

Gifted for Love (Part 5) – In Pursuit of the Spirit

Matt Chandler – July 22, 2018

Good morning. How are we? Doing well? If you have your Bibles, let's go to 1 Corinthians, chapter 14. We have been in a six-week series on the gifts, not just the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit but how God gifts his children. I want to briefly remind you of the context of this passage before we dive into one of the more controversial topics in the Bible. If you're like, "What? What? What?" welcome to The Village. We're just going to dive in and see what the Book says. I want you to be able to see that we're just reading this from the Bible.

The church in Corinth this letter is being written to is a train wreck. No matter what your backstory is, you have not been a part of a church as dysfunctional, as immature, and as foolish as the church at Corinth. In fact, upon reading the letter to the Corinthians, you would wonder why Paul didn't just disband the thing. It's just so toxic that it's a marvel the letter doesn't end with, "And this is our last gathering. Amen." But Paul doesn't do that.

One of the things that has happened in Corinth is that the sign gifts, or the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, are making an appearance through certain men and women, so the church begins to view the supernatural as this varsity-level, "That's what real Christianity looks like," and then the other gifts as kind of subpar gifts. Paul is rebuking that as absurd.

He is saying you cannot take the more spectacular gifts (I even have problem with *that* language) and say, "This is what everyone should look like." In fact, Paul is passionately arguing that no one has all of the gifts and all of us have at least *a* gift and God's plan is to bake a cake in a certain space with the ingredients he put there so that no one, as desirous as we might be of another gift, should not delight in the gift God has given them.

What I've tried to do is put together a summary sentence of our time. *We must never lose sight of the purpose behind the gifts of the Spirit in the first place: the building up of the whole church through the Spirit-empowered ministry of the whole church.* The whole church is built up by the Spirit-

empowered ministry of the whole church. Not an elect few. There aren't like varsity, full-time professionals and then junior varsity or sophomore C-team, third-string tight ends in Texas that doesn't *use* tight ends anymore. There's not that discrepancy.

The more in our minds we distort the lines and pretend there are professionals and then the rest of us, the more we forfeit the good gift of God's grace on our lives to not be spectators but performers. *We must never lose sight of the purpose behind the gifts of the Spirit in the first place: the building up of the whole church through the Spirit-empowered ministry of the whole church. No individual receives all gifts, so we need each other in the body of Christ.*

You are not disqualified from Christian ministry because you can't teach like Jen Wilkin and can't sing in the key of Bleecker or Grant. That does not disqualify you from ministry. You are not disqualified from ministry because you are not as smart as JT English with a PhD in the Trinity. (That's not a joke. His PhD is on the Trinity. I didn't make that up. That's how smart that dude is.) Or are unable to preach a sermon in Trevor Joy's 27 minutes. That's not an indictment on anybody. I'm not sure why you're applauding that. I'm not sure I appreciate it.

So you are not disqualified in ministry because as you look around you don't fit *this* mold or *that* mold. In fact, you have been uniquely wired by God for the purposes of God in this place, which means for us to be us we need you to be you. It's not a good thing to despise the gift you've been given for the desire of another one. It's not a bad thing to desire another one. In fact, gosh, I want them all, and I even know the Bible says it isn't happening, but I want them all. I want *that* gift and *that* gift and *that* gift.

It's okay to desire, even earnestly desire other gifts. It's sinful to despise the one you've been given and to let that gift lay dormant while you pray in another one. You've been given a gift, and it's not a good thing for you to go, "Well, since I don't have *this* gift I'm not going to use *my* gift until I get the gift I want." If you're a parent, almost all of us have had that moment on Christmas morning where the kid opened up their gift and was like, "I want the blue one." What does that do to your soul as a parent? (Some of you answered, and I will not quote some of the answers I just heard.)

It gives us an opportunity, then, as parents, to thank God that we are not God, because God, in light of our, "Oh, hospitality? I want to be able to fly and call dead people to life. I don't want hospitality..." No, no. God gave you hospitality. God gave you administration. God gave you the gift

of helps. God gave you the gift of generosity. God gave you those gifts because he put the kinds of gifts in this place to make us all he would want us to be.

Nobody gets all of them. All of us get at least one of them. Many of us have multiple gifts, but we don't not spend those gifts until we get the one we want. We happily give ourselves over to the good gifts God has placed inside us in a given location for the buildup of that location for the glory of Christ and our joy. I believe with all my heart that most Christians are bored because they still believe they're spectators and not actors.

None of us have been called to be spectators. This version of Christianity where these elite "Christianistas" kind of perform for you as you watch us perform, and then we leave this place and are kind of encouraged because "That was funny" or "You had a good point there" or "I loved that song" but we're not leaving this place in an understanding of God's call on our lives, has to lead to boredom. It just has to. God has called you up into more than that.

The topic today is wildly controversial. I know some of you have been longing for me to dive into this one. "Where are we going?" Then others of you are like, "Oh God, please just skip it. Just skip it and get to the gospel of John. I'm already wiggled out from last week. My preference would be that you would skip this passage altogether, and let's get in the gospel of John. I don't think you'll freak me out quite as much in a gospel as you are right now."

The topic is tongues. Let's just out of the gate go, "That's kind of weird." Tongues is kind of weird. I don't have that gift. I see that it *is* a gift. I'd like it. I've prayed for it. God has not said, "Yes." In fact, most frequently, the Lord says, "Yeah, okay, I hear you. Now study and preach. Quit being greedy. Just study and preach. I'm going to hand the rest of this out. I know you want that. I gave you *this*. Be satisfied with this." I'm like, "I *am* satisfied with this, but this one... I want *that* one," and God patiently endures me.

Let me define tongues just so as we read the passage you know what we're saying. If you're our fifth graders, welcome to your first "big church" sermon. I'm sorry. It's just where it fell. That must mean the Lord has something for you, fifth graders, so I'm glad you're here. Here's how tongues is defined in the Bible. In fact, here in a minute when I read a passage I'll just go, "See where we got it?" Here's our definition of *tongues*: it is a Spirit-inspired utterance.

Again, if you're one of our fifth graders and you're like, "Utter...what?" it's like a language. A Spirit-inspired language. When we use the word *tongue* and when the Bible refers to a *tongue*, it's referring to a Spirit-inspired utterance. Now with it defined, let's look at it. By the way, I want to point this out, even as we dive into it. I'll unpack this more fully in the next 30 minutes.

Most of the information we have about the gift of tongues is found in a rebuke around the usage of the gift of tongues. Most of the information we have about the gift of tongues is found in *this* text, which is a rebuke of the wrong use of the gift. With that said, this is a loving rebuke. I don't know if you've ever been lovingly rebuked, where somebody very kindly tells you you're wrong, but that's what we're about to read. First Corinthians 14, starting in verse 6.

"Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.

What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up." This is a weird... This is the apostle Paul. Only he can get away with sentences like this.

"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your

thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, 'By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.'

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you."

In the Bible there are two types of tongues. That's it. There's not a third type. There is a *missiological* use of tongues... Many of us have heard this type of tongue. It's when someone doesn't know a language and is supernaturally given that language so that others might hear in their own language and come to Jesus Christ.

This is what we're seeing in Acts, chapter 2. In Acts, chapter 2, when tongues of fire fall on the apostles, they speak in tongues, and the tongues they are speaking in are the languages of the nations that are present at Pentecost in Jerusalem. Let me refresh you by reading Acts 2:1-11.

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

The tongues were foreign languages of those who were far from God who were able to hear in their tongues the mighty acts of God, and if we kept reading, we would see that thousands believed upon the name of Jesus Christ. Now, the gift of tongues as we see it here has not ceased. In 2009 (I had to call somebody this week to get the date), we're praying, and as we're praying there's this woman who begins to pray in a tongue, which is awkward in a place where that's not normal.

I don't know if you've had that experience where everybody is praying English and then somebody is praying in *not* English. I'm just thinking in my head how to gently help this woman understand we're not rolling like that here. When we're done praying for this woman, the woman looks at the woman who just spoke in tongues and says, "I didn't know you knew Hindi." She says, "I *don't* know Hindi." She says, "You just prayed *this* over me in Hindi."

That's not out on some mission field. That didn't happen in Iraq. That happened at a prayer meeting at The Village Church. This is how tongues is seen in the Bible and seen among the people of God even to this day. It's a different language given by the Spirit of God that exists somewhere in the world. This is what you're seeing in this text. This is what we see in the Bible, but it's not the *only* way tongues is taught, not the only way tongues is mentioned, and not the only way tongues works.

The second kind of tongues... It's the one that kind of wigs us out a little bit, because I think most people look at that and get really amped up about the gospel going to the nations. They're like, "Yeah! I would love to be able to speak in tongues." I want to know all languages *now*. I don't know about anybody else. I'd love to speak every language ever always and be fluent. It's one of the things I've prayed for. It's one of the things God has said "No" to.

He's like, "I'm struggling just to get English in you, son. We're not expanding your horizons. We're going to stay right here." The other kind of tongues... If you've been around more charismatic folk, they'll talk about it as a prayer language. They'll say it has something to do with intimacy with God. They're not making that up. We actually saw this in our text. We see this in other parts of the Bible. Romans 8:26-27 says:

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." If you were here last week, even in this text, if you go

back and look at verses 2-4 in chapter 14, here's what it says:

"For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church."

There's some sort of language here. If tongues is a gift, it is not given to everyone. Not everyone is going to have a personal, private prayer language, but some people get it. Apparently, it has something to do with intimacy with God. That's all we know from the text, but I want to point this out, because it's what's happening in the text. The last three chapters, Paul has been on a rant about the building up of the body, the building up of the body, the building up of the body. Not the building up of self, the building up of self.

This almost comes across like a slam. Prophecy builds up, teaching builds up, hospitality builds up, it builds up, it builds up, it builds up, but tongues edifies the person, not the body. It comes across in this text... It's this strange tension we're going to try to walk today, where Paul is painting a picture of it that's this really beautiful picture. In fact, he says, "I speak in tongues more than anybody," which would be cocky if he weren't an apostle. He would even go on later and say, "Don't ever forbid it."

He's saying it builds up the person, but it doesn't necessarily build up the body. So that's what we see here. Let me show you what else we know from this passage. We can see in verse 27, which we'll read next week, that tongues doesn't happen out of an explosion of ecstasy that can't be controlled. If in your mind what tongues is is you get so overly tweaked and overly emotional that all of a sudden you just explode in tongues, the Bible is painting a different picture here.

In verse 27, it says if it happens in the gathering it should only happen two, maybe three times but no more, and it should be done in order, which means this kind of private prayer language, if it shows up in a gathering at all, shows up like this: under control and in order. So we know tongues doesn't explode without any control out of nowhere. We can also see it is unintelligible both to the speaker and the hearer. Think of the faith it requires for the one who has been given this. Look at verse 14.

"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will

pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?"

In this case, the person who's speaking in the tongue doesn't even understand it, nor does the hearer. Lastly, we know from verse 2 that this prayer language, this second kind of tongues, is directed toward God. This is all according to the text. Now, I want to point this out. Here's the good in tongues, and I want to highlight the warning about tongues. Here's the good: our spirit is being engaged in a way that our mind isn't.

Now I don't know what that means. I have spent a lot of time on the phone this week with people I love and trust who have this. I'm just like, "Help me understand." There's some kind of building up of the spirit, according to Paul, that's not happening through the intellect. That flies in the face of my boy Augustine and how I've been trained to think about spiritual formation, which is a formation of the mind leads to a formation of the spirit that leads back to a formation of the mind that leads back to a formation of the spirit.

The mind informs the heart, the heart agrees with the mind, and transformation occurs *that way*, but Paul is saying tongues, this gift in particular, builds up the spirit in a way that's different than how you build up your mind. I wish I could give you more. I'm just going to stick to the text. We see here that *with* an interpretation it builds up the body. That would be in verse 6.

We see in verse 21 that, missionally, God is going to continue to draw the nations to himself this way. If you know missionaries connected with some of the stuff that's going on globally, it's not uncommon to hear the story that people picked up a language quickly or that they picked up a language without picking up the language.

Kind of that supernatural "Wow! Why couldn't Spanish class in high school have gone that way for me?" The amount of warnings in this text blows past the amount of encouragement, so let me highlight that. He says that tongues, specifically used in the gathering, are like an instrument that doesn't sound any distinct notes.

He uses the illustration specifically of the bugle, that if the bugle doesn't sound specific notes, nobody knows when it's time for war or when it's time to retreat or when it's time to do anything.

It'll just be a single sound. Paul is saying tongues used in the gathering that aren't interpreted is like a bugle that can't make any distinct sounds. We see here that if tongues are used in the gathering without an interpretation people feel like foreigners. Nobody knows what's going on.

Last week I was in Berlin, and I want to share this because I think maybe, if we're not careful, we kind of believe propaganda. I'm trying to help us not believe propaganda. I was in Berlin and went to this place called the *Hangar*. The Hangar is where all of the refugees from the Middle East come and are processed.

They jam them in there on these bunk beds. It's not an environment conducive to human flourishing. I got to meet with a group of Iraqis, and here's what's crazy: They were awesome. They were friendly and kind and boisterous and loving. I put them right up there with the Italians and the Brazilians as friendly, boisterous, life-loving, awesome people.

I met a boxer from Iraq named Muhammad. Yeah. Right? Here's what I've learned. I started asking, "What's your nickname? Eighty percent of you are 'Muhammad,' so how does this work? What do you call yourselves?" Everybody has this nickname, which is right in my wheelhouse. So now I have Muhammad's nickname. Mo was a boxer, and he asked me through an interpreter if I was into fitness, which is a question I have never been asked.

He was feeling my shoulders and close talking and asking me if I was into fitness. So I had to say through an interpreter, "A little." Then we had this great conversation. What I learned was that the Iraqis and the Afghan people are beautiful, hospitable, kind, amazing people and not in any way out to murder all of us. They lament and are heartbroken over those slivers of evil born among their countrymen.

I say all of that, first, to maybe help you consider that not all Muslims are trying to murder you, and secondly, because there was no way to communicate with that man unless I had an interpreter. I don't speak German. I certainly don't speak broken German. I don't know if you've been around somebody who spoke broken English or broken Spanish. Both of those things exist.

Think about someone from Iraq who was forced to learn German over a period of nine weeks and now has to try to communicate in German to a woman who's an American who knows just a smidge of German to an American guy who doesn't hardly know English. Without an interpreter, things don't work, and you could feel, as friendly as we were, this dividing wall of language.

Paul's point is it doesn't matter if you can't hear. Who cares if nobody understands what you're saying? Then this is huge. Paul says, "I would rather speak five words that are understood than ten thousand words in a tongue." That seems a bit hyperbolic. Five words that you'll get than ten thousand you're not going to get.

So there are all of these words of warning. He's going to go on to say it can confuse and distract the body. This is what we see in the Bible. If you have other questions of how it works or what it's for, this is all we have. This is literally all we have, and it comes in a chapter about a rebuke for the misuse of tongues in a corporate gathering. So that's the good and the bad. That's the purpose and how we see the purpose is played out in the Scriptures.

Here's where I want to spend my last 10 to 12 minutes with you. As a church, we have for quite some time now eagerly wanted to see supernatural breakthrough. Your pastor certainly does. I want to see more people healed than we've seen healed. I want to see more breakthrough into the ordinary from the Spirit of God. If there's more to be had, I want all of it, and I'm going to pester and cry and fast and seek and want it until I get to go home and see it face-to-face.

If we could have an anchor for how to think about the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, not just *all* of the gifts but, specifically, those supernatural, "Wow! What was that?" I think verse 12 is our anchor. Let's look at verse 12. **"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit..."** I think that's our community of faith. We're eager to see God do God stuff. "Yes and amen" to every bit about salvation.

There's no greater miracle than salvation. *Ever*. You will never see a greater miracle than death to life, the Spirit of God regenerating dead souls into living souls, but we're longing to see, as the body gathers in Home Groups and in *this* kind of gathering, supernatural breakthrough, where diseases are healed and anxieties are broken through and demonic oppression is broken and things are put back together.

Paul says this to a church that's high on the supernatural. Do you want to see it? Are you eager to see it? Well, then he says how you go about seeing it. **"...since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive [work]..."** So you're not passive. **"...strive to excel in building up the church."** Now why does that lead to the kind of breakthrough we want? Well, if we're driven by love for God and love for other...

If I can walk in and see you hurting and suffering and be so brokenhearted for you that I can mourn with you, and I am compelled out of empathy for your hurt, for your sadness, for your anxiety, for your brokenness, in your wrestle, to cry out to God of a pure heart, longing for God to set you free because I know he can, to heal you because I know he can, then I'm in a position of faith where I know my words will not heal you but the Spirit of Christ can, and that's different.

So if you want to experience, if we, as a community of faith, want to see these kinds of breakthroughs, then we strive, we work, we labor to excel at the building up of the body of Christ in this location. So what does it look like to strive to excel in the building up of the church? Again, you always ask the right question.

Here's the first thing: it makes church less about you and more about us. Here's the day in which you live. What you are being pelted with all day long is your own unhappiness. Did you know that? Everybody trying to get you to buy their product is selling to you that you're not happy. Every image you see on a magazine, every commercial, everything on your Facebook page says, "Hey, you're not happy. *This* will make you happy. So work harder, go into debt, and get this thing that's going to finally make..."

You are sold on happiness, and what will make you happy is *this* product or *this* product. When that's the air you breathe, you start to approach church that way. "What will make *me* happy? I'm not happy. What's going to make me happy?" The Bible is saying that's the complete wrong way to approach the body. In fact, I've said this for maybe 12 years now. The more your life is about you the more miserable of a human being you're going to be.

The more you are uppermost in your own affection, the more miserable you're going to be. You will use people rather than know people. You will try to manipulate people rather than love them. Everything will be personal. I don't know if you've been able to travel the globe, but almost everywhere else in the world, when somebody honks at you they're just trying to let you know they're there. In *our* country, that's a sign of personal disrespect and could get you shot.

I'm not making a joke. People are crazy right now. "No, he did not!" We're insane. Why? Because the world is about us. If the world is about me, I'll go when I please. Nobody *thinks* that way; we just *believe* that way, and it erupts in anger when things don't go our way, because we're uppermost in our own affection. The church isn't about *you*; it's about *us*. That's what this means.

The second thing is *this*, if it's true, gives you a mission every time we come together. I've had to wrestle with this this week. I mentioned it last week. The Lord has beaten me up on it this week. Misery loves company. Sarcasm is not a love language. You should just stop saying that about yourself. "Yeah, sarcasm is my love..."

"I'm going to identify your weakness and publicly make fun of it, and I'm going to be seen as clever and you're going to feel loved." It doesn't work that way. Here's what happens. All of the sarcastic people go, "That's exactly how it works," but people who aren't witty like that, who aren't sarcastic like that, would strongly disagree with us.

Your mission, my mission is when we come together, whether that be in the Lord's gathering, whether that be in Home Group, whether that be for a dinner, a lunch, a cup of coffee, or whatever, I'm coming into that with this mission: "How might I speak life into this man, this woman? How can I call out their gifts? How can I tell them what I enjoy about them? How can I bless them in this gathering?"

That means when we pull into this parking lot we're thinking, "How do I bless? How do I encourage?" You have a mission. You are not passive in the body of Christ. You're active, you're called, and we're better when you own that rather than hiding behind "My love language is sarcasm." It's wounding and cutting, and might we be known as a place that doesn't do that but, rather, has words of life.

How refreshing and life changing would that be, and how simple is that? "Let me say something kind." How broken is the day we live where *that's* the apologetic. "I'm an expert in your strengths." You have a mission when we gather. You have a mission when you're heading into Home Group. You have lunch with somebody this afternoon? You have a mission. You're not a spectator. You're in the fight. You're in the middle of the arena. What does that look like? It looks like words of life.

That was my last point. I got ahead of myself. It gets you out of the stands and into the center of action. Let me conclude the sermon like this. If you're a regular attender of The Village Church, stop regularly attending and become a member. Just come on in and be part of the family. That's not a category that exists biblically: regular attender. That's just stuff we say because it's hard to get into our membership class, and some of you have been here eight years and haven't been able to do it. We've changed things. Get in it, and just belong.

At some point we have to stop dating. I don't know if anybody else ever gave you that ultimatum, but at some point we have to quit dating. If you're a covenant member or a regular attender, here's what's going on. God has led you to this place, and he has led you to this place not because we have a bunch of things for you, although that's true, but because *you* have something God wants here to make us fully what he plans for us to be.

If you're like, "You don't know me; that can't be true," here's what's great. I love saying this. I don't need to know you, because I know what the Bible says, and the Bible has never lied about you. Here's what I know from the Bible: you have been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

That means *you*, made in the image of God, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, have been given a gift. Maybe it's administration. Maybe it's works of service. I don't know what it is, but you've been given it, and you've been brought to this place because we needed a dash more of that here to be all that God would want us to be. If this is true, here are a couple of ways I think we can actually walk in this. We're thinking about next steps.

First, all the more, I want us to be a place that calls out the giftedness we see in one another. Even after the first sermon this week, I know several Home Groups got together, and that's what they did. They sat around and said, "I see this in you. I want to just affirm this in you. I want to tell you to do something with that. I can see it. You're not second-guessing yourself. I can see this in you. Brother, sister, give yourself over to this. I'd set up a meeting with *this* pastor. I'd get involved *here*. There's no ministry. You should just start one."

I want us to get good at calling out of one another the good we see in one another that God is up to. If you have a friend or you have somebody around you whom you've seen the Lord has significantly grown in the last three months, six months, amen. That should be coming out of your mouth. You should be saying, "Hey, I can see the Spirit of God working in you. I've seen you grow. I'm watching you deepen, and it pleases my heart. I'm going to continue to pray for you. I love what Jesus is doing in you right now."

Secondly, I am naturally critical. I wish I wasn't. Like, Michael Bleecker... I love that man. He's always like, "That's amazing. This is incredible. This is the best I ever saw." I want to be Michael Bleecker when I grow up. It's another thing I asked for and God was like, "I made one of those. He's

optimistic for everybody. You just let him..." Here's what I've learned. Here's what the Lord has taught me painfully. I'm going to show you my scars in the hopes that maybe you won't have to bleed as badly.

My criticism, and I believe God has given me that so I can sometimes make things better... But God has given me a critical eye so I can step into broken places and help by the grace of God be a solution, not someone who complains about the problem. So if you're naturally critical... I'm not trying to drive-by shame you and go, "Shame on you for being critical," because I think a critical eye can sometimes be a really good gift of God, but you have not been given a critical eye to group up with other critical people and criticize without getting in the middle of the arena.

If God has given you a critical eye, he has given you a critical eye so you can be part of the solution, not chirping away at those who are doing their best to solve the weaknesses and brokenness they see around them. So let's be a church that calls the strengths out of one another, and if you have that critical bent, begin to see that bent as God's invitation for you to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Now if you could use your divine imagination, what would it be like for our church to be one where words of life are consistently spoken, and when we saw weaknesses we were the first to go, "I'll help with that. I have an idea about what might make that better. Hey, who do I talk to about this? I just noticed this on Sunday. I think it could be smoother than that. I think I have some skills that might work here."

What if we were proactive in that? I just think what God might do among us, according to the text, is break loose in the kinds of ways we're wanting him to. Where you are eager for the manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in the building up of the church. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women. We thank you for your Word. We thank you that you've wired us and gifted us and called us, that none of us are doomed to watch from the stands but called right into the middle of the arena. Grant us the courage to do this. Grant us the wisdom of where to play and where to walk. You are mighty and good and gracious, and we bless your name, Jesus. It's for your beautiful name, amen.