


Prayer Walk

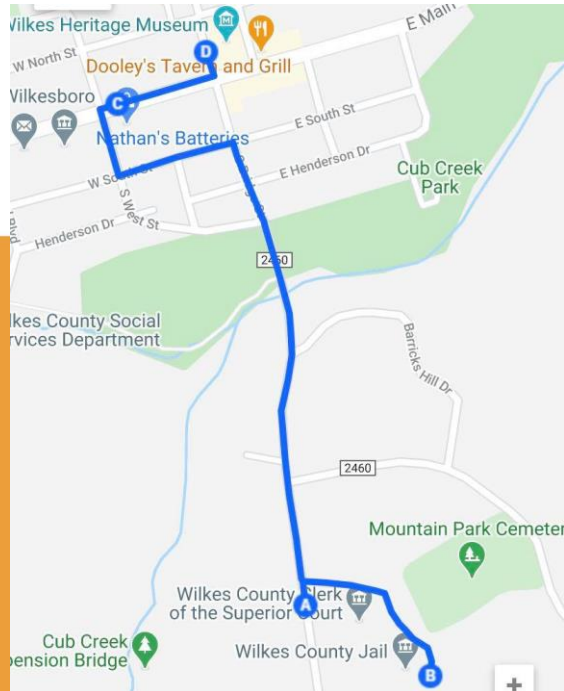


BELIEVERS
ON A MISSION

Prayer Walk
2020

WHO: ANYONE!!
WHAT: WILKES COUNTY PRAYER WALK 2020
WHEN: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2020 FROM 12:00PM UNTIL 2:00PM
WHERE: BEGINNING AT THE WILKES COUNTY COURTHOUSE
WHY?: WE AT BELIEVERS ON MISSION RECOGNIZE THAT OUR COUNTRY AND WORLD IS IN TROUBLE AND HURTING. WE ARE FOCUSING SOLELY ON ASKING GOD TO HEAL OUR LAND AS HIS WORD TELLS US TO DO. 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

**MASKS ARE RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED TO THOSE THAT HAVE MEDICAL ISSUES/CONDITIONS



Who likes getting gifts? I think we all do. Especially when it's kind of unexpected. I remember as a kid my parents bought me a 10-speed bike, just out of the blue, to replace my small "kid" bike that my knees were now hitting the handle bars. I road and road that 10-speed, it was such a good bike, I remember it even had an odometer on it.

Did you know God has given you a gift? But, it's not unexpected. I can tell you exactly when you got it. It was when you called on Jesus to save you...it was then that you were given a gift. Perhaps more than just one gift...maybe several gifts...AND these gifts came to you by way of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are called spiritual gifts. Today and over the next seven weeks, we're going to be studying:



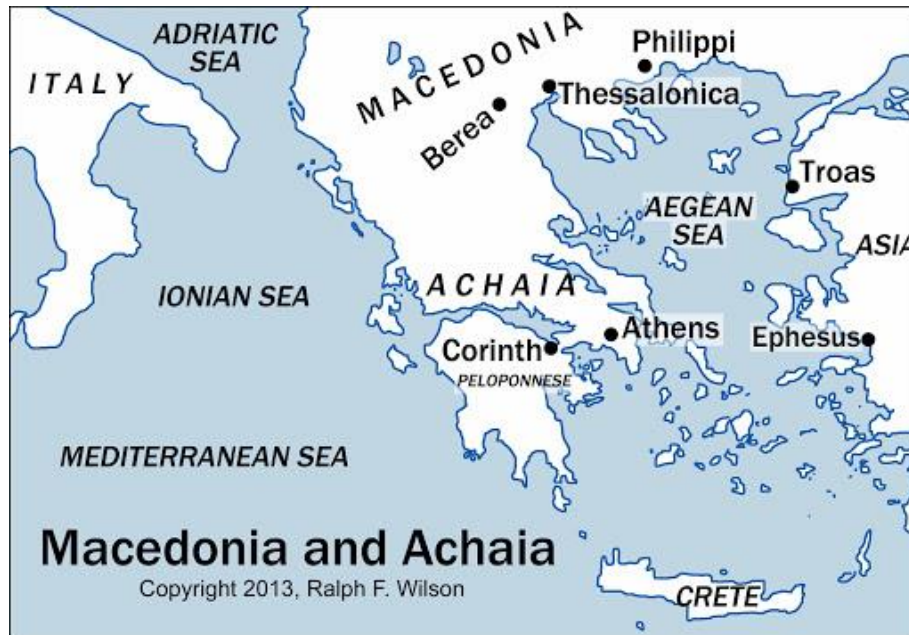
Spiritual Gifts.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. As you are turning, let me bring us up to speed. The church at Corinth was an absolute mess, yet they were rich in gifts...spiritual gifts...but these gifts were being used, like watching a bunch of kids tearing into packages at Christmas...like a free-for-all...paper and bows flying everywhere...there was chaos in the church in so many areas. And so, the church had a letter sent to the Apostle Paul who was in Ephesus at the time. See this map:

See the two **red dots**...



You'll see Rome, top-left and Jerusalem, bottom-right and in between is the Med. Sea. You'll notice, Europe is due north and Asia (what we call Asia Minor) to the east. Now see this next map...I want you to see Corinth and Ephesus. We zoom in...



Corinth is in the middle and Ephesus to the right, across the Aegean Sea.

Remember, Paul had established the church in Corinth 6 years earlier and he's in Ephesus where he is trying to help that church and in this letter that he receives, he hears about division, discord, sexual immorality, law suits, arguing about eating meat offered to idols, gluttony and drunkenness when taking communion, and now chaos in the area of spiritual gifts. They're a mess and this area of spiritual gifts will be addressed for the next three chapters: 12-14. Let's pick up in...1 Cor. 12:1.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Now as we begin to discuss Spiritual Gifts this morning, I believe it's important that we understand who is giving us these gifts. That would be the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit is not an "it" or a "thing," no...He is a person. He is the Third Person of the Trinity of God... Yet, just like we can't see God or Jesus, we can't see the Holy Spirit... But, just like we can't see the wind, we can certainly see its effects. Just ask the folks on the Gulf coast after Hurricane Sally blew through last week.

Now as we talk about the Holy Spirit, I want you to remember what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit? **Turn in your Bibles to John, chapter 16.** Jesus is telling His disciples that He is going away...He's going to die and they are sad. But, He gives them some good news. Look at verse 7.

John 16:7

⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

That's kind of hard to imagine isn't it? That it was "to your advantage," Jesus said, "that I go away." How can that be? Well, we talked about it at length on Wednesday night after watching The Chosen...by the way, the final episode is this Wed. night at 6:30. We hope you'll come...



It's my favorite episode and it's powerful, It's called, "I Am He" and Jesus reveals Himself as the Savior of the world, the Messiah. It's so powerful! I hope you'll come. 6:30 Wed. night. But, this past Wed, we talked about the fact that Jesus is no longer with us in the flesh, but He is in Spirit...through the Holy Spirit.

Listen, when you and I chose to follow Jesus...when we prayed and called on His name to save us...repenting of our sins and throwing ourselves onto Him, by faith, we are saved...and at that moment, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us. We get all of the Holy Spirit we're ever going to get. There is no "2nd baptism of the Holy Spirit," as some seek to claim. Nope. Upon your salvation, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit for all eternity. He comes to live within you and to guide you for the rest of your life and one day to take your spirit, from this earth to heaven.

Now, you can choose to quench the Holy Spirit, as a Christian, by how you're living...because we must never forget... He is the HOLY Spirit... Jesus, said, "Be holy, as I am holy." And you see, that's really a BIG issue today for Christians. Many Christians do not live holy lives and yet, they expect God to bless them. That would go against His character and His nature. No...when you and I are not living in obedience to Jesus, the Holy Spirit convicts us... Look back at John 16, verse 8.

John 16:8-11

⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Listen carefully, Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit at our salvation to guide us into holiness. And church, this is precisely why Jesus came...

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I want you to understand something...the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the **SPRITUAL GIFTS**, given to us at our salvation will never be able to operate in our lives effectively and with any power, if we are living in disobedience and sin...and it's the Holy Spirit's job to convict us and draw us to Jesus...to righteousness...and to holiness...which gives us the power to overcome.

How is it with you today? Is your life characterized by power? If you are walking in the Spirit...you will have power...and it will be evident in your life as it is characterized by holiness... Remember, if you are following Jesus...he doesn't travel through the back alleys of sin. As the Psalmist says, He leads to paths of righteousness.

You see this was the issue in Corinth. They had a lot of gifts, but no righteousness and the church was in chaos. Go back to chapter 12, verse 1.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.

Listen, the Corinthians had come out of paganism...idol worship...gross sin...and yet, they were slipping back into these lifestyles, which led to the division, discord, sexual immorality, arguing, suing of one another...not caring about one another...becoming stumbling blocks to one another...it was a total mess in that church and this dysfunction and chaos and shown up in the area of the gifts of the Spirit as well. And we'll see that over the next several weeks. In fact, by the time we come to chapter 14, the Apostle Paul will literally have to give them directions on how to run their church services.

For now, the question is: how do we see the manifestation of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us. Well, watch verses 3 and 4. We can tell by how somebody acts and speaks...

1 Corinthians 12:3-4

³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Now, you and I may read those two verses and say, "Wait a minute...are you saying someone who isn't a follower of Jesus can be incapable of lying and saying, 'Jesus is Lord.'" Can't people lie and say, "Jesus is Lord." Well, the answer is, "Yes." Indeed, people can lie, they do it all the time.

People tell me all the time that they're saved and that **Jesus is their Lord** and they never darken the door of a church, they have no desire for the things of God...and based on the total lack of spiritual fruit in their lives...well...their lives testify to the fact that **Jesus is not Lord**. I don't care what they say...your actions reveal what you really believe.

What is Paul saying? Well, I believe the great Bible Commentator, Matthew Henry, sums it up best: **"No one can call Christ, 'Lord,' with a believing dependence on him, exhibited by a changed life, unless that faith is brought about by the Holy Spirit."** Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator

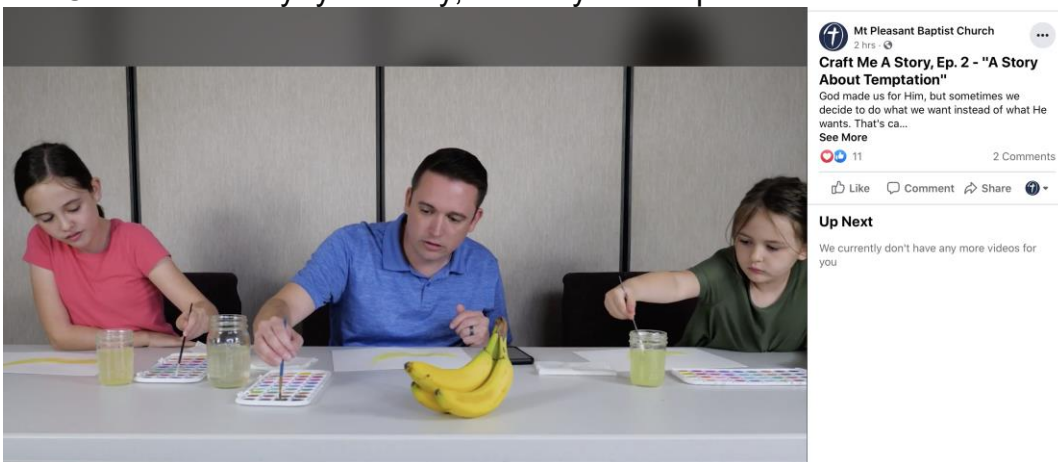
Do you get that? Your life, my life, will exhibit the marks of the Holy Spirit...to a watching world by how we live...LISTEN, our lives SCREAM THE TRUTH...our ACTIONS reveal what we really believe! Oh...the world says: "Don't just tell me you believe...show me!" And that's the point! And that's why we're told to "test every spirit," or to test every person...and their actions. Watch this... The Apostle John said:

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

What's John saying? Simple...we will know people by testing their lives...seeing if what they say matches up with how they live! **Is what you are saying matching up with how you are living?** It's hard isn't? I get it!!! You see, church family, THIS IS SO CRITICAL...get this now...what we're trying to do...TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, is an impossible task without help of whom?

Our Helper...the Holy Spirit... You see, church, it's impossible to live the Christian in our flesh. The flesh is too weak...we are incapable of living the Christian life in our feeble flesh. Because in our flesh, when somebody wrongs us, we want to get them back...but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can let it go. In our flesh, we want to justify sin, but the Holy Spirit says, "No, don't justify sin...instead trust God to provide for what we need. Don't give in to Satan's counterfeits for what's true and what's real." As the old song says: "Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." If you're justifying sin...you'll fall for the temptation...just like Matthew talked about in "Craft Me a Story" yesterday, "A Story of Temptation."



And so, the Holy Spirit helps us, guides us leads us, and it's the Holy Spirit who gifts us... And that's what I want to spend the remainder of our time introducing... the gifts of the Holy Spirit, (and we'll go into detail on these gifts next week).

Now, as we begin to define spiritual gifts, I want to tell you what "Spiritual Gifts" are NOT! They are not just natural talents. You see, everyone, Christian or not, possesses certain natural talents. You don't have to be a Christian to possess natural talents...everyone has these. Yet, God often uses our natural talents in our spiritual gifting.

For instance, I believe the Lord has blessed me with the natural abilities of leadership and communication and I believe He has used those natural talents throughout my life, from being the captain of my High School basketball team, to managing people in various companies, to selling hardwood flooring...but, I believe when He called me to preach and pastor...He took those natural abilities and supernaturally charged them spiritually so I can communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has given me the spiritual gift of prophecy...the ability to teach and preach His Word. That's of God...not of me.

Listen, a Spiritual Gift is a distinct characteristic given by God, through the Holy Spirit, to every believer of Christ, by God's grace alone, for the purpose of building up of His kingdom. Listen, YOU, as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, have spiritual gifts, but do you know what they are?

Some Christians do and some don't, but I want to give you a little hint...and we'll go over this in much more detail next Sunday, if you really want to discover your Spiritual Gifts...you need to get to work. What do I mean? You need to begin doing things in the church and it's through that work that you will discover your gifts. So many Christians, say, "I don't know my gift, so I'm not going to do anything until I find out." No, you've got that backwards...get to work and you'll discover your gift. There are WAY too many lazy Christians out there doing nothing in their churches, while 10-15% of the people do almost all of the work. Yes, starting next Sunday, we'll go through all of the Spiritual Gifts and yes, we have tools to help you discover your gifts, but I can promise you, the best way to discover your gift is to get to work! Next is Trunk or Treat...

Trunk or Treat and Fireworks!



Now, before we move any further...I want to say this in regards to helping out and working in the church...let me tell you about a need...a need for this...



playing the guitar...like Emma Golds...who is excellent... If you can be like Emma who is excellent and playing the guitar and she learned how to play the guitar with an ear piece in ear ear, with what's called a CLICK, going off to help keep the beat and you can play with chord charts...let me or Pastor Dale know...we would love to talk to you about using your gift in our Praise Team. We need some more gifted guitar players...but, you must be a member in order play. So, you let us know...

Now, as we think about Spiritual gifts...remember, they are given to us by the Holy Spirit at our conversion...they typically are used in concert with our natural abilities...and guess who they are FOR? Yourself? No. For the body of Christ and for His kingdom. Look at verses 4-7...

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Your spiritual gifts, my spiritual gifts are for the body of Christ and for the common good of the body. And you see, that's where we're headed...eventually in chapter 12, we'll see how Paul describes the church as a Body and how every believer has a vital ministry just like a vital organ in a human body. You see church, if a body is going to be healthy and mature, whether that's physical body or a church body, then each and every part must be doing their job and being healthy. Have you ever had a toothache?



Does that affect your whole body? You better believe it! Listen, I don't want to be a toothache in the body of Christ, do you? That's what they had in Corinth...a bunch of toothaches. You see, so many of the Corinthian Christians were carnal, self-centeredness, and divisive and this was inhibiting their spiritual growth as a church, and it was KILLING THEIR WITNESS.

And that happens in so many churches even today. So many "stunted-growth" Christians. But, that's not what God intended. Do you know what God wants of us as a church? He wants us to be unified and mature...

Ephesians 4:13

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Did you see that? To the FULLNESS OF CHRIST? God wants us to be like Jesus! That's His will for us! And that's why Jesus came! He came to crush sin, so that we could live free from the ravages and bondage of sin, and so that we can live unified and so that our unity will be a sweet-smelling aroma to a decaying and rotting world, looking for meaning and purpose and peace.

You see, here's the point: the Church, the body of Christ, is to look like Jesus and we are to manifest to the world what He's like, because He's not here. Never forget, we are His ambassadors to a lost and dying world and if we won't do show people to Jesus, then there's no one else to do it. Jesus is depending on us... And, through His Spirit, He has empowered us to do the job...and here's why...

Get this now...think about this...each and every gift that's described in Scripture (and we're going to see each of these gifts over the next several weeks), was lived out by Jesus while He was here on this earth. You say, "What do you mean?" Listen, all the gifts of the Spirit were, in their fullest sense, lived out by Jesus as He lived His life for 33 years on this earth. You think about it: the gift of preaching. Could Jesus preach? Yes! The gift of teaching. Could He teach? The gift of mercy. Did He show mercy? And I could go through all the gifts listed in the NT, and we could answer: "Yes, Jesus exhibited each and every one of these in His life while He was here," and now He has given us...His body the power to exhibit these gifts...through His Spirit, while He's not here. The question is: Will we? Or will we live our lives for ourselves.

Church, as we begin to close this morning...think about this with me...do you know what I believe spiritual gifts are really fundamentally all about? One word: LOVE. Eventually we're going to get to the "Love Chapter"...chapter 13, the chapter I've used in every wedding I've ever done... You know...love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast...etc. Love never fails! LOVE!

Think about it... What does it mean to be a Christian? Doesn't it mean, in its essence, to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourself. Yes, that's LOVE. You see, when we exercise our spiritual gifts, we are expressing love; and so, we will be patient and kind and not envy and not boast, we'll sacrifice, and give ourselves to others.

Yes, I love getting gifts...I bet you do too... Do you want to know the greatest gift I ever received? Yes, it was Jesus. I know that's a really easy answer to give in a church setting. But, it's true. Jesus is the greatest gift I've received. Honestly, sometimes I really just can't believe that I'm saved. That Jesus loves me. That He died for me. That God so loved ME...that He gave Jesus so that I might not perish but have everlasting life. Have you thought about it lately...are you thankful for the gift of Jesus...eternal life! Oh, how thankful we should be...knowing that one day we are going to heaven and we are going to live forever in perfect peace and be with Jesus? Hug Him! Thank Him! And here Him say, "Well done good and faithful servant!"

Yes, I love gifts and I say, as Paul said:

2 Corinthians 9:15

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!
