

Church on Fire.04. Step into the Fire

Today, we continue our study of the book *Church on Fire* looking at Week 4

Week Four: STEP INTO THE FIRE

“It’s not your job to set your church on fire.”

- “Setting your *church on fire* is God’s job, not yours. Fire is not what we do; it’s what God does”

“Fire is what happens when God comes to church”

- “Fire is the manifest presence of Christ in conspicuous, unmistakable, tangible ways.”

➔ **“Fire is dramatic answers to specific prayers; healings; convictions of sin; power to overcome bad habits; reconciled marriages; visions, dreams or words from God; being born again; being delivered from an evil spirit; radical obedience to Christ and transformed lives. All these are evidences of the fire of the manifest presence of Christ.”**

“When we work, we work. When we pray, God works.”

Day 16 - CUP YOUR HANDS

“One of my favorite discoveries as a follower of Christ is that the kingdom of God is full of upgrades.”

➔ **“We will go from fullness to fullness, glory to glory, strength to strength, blessing to blessing.”**

“I learned this life-transforming kingdom principle with my wonderful church family in Atlanta”

- “When I first arrived, I felt overwhelmed by the challenge of pastoring. I was well aware of the fact that I did not have in myself all that I needed to be successful. As I prayed and sought the Lord for His blessing, He kept saying to me, ‘Cup your hands.’ At first I obediently extended my hands in front and lifted up my empty palms to the Lord as if I were about to receive a gift.”

- “Initially, it seemed to increase my faith and my level of expectation, but I really didn’t get it. *Why should I cup my hands?* I wondered.”

- “After months of cupping my hands, although I hate to admit it, it began to bug me. God never let up. It was annoying. At times I tried to argue with Him, ‘I don’t want to cup my hands I don’t feel like cupping my hands.’ He would patiently reply, ‘Are you praying to receive?’ ‘Yes, Lord.’ ‘Then cup your hands,’ He would respond.”

- “He then showed me a thread that runs through the entire Bible. It is the kingdom principle of receiving. ‘Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. 5:18). The command ‘be filled’ is a present passive imperative tense. ‘Be filled’ could more accurately be translated ‘be in a continual state of receiving an ongoing, perpetual filling.’ This means we are never to stop being filled with the Holy Spirit.”

➔ **To put it another way, we are never to stop cupping our hands and never to stop receiving”**

“Jesus taught His disciples to always expect more.”

“The primary reason God wants to heal our ‘receivers’ and empower us always to be receiving is that there is always more for us to obtain from the Lord.”

- “God is a God who loves to reveal more and more of Himself, who gives us continual upgrades.”

“It’s not your job to activate your receptors or the receptors of others around you - only God can do that. It is, however, your responsibility to *ask* God to activate your receptors and the receptors of your church family.”

Day 17 - LISTEN WITH EARS TO HEAR

“One of the more exciting benefits of *church on fire* is learning to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

- “Virtually all the manifestation gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 have to do with God speaking to us and manifesting His presence in dynamic ways.”

➔ **“It is vital that each of us is able to discern a fresh word from the Holy Spirit and to discern His voice.”**

“The key to following Christ is hearing His voice.”

- “Jesus made it very clear, ‘He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice’ (John 10:4).

➔ **“Good listeners make the best followers.”**

“Paul says, ‘Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14).”

- We all have the ability to hear and follow the voice and leadership of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we are told, ‘Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25).”

- “When Paul was in the upper room with his prophet partners in Antioch, they all heard the same thing: ‘The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul”’ (Acts 13:2).”

“A unique message is given by Christ to each of the seven churches in the book of Revelation, but there is one statement and only one statement that He makes to all seven churches: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’ (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).”

- “Notice that every church is exhorted to hear, recognize and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

- “Why would Jesus give this solitary command to every single church if it were not of preeminent importance to the church today?”

- “Some features of individual churches may change, but the one universal constant is the ability of every Christian and every congregation to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

- “For this reason the writer of the book of Hebrews says several times, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts’ (Heb. 3:7-8, 15; 4:7).”

“Some have argued about the biblical principle of hearing the Holy Spirit today. They suggest the complete formation of the Bible stopped the Holy Spirit from speaking to the church other than through the written word.”

→ “As the great Bible expositor Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to say, ‘The Bible was not given to replace direct revelation; it was given to correct abuses.’”

Day 18 - UTILIZE THE GIFTS

“When our church family learns to recognize the manifest presence of Christ, God will manifest more and more of His presence to us. He does this primarily through what are called the manifestation gifts (see 1 Cor. 12, 14).”

- “As we saw in day seventeen, when Paul and Barnabas gathered with others to minister to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said to them, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’ (Acts 13:2). You may be wondering, *How did the Holy Spirit say this to them all? And how did they know that it was the voice of the Holy Spirit?*”

→ **“Undoubtedly, God activated one or more of the revelatory gifts of prophecy, a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, tongues or interpretation. The Scripture doesn’t tell us which gifts were used; all we know is that God spoke to these upper-room disciples by the Holy Spirit.”**

“There are three distinctly different sets of spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible:

- *The motivating gifts of Romans 12:6-8.* The group of seven motivational gifts - prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership and mercy - are given to Christians to build up their fellow believers. Each believer in Christ has one or more of these gifts as a permanent possession, and local churches are strengthened as these gifts are used.

- *The equipping gifts of Ephesians 4:11.* This group of five gifts, or roles, of individual church leaders - apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher - are useful to equip the rest of the church for the work of ministry. We call them equipping gifts because the Scripture says explicitly that they are “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (4:12, RSV).

- *The manifestation gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.* This group of nine gifts - word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues - are occasionally distributed to various church members for the sake of manifesting the miraculous presence of Christ to believers. “To each on the manifestation [or manifestation gift] of the Spirit is given for the common good” (12:7).”

Various lists of gifts have been compiled by different people:

- **Other gifts not cited above include:** celibacy (Matt. 19:10-12; 1 Cor. 7:7), administration (1 Cor. 12:28), helps (1 Cor. 12:28), hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9), intercession (Isa. 62:6; Col. 4:12)

- **Some include:** casting out demons (Matt. 10:8); voluntary poverty (1 Cor. 13:3), martyrdom (1 Cor. 13:3)!

“The word ‘manifestation’ comes from the Greek word *phanerosis*, which means “to reveal in plain sight or to manifest.”

- “The manifestation gifts are always activated in the church family for the singular purpose of manifesting Christ’s presence among His people. All gifts build up the body, and certainly to this extent all gifts are Christ-exalting.”

“Not all gifts, however, conspicuously manifest the presence of Christ so immediately among the corporate church gathering as these nine manifestation gifts

- “For this reason, the apostle Paul clarifies the operation of these gifts: “If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’ (1 Cor. 14:24-25). When unbelievers fall down and cry out, ‘God is really among you!’ we can be certain that they have encountered the manifest presence of Christ.”

“At our church we have discovered many practical benefits of the manifestation gifts functioning properly. Here are a few practical suggestions for their use:

- During our church’s corporate prayer gatherings, when someone expresses a need, everyone is encouraged to stay on point and to focus their prayer on this single issue rather than jumping from topic to topic. Corporate prayer functions best when there is continuity on a specific theme.
- We ask people to physically gather around the needy person. It seems that the manifestation gifts function most effectively when standing in close proximity to the person in need.
- We have discovered that while we are praying, God will often communicate through a scripture or a picture. We encourage people to feel free to say, “I see a picture of _____. Does this make sense to you?”

“We have also learned when using the manifestation gifts that there is a clear distinction between an initial word or revelation from God and the interpretation and application that follows.

- “The initial word or revelation from God may be given through a revelatory gift such as prophecy, a word of knowledge of a picture, vision or dream. Interpretation relays the meaning of the initial word or revelation. Application is what we are to do with the interpretation.”
- “A perfect example is Pharaoh’s dream that Joseph interpreted (see Gen. 41). Pharaoh received the initial revelation: Joseph was given both the interpretation and the application.”

“While you are not the source of the manifestation gifts, and you certainly cannot force them, you are told to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophecy (See 1 Cor. 14:1).”

➔ **“Take time right now to ask the Holy Spirit to release and activate His manifestation gifts in your life and within your church family.”**

“How would you respond to the following questions?”

- Is my church family open to welcome and utilize the manifestation gifts? Am I? What do we need to do to move in this direction? What do I need to do?
- Is our corporate prayer gathering conducive to utilizing the manifestation gifts? What do we need to do to move in that direction? What can I do?”

Day 19 - REPENT AGAIN

“If you plan to encounter the manifest presence of Christ, you might as well get used to the fact that you will need to repent.

- “But be encouraged - if the Holy Spirit has led you personally to repentance, He will then empower you to lead others to repentance.

➔“It is a kingdom principle that everything Christ has done in you, He can do through you.”

“We defined repentance as a complete change of mind, perspective, orientation and motivation.

- It is helpful to recognize three essential R’s that always accompany repentance in one way or another:

- **Recognize the sin.** No more cover-up or hypocrisy. Identify sin as sin. Expose it to God by confessing it specifically.

- **Renounce the sin.** Utterly reject sin as if spitting out sour milk.

- **Replace the sin.** It is essential in repentance that we not only recognize and renounce our sin but that we go full circle and replace it with what Christ has to impart to us. When Christ fully replaces our sin with His life, we will not go back to our wrong behavior and attitudes.”

“In churches all over the world, our College of Prayer leaders have discovered the kingdom principle that the depth of our repentance is determined by the height of our worship.

➔ **There is a direct correspondence between the holiness of Christ that we encounter in worship and the level of conviction with which our sin is exposed and renounced. It’s the principle of “high worship, deep repentance.”**

Day 20 - ENJOY TRUE UNITY

The intimidating thought, *If I give the Holy Spirit control and welcome the manifest presence of Christ, it may split my church right down the middle* has made cowards of too many of us.

➔ **“When we welcome the manifest presence of Christ, we will for the first time know true, deep, honest unity in our church family as never before.”**

“As you welcome the advancing rule and reign of Christ’s kingdom in your church and in your community, you need to expect to encounter demons.”

- “We learn from the life of Christ that encountering evil spirits comes with the territory of seeking God’s kingdom: ‘If I drive our demons by the Spirit of God,’ Christ said, ‘then the kingdom of God has come upon you’ (Matt. 12:28).”

- “Martyn Lloyd-Jones confessed a profound concern over the ignorance in the church of the reality of demon activity: ‘I am concerned that one of the main causes of the ill state of the Church today is the fact that the devil is being forgotten. All is attributed to us; we have all become so psychological in our attitude and thinking. We are ignorant of this great objective fact: the being, the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser, and of his “fiery darts.”’”

- “As C.S. Lewis said, ‘There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.’”

“Right now, in churches all over the world in which the manifest presence of Christ is not being revealed in all His fullness, there are demons irreverently filling the void”

- “These demons are called religious spirits and they thrive in churches in the absence of God’s glory”

➔ For this reason the Bible tells us corporately to put on the whole armor of God (see Eph. 6:10-18). Every part of the armor corresponds to an aspect of Christ Himself?

Further Questions from Week Four

- 1. Read John 14:15-18 and 16:5-14. What are five or more things that we learn about the Person of the Holy Spirit in these verses?**
- 2. What is the primary role of the Holy Spirit?**
- 3. What is the point of cupped hands and receiving? In your own words describe the kingdom principle of receiving.**
- 4. Have you ever heard the Holy Spirit speaking to you? Would you share the experience?**
- 5. What are the three distinct varieties of spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible? Why are we focusing on the manifestation gifts? What would you as a group need to do differently in order to better utilize the manifestation gifts more consistently?**
- 6. What does being holy have to do with the Holy Spirit?**
- 7. What does evicting Satan have to do with being filled with the Holy Spirit?**