**1] You Are the Vessel**

You are the vessel that God desires to use. For the purposes of the building up of His kingdom, building up His church, and bringing glory and honor to His name.

I want us to recognize who we are in the Lord, and what He can accomplish through us.

***2] Romans 12:1: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.***

We present our lives, both physically and spiritually, to the Lord. That He would use us for His purpose.

***1 Corinthians 6:19-20*** reminds us that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. That we have been bought with a price, so we are to glorify God in our bodies.

That is, that the Holy Spirit, upon conversion, dwells in us, and our physical lives should be a continual stream of worship to the Most High God. Ask yourself…is my life worship to God?

* God’s desire = Our lives as an offering, upon the altar, that is holy and acceptable to Him.

We are very broken, very sinful, but it is by the righteousness of God, that we can become an acceptable offering to a holy and perfect God. Not by our works, but by His righteousness in us.

So how does this happen?

***3] Romans 12:2:*** ***Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Not conforming to the world. We want so badly to relate to the world, as Christians. We think we know what people need and want to hear. BUT it is only when we are in tune with the Spirit, that we can know what God’s will is, and what His message is.

It is only through a renewed mind. Sometimes we are so resistant to the Holy Spirit, so resistant to the Gifts of the Spirit, and our minds are not being renewed. We may be gaining more knowledge, as our days continue, but spiritually, we are not being renewed. We are not surrendered to Him.

(Story about Sonny)

It is only through a renewed mind, strengthened in God’s Word, empowered by His Spirit, that we can walk in surrender to His will. This is the reason Paul prayed for the Ephesian church:

***4] Ephesians 3:16: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.***

This was not just a work of intellect, and not just a work of human will, but it must come through our lives, our vessel, being a dwelling place for God.

God desires to dwell in you. Can you comprehend that? You can have the most honored of guests at your home, but all of it can go for naught, if the guest does not arrive.

But we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, available to us. The giftings of His power. There is no question as to His arrival. There is simply a question as to the invitation that we offer Him.

Oh, that we would pray…”Holy Spirit, come and sweep through my life, like a mighty rushing wind!”

Not only that, but scripture says that we would be strengthened with power. Not power, in terms of physical strength, or any strength derived from ourselves. But *dynamis (doo-na-mis) power.* The same power as mentioned in Acts 1, “*and I will give you power to be witnesses”*.

**5]** You are the Vessel! He wants to fill us with His power. Power to pray, and see miracles happen. Power to speak and declare the mysteries of God. Power to prophesy, that blind eyes would be open.

We often think…”What can I do to change this circumstance? What can I do to grow this church? What can I do to win the lost?”

Here’s what you can do: PRAY…Lord, fill me with the power of your Spirit. Fill me with the oil of your anointing. Immerse me, baptize me, that I might be overflowing with the Spirit of God.

He has the POWER. He has the answer. He has the giftings. We are simply the vessel!

* God desires to dwell in you, to be at home in your life. Only, it is not us that prepares, but He that prepares us. WE simply welcome Him in. Invite Him in.

**6]** Paul continues on: ***Ephesians 3:17-18: so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,***

**7]** I don’t know about you, but I want the FULLNESS of God! Not half, not three-quarters, but the fullness. The totality, the completion…don’t give me the condensed version, the watered-down version…I want the fullness!

He wants to take root. That we would be grounded, steadfast in ***His*** love. Oh, this is a love that surpasses knowledge.

***8] Ephesians 3:19: and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

It’s more than just knowing about this love. It’s more than just reading words on a page. It is experiencing the unconditional, uncompromising love of God, for yourself.

How could we possibly express such love, without experiencing it for ourselves? There are some of you today, you’ve heard about the fullness of God’s love, but you’ve never really experienced it for yourself. How could you communicate, how could you bear witness, how could you testify of such love, without having experienced it in your own life?

Oh, you have heard about it. You could point someone to verses about it…(For God so loved the world…) BUT, God wants you to experience this love for yourself. How? By being strengthened in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Don’t neglect the strengthening, empowering work of the Holy Spirit. That is the work that brings to light, the fullness of God. A neglecting of the Holy Spirit will bring about a life that is lacking, that is not full, that is not complete.

Welcome Him in TODAY. Invite Him to take up residence in your life. Not just when you walk through these doors. But He wants to take up residence in you EVERY SINGLE MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE.

You are the Vessel! He desires to dwell in YOU. And through you, He desires that His gifts would be in operation. To that point, let’s focus on 1 Corinthians 12.

**9]** Paul says in ***1 Corinthians 12:1: Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.*** *Pneumatikos* is the word used for Spiritual Gifts. It comes from the root word *pneō,* meaning “to breathe”. The inference is that these gifts are breathed upon the body of Christ.

Some would say that such gifts are no longer in operation, no longer necessary for the church today.

Theologians, pastors, authors…holding to the view of *Cessationism*…that these gifts have ceased to be active in the church, after the end of the first century apostolic age.

This is probably the most cited passage, in support of this claim:

***10] 1 Corinthians 13:8-9: Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.***

Love will never cease…it will continue for eternity. The Word states: ***God is love (1 John 4:8, 16****)…*and so as long as God is, love will be. But these gifts, which the Bible instructs us to earnestly seek…there will come a time, when the perfect comes, when we are no longer in the state of fallen man, but are eternally rejoicing around the throne of God, that such gifts of edification will no longer be necessary.

I find it preposterous that God would dispense such powerful gifts…gifts for ministry, gifts for edifying, gifts for reaching the world with the Gospel…and then choose to stop making those gifts available to His people.

**11]** God has not stopped breathing upon His people, and breathing through His people.

But it is these gifts, especially those in 1 Corinthians 12, that are the most debated and disputed.

**12]** So, we turn to ***1 Cor. 12:4***: ***Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;*** The word for gifts is *charisma…*meaning free gift. Related to the word for grace, and the root of Cheerful, joyful.

These gifts are freely given, by God. And He gives them willingly, joyfully. Varieties of gifts. Varieties of service. Varieties of activities. But the same Spirit. The same Lord. The same God.

***13] 1 Cor. 12:7: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.***

To each…all of us…everyone

Is given…the gift has been given…is available (to each of us)

Manifestation…”to make known”. The Holy Spirit making himself known.

For the common good…for the unity. The bringing together (for one purpose).

And now…the first two of these gifts (mind gifts):

***14] 1 Corinthians 12:8: For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom,***

* This is not just being a wise person.
* It is more than “life experience”…being a problem solver.

***1 Corinthians 2: Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age… But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God.***

***These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.***

***And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.***

Paul said…*I have not come with enticing words of man’s wisdom…but with the power.*

**15]** It is not of man. Not based on your IQ, how many degrees you have. But an impartation of God’s wisdom through you, to open the eyes and hearts of others to the truth of God’s Word.

Examples: You’re conversing with someone, and the Lord gives you applicable insight into a scripture that you have never spoken or even considered before in your life.

It’s eye-opening. It’s a supernatural move of God on the life of a believer, to teach, to apply, to communicate God’s Word in a way that is only from Him.

* Often very specific to a situation, to a person, or to a group of people.

Biblical example: Jesus is in the temple teaching. Pharisees bring a women caught in adultery.

* If He says “stone her”…No longer a Friend of Sinners…here to seek and save that which was lost.
* If He says, “let her go”…He’s violating the very law (of Moses) that He came to fulfill.

Jesus blows their minds: “Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone.”

* The self-righteous were humbled.
* The sinner was saved.

Are you facing conflict that you want to handle in a Biblical manner?

Are you teaching or sharing God’s Word on a challenging subject, or to a challenging audience?

YOU should pray for, and desire for God to use this gift in you!

***16] and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.***

Again, these gifts are supernatural…not just knowledge naturally attained.

**17]** God imparting to you knowledge you would have no way of knowing, if not for Him speaking it to you.

Scriptural examples: Jesus and the woman at the well. You have had 5 husbands, and the man you’re with now is not your husband.

Peter and Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. “Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit?”

Beware of counterfeits, or people who seek after it like Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8).

Beware of abuse/pride. People will see you differently when God uses you in this gift. They’ll clamor for your attention…or almost have a sense of fear or intimidation. *(What do they know about me?)*

That’s not at all the purpose, but it is to bring to light spiritual matters, in hopes that one will surrender to the Lord. (Story about student in Illinois)

**18]** Church, we need these gifts in operation in our lives, and in our church. It doesn’t happen in every situation, that God gives you a Word of Wisdom. It doesn’t happen every time you pray, that God gives you a Word of Knowledge. But we need God-fearing, Spirit-filled believers, who are willing and available to impart wisdom and knowledge that comes from the Lord.

God determines the moments, the times. God distributes the gifts. He simply asks for you and I to be available. **19]** Let me remind you today…YOU ARE THAT VESSEL!

* Are you here today, and you want to be used by God in ways that are far beyond yourself?
* Are you here today, and you have doubts if such gifts are even real, or if He could use you?

Earnestly seek spiritual gifts! Respond today. He knows what you need, and He wants to use you.

Surrender to the Lord today. Quench not the Holy Spirit, but let His gifts be operating freely, joyfully in our lives. He wants to breathe upon us today!