name is not given in the Biblical text) answers that question in no uncertain terms. Interestingly enough, he introduces his explanation in this way: “This is what the ancients were commended for.”

This refers to **faith**. The people whose stories he is about to recount were all men and women who had faith; they were sure and certain about something. They were sure and certain about the right things. The men and women were so certain and sure because each had received a promise from God. They were confident that God would do exactly what He promised. And that is the essence of faith.

The term **promise**, or some derivative, appears eighteen times in Hebrews. It appears seven times in this one chapter alone. What is the significance of that? Faith and the promises of God go hand in hand.

Where there is no promise, there can be no faith—only hope. Notice the connection in the following verse: “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise” Hebrews 11:11. The basis of Abraham’s faith was the promise of God. He believed he and Sarah would have a child in their old age because God promised they would. Their faith followed a promise. Every person mentioned in this chapter of Hebrews was given a promise of some kind. Faith was grounded in the promise of God.

Faith then is confidence in the promises of God, confidence that God will do what He has promised.

To apply our faith is to live as if God will keep His promises. A good question to ask yourself is, how would I conduct my life if I really believed God is who He says He is and if I really believed the Bible is His Word? That is what living by faith is all about – taking God at His Word.

Discussion: So, how would you conduct your life if you really believed God is who He says He is and if you really believed the Bible is His Word? How would that affect the way that you do business? How would that affect your giving? How would that affect the way you treat your neighbors?

Living by faith requires that we become familiar with God’s promises to us. The Bible is filled with promises for believers. Nothing is more encouraging or nurturing to our faith than reviewing God’s promises. We should make it a point of frequently reviewing God’s promises. It’s helpful to make a list of them and then review the promise

regarding our forgiveness, our protection, our relationship with Him and the future inheritance He is preparing for all of His children.

There are several misconceptions about faith. For example, there are Christians that are disappointed with God. They feel as if God has let them down, didn't answer their requests the way they wanted. In situations like this, it would probably not be unusual for them to stop reading their Bibles, stop praying and stop attending church. In some cases their disappointment may even turn into anger. Do you know anyone that fits that picture?

Disappointment can stem from confusion over the meaning of faith, they misunderstand what faith is.

ASK: What did we say was the meaning of faith?

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" Hebrews 11:1.

It is believing in something that is greater than ourselves. Confidence that God will do what He has promised. It is trusting God to do what we cannot do with no expectations of how or when it will occur.

People that get disappointed with God may think that faith is some sort of power or force. They probably think that if they have enough faith, God will do whatever they ask Him. So when a crisis comes along, they try to move God into action through their faith. When God doesn't respond, they become disappointed. Their misunderstandings lead to unrealistic expectation. And their expectations eventually lead to disappointment.

Faith is not a power we tap into. Faith is not a lasso we slip around God's neck to force our will on His. Faith is not a button you push to prod God into action. Faith is confidence that God will do what He has promised. That is what all those men and women in Hebrews 11 were commended for.

As children of God, we are free to ask God for anything we please. And once we ask, we can *hope* He will give us exactly what we've asked for. But to *believe* He will do something He has not promised to do is not faith; it is presumption.

Another reason for the confusion is that many of us want to be in control – imagine that! We want God to do our bidding. We don't want to submit to His will; we want Him subjected to ours. We really don't want God to function as the Lord of our lives; we would rather have Him operate like a vending machine. We put in a little faith and He sends out whatever we think we need. But He doesn't operate that way. And to approach the Christian life as if He does is to set ourselves up for disappointment. Faith is not an escape hatch from all the trials and tribulations in this life. It is confidence that God will keep His promises.

Another area of confusion has to do with the foundation of faith. Some folks tend to judge God's interest and involvement in their lives according to what happens around them. When things go well – their health is good, their finances are solid, their family members get along – they are quick to praise God for His faithfulness. But when things take a turn for the worse, they doubt. "Where is God?" they ask. "Has He forgotten me? I thought He loved me." They make the mistake of drawing conclusions regarding God's faithfulness based on what is happening then.

The author of Hebrews warns us against this. His original audience made the same mistake two thousand years ago. Their situation, however, was a bit more severe than anything most of us will face. He was writing to a group of Jewish Christians who were being persecuted for converting from the Jewish faith. The persecution was so intense that they began to doubt whether they had made the right decision. God wasn't honoring their faithfulness in any tangible sort of way. On the surface it looked as if He has abandoned them. They were judging His love and concern for them on the basis of what was happening around them. Consequently, some believers abandoned the faith.

To deal with those who were abandoning the faith, the writer of Hebrews reminded them of the foundation of their faith. He took the entire first three chapters of his letter to demonstrate for them the superiority of Christ over Abraham, Moses and even the angels. He summarized his argument with these words: "Seeing then that we have a

High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” Hebrews 4:14.

In other words, Jesus, having died and risen from the dead, went to live with the Father, so we have every reason to hang on to our faith. He has done enough to merit our faithfulness regardless of what happens.

The writer’s point is that the primary support for our faith is not what is happening now, but what happened two thousand years ago at Calvary and later at the tomb. Jesus has demonstrated His faithfulness to us in a way that far supersedes bailing us out of unpleasant circumstances. The fact that He would die on the cross for our sin settles the question of His love and concern. The fact that He could rise from the dead settles that question of His reliability and His right to call Himself Lord. The fact that He passed through the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father is overwhelming support for the reliability of His promise to return.

The question of whether or not God loves us and is concerned about us has nothing to do with the various circumstances surrounding each of us right now. That question was settled a long time ago. We never, regardless of our circumstances, ever have reason to doubt God’s love, care and concern.

The Bible tells us that our faith is grounded in our very understanding of God: “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” Hebrews 11:6. If we truly believe that our search will lead somewhere – that God will indeed grant us spiritual renewal –then we will be willing to actually seek God.

So, what do you think you can do to grow stronger in faith?

If our faith has not matured to that point yet, we can start by asking God for the faith we need. Learning about God through the Bible and seeing his provision for us reinforces the faith God has given us. Another thing, which was mentioned earlier, was to begin a list of God’s promises. Write them out in a journal and you can even categorize them, so that when you need to apply one to a particular situation you can find the category that applies.

When things are not going our way, it’s hard to look beyond the here and now; it’s hard to remember the goodness of the Lord; we forget the significance of the sacrifice made for us at Calvary. Consequently, our faith runs low; we begin to doubt. But as we learn to refocus on what happened at Calvary two thousand years ago, and reflect back on God’s promises that we are reviewing periodically, our faith will grow strong.

Comprehending the faithfulness of God is critical to growing stronger in your faith. How can we have a vital faith in someone we’re not sure is faithful? Proverbs 25:19 vividly describes the distressing results and disappointment of misplaced faith.

Read Proverbs 25:19: “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint” (NKJV).

The recipient of our faith often determines the measure of our faith. The Hebrew word for faith means “firmness, steadiness.” This word is used to describe the absolute dependability of God’s character. Because God is firm and steady, you can put your weight on Him. He will hold you securely and steadfastly.

God’s trustworthy character is acknowledged and praised all through the Scripture.

ASK: How does each of the following passages describe His faithfulness?

1. Deuteronomy 32:4
2. Psalm 36:5
3. Psalm 119:90
4. Hebrews

10:23

God demonstrates His faithfulness to us in many ways.

ASK: What specific aspects of our lives do the following verses address?

1. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
2. 1 Corinthians 10:13
3. Hebrews 13:5-6
4. 1 John 1:9

ASK: What is one specific way in which you have experienced the faithfulness of God in your life?

Many parents encourage their young children to jump from the edge of a swimming pool into their arms. It is truly a leap of faith for the children to go into unknown waters, trusting in their parents love and strength to catch them. Sometimes the assurances take a long time before the children are willing to take the first jump. But inevitably, after the initial leap, there are squeals of delight over repeated jumps along with pleas to do it again and again.

In a similar way, our Father stands with open arms and asks us to trust in His faithfulness to hold us and keep us from “going under.” Truly, He is steady, and He firmly grasps us as we reach out to Him. We can rest our whole weight upon Him, confident that He will never forsake us.

Who else can we trust so implicitly? Who else extends unconditional love and faithfulness? Who else offers the surety of unfailing love, which is new every morning? Who else call us to an abandoned trust with the assurance that we will never be abandoned? He alone is worthy to hear, “Great is Your faithfulness!”

Strengthening Your Faith

Choose a Scripture from one of the ones we have discussed that particularly assures you of God’s faithfulness. Meditate upon it and write it down, wither in your own words or by personalizing it with your name and personal pronouns. You might feel prompted to write the verse as special word from the Lord just to you. Throughout this week, pray over your verse to help strengthen your faith.

READ: To help you get started, here is an example created from Hebrews 13:5-6:

I, as your Father; want you to be content with what you have.

In fact, what you have is Me! And, contrary to material things.

I will always be with you. I will never abandon you.

Put your faith in Me. Don’t be afraid of anyone, because

I am your helper and faithful Father.

ENCOUNTERING DOUBT

The desperate father of a son possessed by an evil spirit begged Jesus to do something if He could. “What do you mean ‘**IF** I can?’” Jesus replied. “Anything is possible if a person believes.” Then the father answered honestly by pleading, “I do believe, but help me not to doubt.” On another occasion the disciples said to the Lord, “We need more faith; tell us how to get it.” (Luke 17:5 NLT). Uncertainty in our faith is an issue to recognize and address, not to ignore. To help us in times of doubt, we have two excellent prayers recorded in Scripture from Jesus’ encounters with the grieving father and the disciples - “Help me” and “Teach me.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE SPIRIT- FILLED LIFE

If someone mentioned *The Spirit-filled life* you may tell them that you don’t know what they are talking about. Many people don’t know much about the Holy Spirit, and they know less about how He works in the life of every Christian. However, if you are a genuine Christian, you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, whether you acknowledge Him or not.

The Spirit-filled life is the way a Christian can experience all that God has for a person to be, say and do. It is life to the fullest, the true abundant life that Jesus promised. The Spirit-filled life is not based on emotions, although you are likely to feel various emotions as the Spirit works in you and through you to produce the character of Christ Jesus and to replicate the ministry of Christ Jesus in your life and the world.

The Spirit-filled life is also not something that a person can study from afar. The Spirit-filled life is experienced. It is lived out by real people in real life facing real, and sometimes difficult, circumstances and situation. It is not something that you do, but something that you are because of who is living and working inside you. God desires for each of His children to live a Spirit-filled life, and He expects you to be led by the Spirit on a daily basis.

Many Christians are content to live an adequate Christian life. They believe that if they go to church, read their Bible occasionally, and say their prayers once in a while, they are all right with God. Occasionally, they volunteer to serve others in a particular way—perhaps as an usher or a member of a church committee---and they consider that ministry above the norm. But God doesn't call you or anyone to just an adequate Christian life. He desires to have a daily walking-and-talking relationship with you in which you experience His presence, trust Him for wisdom, courage and strength, and rely on Him for results. The Lord desires to live within you. He desires to communicate to you and through you. He desires to live out His life through your expression of it - a perfect blending of His perfection and your unique talents, traits and personality.

Make a decision today to choose the Spirit-filled life. That's within your prerogative and will to do. God will not force Himself on you or force Himself to operate within you. He works by invitation only. He won't overstep the boundaries of your will.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

ASK: If someone asked you, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" what would you tell them?

The Holy Spirit is a person not an "it." Many people tend to think of the Holy Spirit as a force, a power, an event, an experience or a manifestation. When you begin to see the Holy Spirit as a person - not as a power or an experience - you have a much different perspective on receiving or getting the Holy Spirit. So where do people get the false understanding of the Holy Spirit as an "it"? It may come from Acts 2 where we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the first Christians.

READ: Acts 2:1-4

People tend to confuse the sights and sounds present at the Holy Spirit's arrival with the Holy Spirit Himself. They read of a rushing wind-like sound from heaven. They read of a mass of fire that seems to divide into tongues that touch each person. They read of the people speaking in languages they didn't learn with their minds. And they assume that the sound, the fire and the unknown tongues are the Holy Spirit.

These are manifestations of the Spirit's coming to the church the day of Pentecost shortly after Jesus' ascension. They are *not* the Holy Spirit Himself. The Holy Spirit is infinitely more than any single manifestation of His presence.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON

What makes a person a person – as opposed to any of God's other creatures? The three foremost qualities of personhood are:

1. *Knowledge* – an ability to know, understand, recognize and have meaning
2. *Will* – an ability to make choices and decisions on the basis of what one chooses to do, not as an instinctual response to external stimuli
3. *Emotion* – an ability to feel, both to have and express feelings and to be aware of them.

Let's take a look at the Scriptures that reveal these qualities associated with the Holy Spirit.

READ: 1Cor. 2:10-11 regarding the *knowing* ability of the Holy Spirit

“But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God’s secrets. No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit.” (NLT - New Living Translation)

“God’s secrets” refers to God’s unfathomable nature and his wonderful plan - Jesus’ death and resurrection - and to the promise of salvation, revealed only to those who believe that what God says is true. Those who believe in Christ’s death and resurrection and put their faith in him will know all they need to know to be saved. This knowledge, however, can’t be grasped by even the wisest people unless they accept God’s message, the Gospel and are therefore indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

READ: 1Cor. 12:11 about the *will* of the Holy Spirit.

“It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distribute these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” (NLT)

No matter what gift(s) a person has, each gift is given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit decides which gifts each one of us should have. We are responsible to use and sharpen our gifts but we can take no credit for what God has freely given us.

READ: Ephesians 4:30 about the *emotions* of the Holy Spirit.

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (NIV)

We can’t grieve somebody that doesn’t love us. Because the Holy Spirit has an emotional capacity, we can grieve Him by the way we live - unwholesome language, bitterness improper use of anger and bad attitudes towards others. Yes, the Holy Spirit has emotions.

Let’s take a look at some other references to the Holy Spirit.

READ: John 14:16-17

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor (or Comforter) who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.” (NLT)

ASK: What does this verse tell us about the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: The Holy Spirit will be with us forever, (will never leave us).

The word Counselor combines the ideas of comfort and counsel. The Holy Spirit is a powerful person on our side, working for us. The Holy Spirit has been active among people from the beginning of time, but after Pentecost (Acts 2) he came to live in all believers. Many people are unaware of the Holy Spirit’s activities, but to those who hear Christ’s words and understand the Spirit’s power, the Spirit gives a whole new way to look at life.

READ: John 14:26

“But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative - and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit - he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.” (NLT)

ASK: What does the Holy Spirit do for us?

ANSWER: He teaches us and he reminds us of Jesus’ words.

Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember what he had been teaching them. This promise ensures the validity of the New Testament. The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life. And teachings and the Holy Spirit helped them to remember without taking away their individual perspectives. The Holy Spirit can help

us in the same way. As we study the Bible, we can trust him to plant truth in our mind, convince us of God's will and remind us when we stray from it.

READ: John 16:8

“And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.” (NLT)

ASK: What are three important tasks of the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: He convicts us of sin, shows us God's righteousness and announces God's judgment on evil.

ASK: Who did we say the Holy Spirit is?

ANSWER: The Holy Spirit is a person and we have just looked at several scriptures that referenced the Holy Spirit, with the characteristics of a person.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PART OF THE TRINITY

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the triune Godhead or the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He is inseparable from the Father and the Son; He is of one nature, character and identity with them. At the same time, He is a unique person; He has a specific identity and function. The Holy Spirit is present anytime the Father and the Son are present, and they in turn, are present anytime the Holy Spirit is present.

The Holy Spirit was present at creation: **READ:** Gen. 1:2

“The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.” (NLT)

And He was vital in the creation of humankind: **READ:** Gen. 1:26-27

“Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life - the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky and all the livestock, wild animals and small animals. So God created people in his own image, God patterned them after Himself, male and female he created them.’” (NLT)

Note the word **our** in verse 26. We have been created in the full image of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be created in God's image?

To be created in God's image means that He has given us His qualities of personhood: we have an ability to know things and remember them, we have an ability to feel emotions and to respond to life with a full range of feelings, and we have an ability to make choices and decisions, to solve problems, to have “dominion” or authority over creation. We also have God's ability to help, to teach, to testify, to call to remembrance and to give convincing, convicting arguments. God has created us with the full capacity to be His children and to invite Him into our lives.

God obviously did not create us exactly like himself because God has no physical body. Instead, we are reflections of God's glory. We will never be totally like God because he is our supreme Creator. But we do have the ability to reflect his character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness and faithfulness.

Knowing that we are made in God's image and thus share many of his characteristics provides a solid basis for self-worth. Human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness or public acclaim. Instead it is based on being made in God's image. Because we bear God's image, we can feel positive about ourselves. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities he has given us. Knowing that you are a person of worth helps you love God, know him personally and make a valuable contribution to those around you.

God made both man and woman in his image. Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. As part of our creation, God breathed Himself into us. He imparted the capacity for His very nature to us.

We have the specific ability to know God, to sense God at work in us and to respond to God. He made us with the capacity to be His children and to invite Him into our lives.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God:

- The Holy Spirit of God Almighty
- The Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus - the same Spirit who indwelt Christ
- The Holy Spirit who indwells us today

All are one and the same Holy Spirit. His role in the Trinity is to fill, to energize, to empower, to cause to act, to compel behavior, to produce qualities of character, to work in and through God's creation.

He is not the Creator, but there was and is no creation without Him. He is not the Father, but there is no understanding of our need for relationship or confirmation of our relationship with the Father without Him. He is not God almighty, but there is no expression of or conviction about God's will apart from Him.

He is not the Son, but there are no awareness of sin and no coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior apart from Him. He is not Jesus, but Jesus did not do anything apart from the Holy Spirit's empowerment. **The Holy Spirit is inseparable from Christ Jesus and from God the Father.**

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE PROMISE OF GOD TO THE BELIEVER

The Holy Spirit has a unique relationship with believers. Let's take a look at a couple of scriptures that support that fact.

READ: Ephesians 1:13-14

"And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.

The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal that we belong to him and his deposit guaranteeing that he will do what he has promised. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment, a deposit, a validating signature on the contract. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith, proves that we are God's children, and secures eternal life for us. His power works in us to transform us now, and what we experience now is a taste of the total change we will experience in eternity.

READ: Romans 8:9-11

"But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all). Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by the same Spirit living within you." (NLT)

Have you ever wondered whether or not you really are a Christian?

A Christian is anyone who has the Spirit of God living in him or her. If you have sincerely trusted Christ for your salvation and acknowledged him as Lord, then the Holy Spirit has come into your life, and you are a Christian. You won't know that the Holy Spirit has come if you are waiting for a certain feeling; you will know he has come because Jesus promised he would.

The Holy Spirit is God's promise or guarantee of eternal life for those who believe in him. The Spirit is in us now by faith, and by faith we are certain to live with Christ forever.

The verses we just read plainly say that if you have Christ, you have the Holy Spirit of God. He is the seal of your commitment to Jesus Christ. In other words, when you accept Jesus Christ as the substitutionary, sacrificial, all-

sufficient atonement for your sins - as an act of your confession and will - the Holy Spirit automatically seals that decision before the Father in heaven. You belong to God forever. There is no unsealing of what the Holy Spirit seals, not by your actions or by the actions of any other person.

Conversely, if you do not have the Holy Spirit resident in you, as God's seal and guarantee on your life, you have not received Jesus Christ as your Savior.

ASK: Can you be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER: No - you received the Holy Spirit *as part of your receiving Christ*. You can't receive just one part of the Trinity. When you became a Christian - when you confessed your sins and repented of them, when you asked for and received God's forgiveness - you received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God came and indwelt your spirit and claimed you as His own. He has put you into full relationship with the Father and the Son, because He is inseparable from the Father and the Son. He now seeks to live his life - the same quality of life that Jesus Christ lived - in you and through you.

The Holy Spirit is God's promise to you as His child today. If you are a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit resident in you.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER OF THE BELIEVER

Why did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit to those who followed Him?

READ: Ephesians 1:17-18

"He has brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him and to us Jews who were near. Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us." (NLT)

Jesus knew that believers would need to have the Holy Spirit in them if they were to be faithful, steadfast and effective in their walk with God. The Holy Spirit enables people to live the Christian life.

READ: Ephesians 3:20

"Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope." (NLT)

Paul wanted believers to know that they had full resurrection power in their lives. They had the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead. Certainly, such power was able to raise them from their sins. Not only that, but the power is above all other principality, power, dominion or might. Nothing is more powerful than the Holy Spirit resident in you.

SUMMARY: WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

Most of us have no difficulty admitting that we need Jesus Christ in our lives. We recognize that we are sinful creatures by nature and that we must have the sacrificial, substitutionary, all-sufficient atonement made possible by Christ Jesus and His shed blood on the cross of Calvary if we are to experience forgiveness for our sins and to receive eternal life. Yes, we need Christ.

Most of us have no difficulty admitting that we need God the Father in our lives. We recognize Him as our all-powerful, ever-present, everlasting, sovereign and holy creator. Jesus Christ came into the world so that we might be restored to a full and intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, who in His infinite love desires to bless us as His children. Yes, we need God the Father. In many ways, we need Christ Jesus in our lives because of our need for a relationship with the Father.

But do we need the Holy Spirit?

We need the Holy Spirit in our lives just as much as we need a relationship with our heavenly Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is part of the holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You need Him just as much as you need the Father and Son. In fact, the Holy Spirit makes possible your ongoing Christian life and enables you both to experience Christ and to have a relationship with the Father. The Holy Spirit enables you to have a sense of victory in your Christian walk. You need Him at work in you and through you if you are to fulfill your earthly destiny in Christ and become the person that the Father created you to be.

A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Definition: The habit of participating in a local church on a regular basis.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

God wants His children to meet with other believers on a regular basis. He wants His people in church! One reason so many believers don't take this admonition seriously is that they don't know the reason behind it. How often have you heard this comment: "I can worship God at home. I don't need to go to church." Many believers are convinced that the primary reason we meet together is to worship. And understandably so. After all, we call it a worship service. If worship was the primary reason we are commanded to meet, those who claim they can worship at home would have a strong argument. After all, in some instances it is much easier to worship at home. But worship is not the sole reason we are commanded to meet together.

Certainly then, it must be so that we can be taught the Word. Not entirely. We can turn on our radios and televisions and hear good Bible teaching and preaching. On the surface it would seem that anything we can do at church, we can do just as well at home.

So why are we commanded to meet? Why go to church?

ANSWER: The writer of Hebrews says it is to safeguard against drifting.

We are surrounded by forces that work to blow us off course. Sheer individual commitment alone is not enough to keep us in line. There are times when we feel as if our faith makes no difference. We see no fruit in our lives, and we don't seem to be making any difference in anyone else's life either. During those times, we are tempted to pull up anchor and drift. After all, everybody else is - at least that's the way it appears.

And then we drag ourselves to church and discover that we are not alone. We hear others share how God came through for them when they were in a tight spot. Someone else shares about the pain experienced when he left the faith. A new believer tells her story and rejoices in God's grace. And something begins to happen inside us. We are spurred on to faithfulness!

The accountability and encouragement found in church fellowship anchors us against the tides that work to sweep us away. We can develop a network of relationships with other believers that works to ensure we don't abandon our faith when the pressure is on to do so. To neglect the regular assembling with other Christians is to miss out on this essential element in the development of our faith.

In Hebrews 10:22, the writer said, "Let us draw near [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith." God desires a relationship with His children. By becoming active in a local church, you safeguard yourself against missing out on all that God has for you. Your participation in a local church protects your personal fellowship with God. When you drift away from the family of God, it is only a matter of time until you drift away from fellowship with God. Solomon said it this way:

"He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20).

SERVICE

Definition: An act of assistance or benefit.

Scripture: ***“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” Galatians 5:13-14.***

In Galatians 5:13, Paul declared that believers are called to freedom and are no longer handcuffed to the standard of acceptance that every other religion in the world had been founded upon, salvation by works. Because of Jesus’ death at Calvary, Paul made it clear that we have been set free from condemnation and that our sins are forgiven. However, he exhorted the Galatians not to use their freedom as a permission to do as they pleased. Rather, he wrote that the freedom should express itself in the form of service. Paul concluded the passage by admonishing the church that there is only one way to fulfill the law and that is through love, specifically, through loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

Therefore, you are to express your freedom through service and to fulfill the law by loving your neighbor. To serve is to love. Or put another way, if you love, service will be the logical and natural outcome. Service for any other reason is another form of legalism by which you strive for approval or acceptance.

Before we take a look at the right reason for service (love), let’s talk about the wrong reasons - and there are a few. Often service is done because there is a need, and on the surface, that appears to be perfectly logical. We automatically think of meeting a need when we think about service. However, that should never be the only criterion for service because tomorrow or next week or next month there will be another need, perhaps of greater importance. Then what will happen? How will priorities be determined? Certainly, it is commendable to want to serve and meet a need, but it should never be the primary reason to serve.

Service is often done by people who are consumed with guilt and feel a need to make up for past wrongs. This is frequently the case when a new Christian hasn’t grasped the reality of grace and still feels the need to do something to make up for the past. Others turn their backs on God for a time, and once back into the fellowship, they jump into serving others with great intensity. Service under these conditions is always wrong. It may look as if it’s the right thing to do, but it reinforces the notion that they can atone for things that happened in the past. In reality, that can’t be done.

ASK: Why is it that it can’t be done?

ANSWER: Jesus made up for everything at Calvary.

Sometimes service is done because of tradition or the fact that a person’s family has always “been part of this church.” Some families have been a part of a particular church since its organization, and as each generation takes its turn, the hand-me-down theory of service is evident. Grandmother was involved in something at the church. So was Mother. Now it’s my turn. It’s difficult to criticize someone who wants to serve when there are so many who are indifferent to the responsibility they have as believers however, service as a result of tradition is misguided.

One of the primary reasons people want to serve is to win God’s approval or acceptance. This is a dangerous motivation. Many people serve as a means of seeking God’s approval because they spend their entire lives having to perform to get the approval of a parent, spouse, or boss. We can do nothing to increase (or decrease) God’s approval and acceptance of us. He can’t approve of us more than He already does. He accepts us completely. To enter into service to get God’s approval - or for that matter anyone’s approval - is to continue to live in bondage to the “works” theology that “if I just do more, I will be accepted more, loved more, or approved of more!” What happens if that person is forced to give up the service he or she has been performing due to health reasons or time constraints? Fear of loss of approval (love, acceptance) will result. It’s a no-win situation.

Service under any of these circumstances may result in the gratitude of many, and it may truly benefit those who have been served. However, in some instance, it may result in more problems if the motivation for serving was wrong. Understanding the cause and effect of wrongly motivated acts of service, Paul instructed the Galatians to express their freedom through service and more specifically, through loving their neighbors.

The result (or outreach) of true freedom is to serve one another and not get caught up in the personal advantages of being a believer while ignoring the community. Because of what Christ did on the cross and the resulting freedom, there is a feeling of gratitude that creates a sense of obligation. That obligation is to love one's neighbor as oneself. When Paul was writing to the Galatians, he left no room for doubt that service must be an expression of love. The way the sentence is structured gives insight into Paul's thinking. He said love, then serve. ***Service is the outward expression of the love that motivates every believer who understands that freedom from works does not mean freedom from responsibility.***

Let's take a look at some of the other scriptures regarding service and some of the examples of it.

READ: Matthew 20:26-28

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

When Jesus came to earth, He came not grabbing but letting go. He emptied Himself of His kingly majesty, set aside His divine power, and stuffed into one ordinary human body so small a portion of His former might and majesty as to be unrecognizable by all but a few.

From first to last, Jesus' public ministry is the picture of a servant's determination to serve the wishes of another.

READ: John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." And so He did, going everywhere the Father sent Him, doing nothing but what the Father directed Him to do, and teaching only those things the Father told Him to say.

In His final hours on earth Jesus reinforced His own pattern of self-sacrifice, etching into the minds of His disciples a picture of the self-emptying descent He'd made and to which He called them. The guest of honor stood, stripped off His robe, garbed Himself as the lowest of household servants, and knelt to scrub off the manure and mud from the feet of His followers.

READ: John 13:14-16

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master

Far more than a call to the foot-washing business, this is a reenactment of heaven emptying itself for the sake of earth. In so doing, Jesus set an example for all for us who would count ourselves as His followers.

READ: Phil. 2:3-7

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant."

Jesus calls each of us to a whole new self-understanding. We are God's servants. Sons and daughters, yes, but servants nonetheless.

ASK: What is a servant?

ANSWER: Someone whose heart is intent upon, and whose will is bound to the will and wishes of another.

The master moves his finger in command, and the servant - while capable of ignoring or debating the merits of the directive - simply obeys. He does not waffle, hedge, debate and eventually acquiesce. He obeys. A true servant is one who has learned to subdue the defiant autonomy of self and to subject the will to the wishes of another.

The challenge, of course, is that when God plants His Spirit within us, He doesn't excise our will in the same operation. That internal free agent (our free will) remains, stubbornly persisting in its concern for self.

When you push the button to change channels with a remote, it doesn't have to decide whether or not to carry out your request. It has no mind of its own. It is a mere switching device. Human beings, however, are no mere robots. We have will, and it is precisely here that we feel the rub of the call to servanthood. God makes a request and we... think about it.

Sinners that we are, all of us – especially in the free and wealthy world of the United States – feel a sense of entitlement. Lurking in the back of our minds is a vague but powerful sense that we *deserve* to be tended to, to have our needs met, and we feel put out when we have to set aside our carefully cultivated needs and wants for the sake of another. We often forget that it is we who exist for the sake of God, not God who exists for us. It is God's prerogative to do with us whatever may be best to serve His kingdom purposes.

The only way a servant's act can ever be anything other than the teeth-gritting, self-concerned labor of the will is when it is motivated by love. Where have you fixed your eyes? On the servant? Or on the Master, whom you love with the whole of your life? The focus of your gaze will make all the difference in the world.

SIX QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE SERVANTS

Not all of us are natural servants, but all of us are called to follow the example of Christ as described in Luke 22:27. **(HAVE SOMEONE READ THE VERSE).** "I am among you as one who serves."

As you heard in some of the previous verses about Jesus' life on earth, we see that much of it was spent in doing kind things, relieving burdens, bringing happiness. And God has designed us - the body of Christ - to live similarly, benefiting from each other's gifts, ideas, friendship and help.

Let's take a look at six of the qualities that make Christians particularly effective at responding to the needs of those around them.

- **The Friendly Servant** - Phil. 4:5

Translated it might read, "Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them." We can serve by being a friend, showing interest in others and what is going on in their lives.

- **The Prepared Servant** - 2 Kings 4:8-10

The Shunammite woman noticed that Elisha the prophet often passed by her house, so she began to watch for him and invite him in for meals. She was a generous woman and wanted to do more for the man of God. So she asked her husband, who was also generous, to build a little room onto their house so that the prophet could have a place to rest as well. The rest of the chapter describes how God blessed this woman through her readiness to serve. Do you have an extra room that could be made ready for service? In what unique-to-you way might you prepare yourself to be a servant?

- **The Humble Servant** - John 13:14-16

While Jesus has called some to serve in highly visible positions, such as teaching and preaching, He invites most of us to serve in simple, ordinary, often hidden ways, doing the thankless, tedious and sometimes unpleasant jobs that come with living in this world.

- **The Alert Servant** - I Cor. 10:24

Paul tells us to look out for each other's welfare. The alert servant is one who keeps his eyes open and his mind engaged. In a crisis, people often ask, "How can I help?" and then wait for someone else to come up with an idea.

This is a start, but we can be even more helpful if we can look at the situation, figure out the need ourselves, and meet it.

- **The Talented Servant** - 1 Peter 4:10-11

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll (author of Alice in Wonderland), wrote, “One of the deep secrets of life [is] that all that is really worth doing is what we do for others.” Lewis Carroll helped support his six unmarried sisters and other relatives, friends and strangers all his life. He wrote books and stories to instruct and amuse both children and adults; he tutored in math and biblical instruction and paid for the schooling of many children. Letter writing was one of his passions. He wrote more than 100,000 letters, most of them filled with games, poems, puzzles and sketches.

Serving through our gifts - both spiritual and natural - tends to energize us rather than exhaust us. Granted, it always will cost us something to serve, but God doesn't expect us to live constantly on the verge of emotional or physical depletion. Jesus said in John 4:32 that serving God was like food to Him. Lewis Carroll found many ways to put his gifts of teaching and writing into service for others. Ask God to give you ideas for putting your gifts and abilities to work for the good of others.

- **The Teachable Servant** - Luke 22:26 (NLT): ‘But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.’

A director of a school in Holland wondered how he could put that scripture into practice during his free hours. He had thought about it before and had tried a few things but decided to ask God, ‘How should it be different?’ and it seemed that God told him to ‘Ask them,’ meaning the teachers. So he did. And they came up with a list of really good ways that he could help them.

We, too can learn to serve better by asking questions. Questions like: ‘What would you like me to do?’ ‘How can I serve you better?’

As you try these ideas and others in your journey as a servant, bear in mind the following.

First, remember that we all have limitations as servants. No one person is called or equipped to do it all.

Second bear in mind as you serve: We cannot please everyone, so focus on pleasing God. A sure way to wear yourself out in serving others is to struggle to meet someone else's expectations. We need to ask, Why do I feel I must do this? Is God asking me, or do I feel pressure from someone else or from an unrealistic ideal? If we ask God for insight into these questions and follow His leading, our service will become an act of love and obedience rather than grudging or pressured obligation.

Above all, remember this: We can all serve well if we eagerly focus on pleasing our Savior, who will one day ask us to sit down and be served by Him.

LEARNING TO BE SERVED

In the Christian community, it's often considered spiritual, to refuse if someone offers to serve you. After all, didn't Jesus say that he came to serve and not to be served? Didn't He pick up the basin and towel and wash the disciples' feet? So if people attempt to serve you, isn't it particularly Christlike to refuse them instead?

There is profound spiritual truth here: We are people of the basin and towel, for the Son of God came to serve. But the gospels also portray Jesus as the Son of Man, the one who allowed others to serve Him. For three years Jesus lived as an itinerant preacher, depending on the goodness of others to clothe Him, feed Him and house Him (**Read Luke 8:1-3**).

Let's take a look at some other examples in the Scriptures.

John 4 - the woman at the well who gave Jesus a drink

Mark 14:32-42 - the band of friends Jesus asked to stay with Him and pray for Him

John 12:1-8 - the woman who anointed His body before His death

John 19:38 - the rich man who purchased a tomb for Jesus' burial

Jesus let others give to Him. Based on the gospels, our deep-seated aversion to being served may not be a mark of Christlikeness at all. It may indicate that we are becoming less Christlike, that is less spiritual.

Lurking behind our unwillingness to be served, we may discover not spiritual maturity, but pride and low self-worth. Pride holds its head up and proclaims, "I don't need your help. If I have problems, I will fix them myself. If I have needs, I will meet those needs by myself." The Christian version simply adds Jesus into the formula, as in, "You can't serve me because Jesus will meet my needs and fix my problems."

It is true that Christ alone can meet the deepest longings in our hearts. Sadly, pride often pollutes this simple truth. When pride creeps in, we hide our needs from others. Instead of saying, "I need you," we say, "I can't let you." Why, because by admitting my need for you, by allowing you to serve me, I might unmask my weakness, brokenness and spiritual poverty (see Matt. 5:3). Then the truth leaps forth: I don't have it all together; I have cracks and wounds in my heart; I need help. Pride can't tolerate this kind of exposure.

A sense of low self-worth hangs its head and whispers, "I don't deserve your help. Don't make a fuss for me. Don't go out of your way for me. I can't accept your compliments, gifts and service, because I'm not worth it." Low self-worth and pride, on the surface spiritual opposites, actually lead us to the same place: We can't let others serve us.

Most Christians might ask, "Is it really a big deal if I don't learn to let others serve me?"

Yes it is.

By refusing to be served, we cut ourselves off from the richness of Christian community. The Apostle Paul learned this early in his Christian life. Blind, hungry, broken and afraid, Paul waited until faithful Ananias arrived to lay hands on him, thus releasing him from bondage and commissioning him for service. But before Paul could serve, he had to let another Christian serve him (Acts 9:10-19).

Late in his life, Paul would passionately write, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor.12:21). Thus Christian community undercuts our pride and self-sufficiency. For Paul, true fellowship involves a deep mutuality of giving and receiving, serving and being served. By refusing to be served, we truncate such fellowship and create a fractured community. We become spiritual amputees - lonely, weak, and slowly dying.

We may think it's somehow unspiritual to need people. But consider this: When Ananias came to serve Paul, he solemnly declared, "I have been sent by the Lord Jesus." What if people offering to serve you have like Ananias, been sent by the Lord Jesus? What if, as Scripture states, so clearly, God wants to lavish us with His grace (Eph. 1:6), crown us with His tenderness (Psalm 103:4), and reveal His compassion (Isaiah 30:18), but He chooses to do so through the deed or words of another human being? Then, by resisting the gifts of others, we may be resisting the Lord Jesus Himself. By spurning the service of others, we may be spurning the grace of God. Put like this, our "little flaw" certainly is a big deal.

Lesson Five
~Christian Stewardship~

Stewardship of Time

Time is not manageable but one can manage oneself in time. Time is a totally inelastic quantity. It cannot be added to; it cannot be changed; it cannot be subtracted from; it cannot be stretched or shrunk; and it cannot be saved. The time we have to live is one of the things in life that we have no control over. It is a pure gift from God. We cannot earn time and we don't deserve time the time we have. It's God's gift to us and the Lord expects us to use it wisely. The best way to use the time Lord has given us is to be faithful to the Lord's word, will, and way. When we are faithful in our daily living, we are using the time the Lord has given us wisely. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays said "I have only just a minute, only sixty seconds in it, forced upon me, and I can't refuse it. Didn't seek it, didn't choose it but it's up to me to use it. I must suffer if I loose it; give account if I abuse it; just a little minute – but eternity in it."

Stewardship of Talents

God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), including the talents He gives us for service in His Kingdom. If we don't use the gifts God gives us, we will lose them. The parable of the talents in Mathew 25:14-30, illustrates this point well.

Romans 12:4-8 and I Corinthians 12:1-31 lifts the facts that the church is one body with many members. We note in these passages that not all members have the same gifts or talents. It is noted that for the church to live and thrive as the body of Christ, she needs the talents and gifts of all God's people to help the church function. Find out what the Lord wants you to do. Say like Samuel "speak Lord thy servant hears." Be available like Isaiah and say "here am I send me I'll go." Have a yielded spirit like Paul and say "Lord what will you have me to do." The Lord needs you.

Stewardship of Treasure

Ten Reasons Why We Tithe:

1. It is commanded by God (Malachi 3:8-12).
2. It is God's way to provide money for the ministries and local work of the church.
3. It is the only fair and equitable way to give. Each member gives 10%.
4. It stops the Body of Christ (The Church) from begging for money.
5. It provides the means for Christian Education. (II Timothy 2:15).
6. It gives us the means to help needy persons (Acts 2:44-45).
7. It honors God, makes us realize that all we have belongs to Him (Proverbs 3:9-10)
8. It promises those who tithe that God will provide and protect (Proverbs 3:10; Malachi 3:10).
9. Tithing supports Christian Evangelism (Mathew 28:18-20)
10. Tithing expresses thankfulness and gratitude for all the Lord has done (Psalms 116:12)

More Good Reasons for Tithing:

1. The law commands it (Leviticus 27:30, 32; Malachi 3:8).
2. Stewardship includes it (Mathew 23:23, I Corinthians 16:2).
3. Need Demands it (Romans 1:14-15, II Corinthians 8:14).
4. Love constraints it. Tithing is not only an acknowledgement of debt; it is an expression of love and gratitude. The believer has received much from God therefore he/she must give much back to Him (II Corinthians 8:5, Luke 7:47).
5. Results justify it. The results of tithing are both material and spiritual (Luke 16:11, Malachi 3:10).

Questions and Answers about Tithing:

1. Is there a difference between tithing and Christian Stewardship?
Yes. A tithe is what God requires His people to return to Him. Stewardship is using the remaining 90% in a way that is acceptable and pleasing to God.
2. When I give to the Church, is that my offering?
Not necessarily. An offering is something we give God above the tithe.
3. What if I have a problem determining my gross income? How should I figure out my tithe? Try this method. If God were going to give you a 10% bonus, what figure would you give Him to figure out the bonus? Then use that figure to compute your tithe.
4. Must the entire tithe go to the Church? What if I support other worthy causes?
The bible says “bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house.” (Malachi 3:10).
5. If I tithe, have I fulfilled my obligation? No. You still have some other obligations. You should tithe your time and talents. Your whole life should reflect God’s glory.

Objections to Tithing

Excerpts by Merrill D. Moore

1. Why give money away?

“It is my money, I earned it. Why should I give it away? The basic reason why men do not tithe is that they start out with the assumption, “What I make is mine.” But is it? Does one earn his income all by himself, without God’s help or without the help of other men? The Bible plainly declares “You are not your own” (I Cor: 6:9). The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1). The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts (Hag 2:8).

2. I am in debt.

“It is a shame for a man to give away his money while he owes other persons.” This objection reflects a basic spiritual inadequacy, a lack of the proper understanding of the bigness and importance of the cause we are in, and of our relation to God.

3. I cannot afford to Tithe.

“I earn so little, it takes all I have to live, and would be impossible to give a tenth” one says. But has he tried it to see? Whose testimony about the value of a product is competent? The man who has tried it and found it satisfactory or the one who has never tried it? The ones who object to tithing are those who have never tried it. There is not a known case on record of anyone who has been poorer for tithing.

Every thither is enthusiastic. The uniform testimony is “I’d rather have nine-tenths with God than ten-tenths without Him. The blessings have been so many that I would not stop tithing for any amount of money. I cannot afford not to tithe.” The Lord did not institute the tithe for His benefit but for ours. He does not deny the blessings of stewardship to those who have little money. Nor does He want His kingdom supported by the rich or poor alone, but by all His children, whether rich or poor. Fundamentally, tithing has nothing to do with either poverty or riches but with the relation of man to God. It is not little money but little love which stands in the way of tithing. You may be too poor to pay church dues, rallies, church assessments, etc.; but no one is too poor to tithe. You see if a thither doesn’t make anything, he doesn’t owe anything.

4. Where does the Bible teach Tithing?

From Genesis to Revelation. Read Genesis 29:20-22; Leviticus 27:30-34; Malachi 3:8-10. Tithing was strictly practiced by the Pharisees and other Jews in New Testament times. It was necessary for Jesus to rebuke hypocrisy then but it was not necessary for Him to further emphasize tithing, which they were doing already. “Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). To the Pharisees He said, “These ye ought to have done and not leave the other undone” (Luke 11:42; Matt. 23:23). He went on record not only as endorsing obedience to the law of the tithe but as considering it a duty. Jesus had more to say about the right use of possessions than any other single subject. There are 1,565 references to giving in the Bible.

At least twenty of thirty Jesus’ major parables and one verse out of seven in four gospels relate to man’s attitude to property.

5. Let those who have a great deal of money Tithe. It is too much for the poor to give and it is not enough for the rich.

Are we to deny the blessings of Christian stewardship to those who have little money? Did Jesus not commend Mary of Bethany (John 12: 7-8) and the poor widow (Mark 12:42-44), who gave what men thought to be far beyond their abilities. God does not want His kingdom supported by the rich alone or the poor alone, but by all His children, rich and poor alike. And to them He promises His blessings for faithfulness. The tithe is an appeal to faith “Prove me now ...” and “seek ye first the kingdom” When things are hard, what shall one do? Do what God says and trust Him. Fundamentally, tithing has nothing to do with either poverty or riches but with the relation of man to God.

6. Salvation is free. We are not under the law but under grace.

If our gratitude to God under grace is less than that of the Jew under the law, something is wrong within us. Grace has not repealed the Ten Commandments but it has given more strength to keep them and provide more compelling motives for doing so. The Christian under grace has larger obligations and privileges than the Jew under law.

7. I believe in Tithing – and more but there are so many calls for charity and good causes. I cannot give my entire Tithe through the church.

“Bring ye all the tithes (i.e. the whole tithe) into the storehouse ... saith the Lord” (Malachi 3:10). “The tithe ... is holy unto the Lord... the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30, 32). The Lord’s tithe is not for secular uses. In the Old Testament, the charity tithe for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow was brought in addition to the regular tithe (See Deut. 14:28-29)

8. I have a good excuse.

So have others thought. But Jesus has not agreed that excuses for not doing what God says are so good. Jesus indicated that the ones who “Begin to make excuses” by their own action prevented themselves from tasting the supper (Luke 14:18, 24). A farmer asked his neighbor, “May I borrow your ax?” “No,” was the reply. “I have to go to town tomorrow.” Someone later asked, “What does your going to town have to do with lending your ax?” Nothing, but when one does not want to do a thing, one excuse is as good as another.” Without offering an excuse, let us not delay “bring...all the tithes into the storehouse...” and prove the Lord, if He will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for us, as He has for others, blessings so great that we will not be able to receive them.

Will you not do so...now?

Lesson 6
~ Finding Your Place in Big Bethel~

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

Before you take this inventory (at your leisure), please consider for imperatives: (1) Pray sincerely for God's guidance. God wants you to know and use your gifts. (2) Do not relate these to your profession or occupation. (3) Do not consider how you relate to your family or what you do for your family. (4) Make every effort to rank all items in relationship to what you have done and experienced within the body of Christ, the Church.

If you have no previous experience as a Christian or church member, consider this statement about each item: If I have the opportunity, time, and resources, this describes my inclination. (Then list one of the numbers described below.)

Rank (assign a value to) each of the following statements according to how it describes your experience or strong inclination – not how to make you look good: ***Much (3), Some (2), Little (1), or None (0).*** Write the number of the value in the blank to the left of the statement.

(3) <i>MUCH</i>	(2) <i>SOME</i>	(1) <i>LITTLE</i>	(0) <i>NOT AT ALL</i>
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- | | | |
|-------|-----|---|
| _____ | 1. | I have a desire to speak direct messages from God that edify, exhort or comfort others. |
| _____ | 2. | I have enjoyed relating to a certain group of people over a long period of time, sharing personality in their successes and their failures. |
| _____ | 3. | People have told me that I have helped them learn biblical truth in a meaningful way. |
| _____ | 4. | I have applied spiritual truth effectively to situations in my own life. |
| _____ | 5. | Others have told me I have helped them distinguish key and important facts of Scripture. |
| _____ | 6. | I have verbally encouraged the wavering, the troubled or the discouraged. |
| _____ | 7. | Others in the church have noted that I was able to see through phoniness before it was evident to other people. |
| _____ | 8. | I find I manage money well in order to give liberally to the Lord's work. |
| _____ | 9. | I have assisted Christian leaders to relieve them from their essential job. |
| _____ | 10. | I have a desire to work with those who have physical or mental problems, to alleviate their suffering. |
| _____ | 11. | I feel comfortable relating to ethnic and minorities, and they seem to accept me. |
| _____ | 12. | I have led others to a decision for salvation through faith in Christ. |
| _____ | 13. | My home is always open to people passing through who need a place to stay. |
| _____ | 14. | When in a group, I am the one others often look to for vision and direction. |
| _____ | 15. | When I speak, people seem to listen and agree. |
| _____ | 16. | When in a group that is lacking organization, I tend to step in to fill the gap. |

- _____ 17. Others can point to specific instances where my prayers have resulted in visible miracles.
- _____ 18. In the name of the Lord, I have been used in curing diseases instantaneously.
- _____ 19. I have spoken in tongues.
- _____ 20. Sometimes when a person speaks in tongues, I get an idea about what God is saying.
- _____ 21. I could live more comfortably, but I choose not to in order to live with the poor.
- _____ 22. I am single and enjoy it.
- _____ 23. I spend at least an hour a day I prayer.
- _____ 24. I have spoken to evil spirits and they have obeyed me.
- _____ 25. I enjoy being called upon to do special jobs around the church.
- _____ 26. Through God I have revealed specific things that will happen in the future.
- _____ 27. I have enjoyed assuming the responsibility for the spiritual well-being of a particular group of Christians.
- _____ 28. I feel I can explain the New Testament teaching about the health and ministry of the Body of Christ in a relevant way.
- _____ 29. I can intuitively arrive at solutions to fairly complicated problems.
- _____ 30. I have had insights of spiritual truth that others have said helped bring them closer to God.
- _____ 31. I have effectively motivated people to get involved in ministry when it is needed.
- _____ 32. I can “see” the Spirit of God resting on certain people from time to time.
- _____ 33. My giving records show that I give considerably more than 10 percent of my income to the Lord’s work.
- _____ 34. Other people have told me that I have helped them become more effective in their ministries.
- _____ 35. I have cared for others when they have had material or physical needs.
- _____ 36. I feel I could learn another language well in order to minister to those in a different culture.
- _____ 37. I have shared joyfully how Christ has brought me to Himself in a way that is meaningful to non-believers.
- _____ 38. I enjoy taking charge of church suppers or social events.
- _____ 39. I have believed God for the impossible and seen it happen in a tangible way.
- _____ 40. Other Christians have followed my leadership because they believed in me.
- _____ 41. I enjoy handling the details of organizing ideas, people, resources and time for more effective ministry.
- _____ 42. God has used me personally to perform supernatural signs and wonders.
- _____ 43. I enjoy praying for sick people because I know that many of them will be healed as a result.
- _____ 44. I have spoken an immediate message of God to His people in a language I have never learned.
- _____ 45. I have interpreted tongues with the result that the Body of Christ was edified, exhorted or comforted.
- _____ 46. Living a simple lifestyle is an exciting challenge for me.
- _____ 47. Other people have noted that I feel more indifferent about not being married than most.

- _____ 48. When I hear a prayer request, I pray for that need for several days a least.
- _____ 49. I have actually heard a demon speak in a loud voice.
- _____ 50. I don't have many special skills, but I do what needs to be done around the church.
- _____ 51. People have told me that I have communicated timely and urgent messages that must have other directly from the Lord.
- _____ 52. I feel unafraid of giving spiritual guidance and direction in a group of Christians.
- _____ 53. I can devote considerable time to learning new biblical truths in order to communicate them to others.
- _____ 54. When a person has a problem I can frequently guide them to the best Biblical solution.
- _____ 55. Through study or experience I have discerned major strategies or techniques God seems to use in furthering His kingdom.
- _____ 56. People have come to me in their afflictions or suffering, and told me that they have been helped, relieved and healed.
- _____ 57. I can tell with a fairly high degree of assurance when a person is afflicted by an evil spirit.
- _____ 58. When I am moved by an appeal to give to God's work, I usually can find the money I need to do it.
- _____ 59. I have enjoyed doing routine tasks that led to more effective ministry by others.
- _____ 60. I enjoy visiting in hospitals and/or retirement homes, and feel I do well in such a ministry.
- _____ 61. People of a different race or culture have been attracted to me, and we have related well.
- _____ 62. Non-Christians have noted that they feel comfortable when they are around me, and that I have a positive effect on them toward developing a faith in Christ.
- _____ 63. When people come to my/our home, they indicate that the "feel at home" with me/us.
- _____ 64. Other people have told me that I had faith to accomplish what seemed impossible to them.
- _____ 65. When I set goals, others seem to accept them readily.
- _____ 66. I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.
- _____ 67. God regularly seems to do impossible things through my life.
- _____ 68. Others have told me that God healed them of an emotional problem when I ministered to them.
- _____ 69. I can speak to God in a language I have never learned.
- _____ 70. I have prayed that I may interpret if someone begins speaking in tongues.
- _____ 71. I am not poor, but I can identify with poor people.
- _____ 72. I am glad I have more time to serve the Lord because I am single.
- _____ 73. Intercessory prayer is one of my favorite ways of spending time.
- _____ 74. Others call on me when they suspect that someone is demonized.
- _____ 75. Others have mentioned that I seem to enjoy routine tasks and do well at them.
- _____ 76. I sometimes have a strong sense of what God wants to say to people in response to a particular situation.

- _____ 77. I have helped fellow believers by guiding them to relevant portions of the Bible and praying with them.
- _____ 78. I feel I can communicate biblical truths to others and see resulting changes in knowledge, attitudes, values or conduct.
- _____ 79. Some people indicate that I have perceived and applied biblical truth to the specific needs of fellow believers.
- _____ 80. I study and read quite a bit in order to learn new biblical truths.
- _____ 81. I have a desire to effectively counsel the perplexed, the guilty or the addicted.
- _____ 82. I can recognize whether a person's teaching is from God, from Satan, or of human origin.
- _____ 83. I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to Him sacrificially and consistently.
- _____ 84. When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful.
- _____ 85. People call on me to help those who are less fortunate.
- _____ 86. I would be willing to leave comfortable surroundings if it would enable me to share Christ with more people.
- _____ 87. I get frustrated when others don't seem to share their faith with unbelievers as much as I do.
- _____ 88. Others have mentioned to me that I am a very hospitable person.
- _____ 89. There have been times when I have felt sure I know God's specific will for the future growth of His work, even when others have not been so sure.
- _____ 90. When I join a group, others seem to back off and expect me to take the leadership.
- _____ 91. I am able to give directions to others without using persuasion to get them to accomplish a task.
- _____ 92. People have told me that I was God's instrument which brought supernatural change in lives or circumstances.
- _____ 93. I have prayed for others and physical healing has actually occurred.
- _____ 94. When I give a public message in tongues, I expect it to be interpreted.
- _____ 95. I have interpreted tongues in a way that seemed to bless others.
- _____ 96. Others tell me I sacrifice much materially in order to minister.
- _____ 97. I am single and have little difficulty controlling my sexual desires.
- _____ 98. Others have told me that my prayers for them have been answered in tangible ways.
- _____ 99. Other people have been instantly delivered from demonic oppression when I have prayed.
- _____ 100. I prefer being active and doing something rather than just sitting around talking or reading or listening to a speaker.
- _____ 101. I sometimes feel that I know exactly what God wants to do in ministry at a specific point in times.
- _____ 102. People have told me that I have helped them be restored to the Christian community.
- _____ 103. Studying the Bible and sharing my insights with others is very satisfying for me.

- _____ 104. I have felt an unusual presence of God and personal confidence when important decisions needed to be made.
- _____ 105. I have the ability to discover new truths for myself through reading or observing situations firsthand.
- _____ 106. I have urged others to seek a biblical solution to their affliction of suffering.
- _____ 107. I can tell whether a person speaking in tongues is genuine.
- _____ 108. I have been willing to maintain a lower standard of living in order to benefit God's work.
- _____ 109. When I serve the Lord, I really don't care who get the credit.
- _____ 110. I would enjoy spending time with a lonely, shut-in person or someone in prison.
- _____ 111. More than most, I have had a strong desire to see peoples of other countries won to the Lord.
- _____ 112. I am attracted to non-believers because of my desire to win them to Christ.
- _____ 113. I have desired to make my home available to those in the Lord's service whenever needed.
- _____ 114. Others have told me that I am a person of unusual vision, and I agree.
- _____ 115. When I am in charge, things seem to run smoothly.
- _____ 116. I have enjoyed bearing the responsibility for the success of a particular task within my church.
- _____ 117. In the name of the Lord, I have been able to recover sight to the blind.
- _____ 118. When I pray for the sick, either I or they feel sensations of tingling of warmth.
- _____ 119. When I speak in tongues, I believe it is edifying to the Lord's body.
- _____ 120. I have interpreted tongues in such a way that the message appeared to be directly from God.
- _____ 121. Poor people accept me because I choose to live on their level.
- _____ 122. I readily identify with Paul's desire for others to be single as he was.
- _____ 123. When I pray, God frequently speaks to me, and I recognize His voice.
- _____ 124. I cast out demons in Jesus' name.
- _____ 125. I respond cheerfully when asked to do a job, even if it seems menial.

For your convenience, you may gently tear out this sheet.

How to Score Your Inventory

The numbers in the chart on this page refer to the numbered inventory items you just ranked (pages 3-7). Look back at the inventory to see the value you assigned to each question, and pencil in that value (3, 2, 1, or 0) next to the number of that question in each box. After listing the 160 values, add your total horizontally for each row in the chart. **(Do not include the printed numbers).** Put the sum on the line in the Total column. The sum ranges from 0 to 15.

The total for each row indicates the extent to which you may be gifted or inclined to operate the gift named in the first column of the row. Look to see which gifts have the highest totals. If you recorded a high total for the gift of evangelism, for example, you might pray for ways God can best help you operate that gift.

The Inventory Scoring Chart

(3) MUCH (2) SOME (1) LITTLE (0) NOT AT ALL

	VALUE	OF	ANSWER	TOTAL	GIFTS (see pp. 11-13)
1	26	51	76	101	1) Prophecy
2	27	52	77	102	2) Pastor
3	28	53	78	103	3) Teaching
4	29	54	79	104	4) Wisdom
5	30	55	80	105	5) Knowledge
6	31	56	81	106	6) Exhortation
7	32	57	82	107	7) Discerning of Spirits
8	33	58	83	108	8) Giving
9	34	59	84	109	9) Helps
10	35	60	85	110	10) Mercy
11	36	61	86	111	11) Missionary
12	37	62	87	112	12) Evangelist
13	38	63	88	113	13) Hospitality
14	39	64	89	114	14) Faith
15	40	65	90	115	15) Leadership
16	41	66	91	116	16) Administration
17	42	67	92	117	17) Miracles
18	43	68	93	118	18) Healing
19	44	69	94	119	19) Tongues
20	45	70	95	120	20) Interpretation
21	46	71	96	121	21) Voluntary Poverty
22	47	72	97	122	22) Celibacy
23	48	73	98	123	23) Intercession
24	49	74	99	124	24) Exorcism
25	50	75	100	125	25) Service

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Each believer in the body of Christ Jesus has been given gifts to do ministry according to God's will. At Big Bethel, a critical part of your Christian growth is your involvement in ministry, as well as you affirming and using the gifts that God has given you. The following section gives a brief definition of each gift with Scripture references. This is intended to provide you with clarification as to your particular gifts, as well as prompt you to get busy with your gifts.

1. **Prophecy/Prophecy** – These are both interrelated and essentially the same. Prophecy can be defined as human utterance inspired by a divine or transcendent source. Its expressions may be through words, signs, or actions, but all prophecy requires evaluation and eventual recognition by the community of faith, to authenticate the message. If it is about a futuristic event, the way to know if true, is through the discernment of the Holy Spirit in the Community of believers. If it is through preaching, you as the community have the responsibility to check it out, and ask God; check the scriptures, to see if the preached word is authentic.

Acts 2:14-36; 11:28; 15:32; 21:10ff;	Romans 12:6; 21:9-11
1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:3, 6, 24ff.	Ephesians 3:1-6; 4:11-14

2. **Pastor** – The ability to carry varieties of spiritual, physical, and social concerns for groups and individuals and to persist over long periods of time and circumstances with effective caring.

Matthew 18:12-14	Ephesians 4:11-14
John 10:1-30	1 Timothy 3:1-7
Acts 20:28	1 Peter 5:2-4

3. **Teaching** – The ability to discern, analyze, and deliver biblical and other spiritual truths to help others to comprehend and accept the clear calling of God to live justly and righteously.

Acts 13:1; 18:24-28; 20:20-21	1 Timothy 2:7
1 Corinthians 12:28	James 3:1
Ephesians 4:11	

4. **Wisdom** – The ability to make concrete, practical, and specific applications of divine knowledge received directly from God, from one's spiritual gift of knowledge, or from another's shared gift or gifts.

Acts 6:3, 10; 7:10	Colossians 1:28; 3:16
1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 26-27;	2 Peter 3:15
3:18-19; 12:18	

5. **Knowledge** – The ability to ascertain and to understand the universal and timeless truths of God and to link them with the church in its mission through Christ for justice and righteousness in the world.

Act 5:1-11	2 Corinthians 11:6
Romans 11:33	Ephesians 3:19
1 Corinthians 12:8	Colossians 2:3

6. **Exhortation** – The ability to counsel, inspire, motivate, encourage, and strengthen others in and through their efforts to live out God's will and calling as Christians in pain or pleasure, want or plenty.

Acts 4:36; 11:19-26; 14:22	1 Timothy 4:13
Romans 12:8	Hebrews 10:25
1 Thessalonians 2:11	

7. **Discerning of Spirits** – The ability to differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong, and what is of God, human nature, or evil, and to use this knowledge for the protection and health of the body of Christ.

Matthew 7:6	2 Peter 2:1-3
Acts 5:1-11; 8:22-23	1 John 4:1-6
1 Corinthians 12:10	

8. **Giving** – The ability to manage one’s resources of income, time, energy, and skills to exceed what is considered to be a reasonable standard for giving to the church, an amount that brings joy and power to do more for further service.

I Kings 17:8-16	Acts 4:32-37
Mark 12:41-44	Romans 12:8
Luke 8:1-3; 21:1-4	2 Corinthians 8:1-7
9. **Helps** – The ability and eagerness to aid or assist others I need to such an extent that the helper receives as much as the person helped.

Psalm 21:1	Acts 9:36
Mark 15:41	Romans 16:1-2
Luke 8:2-3	I Corinthians 12:28
10. **Mercy** – The ability to identify with and actually feel the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional pain of distress of others and to feel the absolute necessity to do something to relieve them.

Matthew 20:29-34	Acts 11:28-30; 16:33-34
Mark 9:41	Romans 12:8
Luke 10:33-35	
11. **Missionary** – The ability to go beyond race, culture, subculture, creeds, nationality, or life-style to serve the basic human and spiritual needs of certain neglected peoples.

Matthew 25:37-40; 28:19-20	Romans 10:14-17
Acts 8:4-8; 13:2-12	
12. **Evangelism** – The ability to give such a persuasive witness to the love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ that it moves others to accept that love and to become Disciples of Christ.

Acts 8:5-6; 21:8	I Timothy 2:7
I Corinthians 3:5-6	2 Timothy 4:5
Ephesians 4:11	
13. **Hospitality** – The ability to extend caring and sharing to persons (strangers) beyond one’s intimate circle to demonstrate and establish the unlimited and inclusive companionship of Christ.

Matthew 25:35	I Timothy 3:2
Acts 16:14-16	Titus 1:8
Romans 12:13	I Peter 4:9-10
14. **Faith** – The ability to extend one’s basic or saving faith to serve corporate and individual needs specifically related to the life and ministry of the church, the body of Christ.

Matthew 17:19-21	Romans 4:18-21
Mark 9:23	I Corinthians 12-9
Acts 11:22-24	Hebrews 11
15. **Leadership** – The ability to envision God’s will and purpose for the church and to demonstration compelling skills in capturing the imagination, energies, skills, and spiritual gifts of others to pursue and accomplish God’s will.

Luke 10:16	I Timothy 3:4; 5:17
Acts 7:10	Titus 3:8, 14
Romans 12:8	Hebrews 13:17
16. **Administration** – The ability to sort our resources and persons for effective church ministries and to organize and implement them into ministry projects until completion with eventful results.

Luke 14:28-30	Romans 12:8
Acts 6:1-7	I Corinthians 12:28
17. **Miracles** – The ability to do powerful works that transcend our perception of natural laws and means to free the church or individuals from conditions that restrict needed ministries.

Genesis 18:14	Acts 4:30; 5:1-10; 5:12; 13:11
Mark 9:38-40; 16:17-18	I Corinthians 2:4; 12:10, 28
Luke 1:37	

18. **Healing** – The ability to cure or to be cured of ill conditions that hinder effective ministries for Christ, the church, or individuals.
 Luke 5:17; 6:19; 9:2, 11, 42 I Corinthians 12:9, 28
 Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16 I Peter 2:24
19. **Tongues** – The ability to praise God with beneficial utterances not familiar as a known language, and with such joy-filled intimacy with Christ that faith is strengthen and ministries become effective.
 Acts 2:1-13; 10:44-46; 19:1-7 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 13:1; 14:4-5.22
 Romans 8:26-27 Ephesians 6:18
20. **Interpretation** – The ability to hear, comprehend, and translate spiritual messages given by others in wordless phrases or utterances unfamiliar as a known language or to decipher and translate spiritual messages from another who speaks in a known language but not recognized by the interpreter.
 Luke 24:27 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 27
 Acts 2:14-21
21. **Voluntary Poverty** – The ability to live a simple, conservative, and unencumbered life free of material responsibilities in order to devote large amounts of time, energy, and skills to essential ministries.
 Mark 1:18, 20; 10:21 1 Corinthians 13:3
 Acts 2:45; 4:34-35 2 Corinthians 8:9
22. **Celibacy/Singleness** – The ability to offer God and the church a life free from marriage, family responsibilities, and sexual frustrations to spend time and energies necessary for certain Christian ministries.
 Isaiah 56:3-5 I Corinthians 7:7, 27-28, 32-35
 Matthew 19:10-12; 22:27-30
23. **Intercession** – The ability to know when, and for whom or what to pray with effective results.
 Luke 22:41-44 Colossians 1:9-12; 4:12-13
 Acts 12:5, 12; 16:25-26 I Timothy 2:1; 4:5
 Romans 8:26-27 James 5:14-16, 17-18
24. **Exorcism** – The ability to use faith, prayers, spirit-music, or other spiritual gifts to liberate person from debilitating and hindering forces ad evil circumstances to free them to use their gifts effectively to serve the body of Christ and others through the church.
 I Samuel 16:14-23 Acts 5:16; 8:6-8; 16:16; 19:11-12
 Matthew 8:16-17; 12:43-45 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; 10:20-21
 Mark 1.24; 16:17 Ephesians 6:10-18
 Luke 9:1, 49-50; 10:17; 11:25 Colossians 1:13-15; 2:20
25. **Service** – The ability to elevate any deed or service that aids the church or another person to a form of worship without concern or desire for rank, popularity, position, or recognition.
 Matthew 4:11 Acts 6:1
 Mark 1:31 Romans 12:7
 Luke 10:40 Galatians 6:2, 10
 John 12:2 Titus 3:4

Sources:

Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts, Charles V. Bryant
Gospel Light: Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire & Chart