

01 | Empowered Influencer

Loving Like God

I want to welcome all of you. It's so good to be with you. The Lord has a very special word for you. And, of course, even while I'm going to be sharing it, I know He wants to steer my heart, too. I never want to let a day go by without being a little bit more like Jesus. And one of the things that He shared with us is He knew what His Father was doing and He wanted to do what His Father was doing that day. And even Jesus said, "My sheep know My voice and they follow Me."

So, I know one of the things that He wants us to do is He wants us to be salt and light in the world of darkness. I remember one of the first times that I read Matthew 5 and, you know, reading through that we are salt of the earth, we are light of the world, I remember thinking, "I'm not light of the world. Jesus is the light of the world." And yet, He does something when we give our life to Him. You know, He's knocking at the door of our hearts, according to Revelations 3. And He's knocking on our heart's door, and we then open the door, and we invite Him in. When we invite Him in, something powerful happens because we now have the presence of the Lord in our life.

I want to read a scripture to you out of the Bible and out of the New Testament; the book

that I want to read out of is called the Book of Acts. And it's the story--the recount, as it would be-- of the happenings after Jesus was raised from the dead, and then the beginning of the church, and really the instructions that were being given to the church by the church leaders through that time. Well, one of the ways that the Book of Acts starts in chapter number one is the recall of some of the things that Jesus was saying. And in chapter number one and in verse eight is the recording of what Jesus said. And He said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." So, we not only are thrilled at the presence of the Lord that we gain when we give our hearts to Christ, and we invite Him into our life, making Him the Lord of our life, and we decide to love Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, but then there's also this baptism, this happening of the Holy Spirit. Here it's called receiving power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And so, we invite the Holy Spirit to come into our lives and to overflow us, to fill us, to baptize us as it would be. And that many times is a separate experience that comes at a different time other than salvation. And what we find here is that we become empowered to be witnesses for the Lord. In other words, we don't need Jesus to show up. He would say, "I have you!"

And so, I want to talk to you just for a little bit today about our walk with God and you

allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you in your walk today. The Bible says the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord. And so, it's you and me deciding that we are allowing the Lord to order our steps wherever we go, and also to realize whether we're at work or out in our community--you're maybe going to school or you're at home, you're with friends, you're out shopping--it doesn't matter what you'd be doing. The walk that you're on, that it would be visited by the Lord, and you would be aware of the people around you. So, as we are empowered, what's pretty exciting about this scripture to me is that they were then given the ability by the Holy Spirit. So, it's a yielding to the Holy Spirit and we're given the ability by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for the Lord. And that witness, if you look at the succession of the four things mentioned, they're witnesses, first of all, in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the people that are like them and that live close by because they were in Jerusalem. And if you looked at the culture at that time, it wasn't very mixed compared to the cultures that we live in. But it was if you left Jerusalem. But they were empowered to be able to be witnesses of Jesus to people just like them. So, you have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a representative of the Lord to people that you have been close to for years and that are a lot like you. Maybe they're your family members, maybe they are some of your friends, etc. But also, it goes on to say "in Judea"; Judea was a more distant land, but it was still people like them. So, it's the ability to influence people even that are far off. Maybe you have an aunt or an uncle

or you have some good friends or maybe it's friends' relatives, etc. and maybe they live a distance from you, but that doesn't remove your ability to be there and be a witness for the Lord in whatever situation He's put you in. And then it goes on to say "and in Samaria..." Now, Samaria's interesting. Now you're talking about people that are fairly close, but they are different regarding their ways. They come from all different kinds of ways of life: ages, ethnicities, political opinions, etc., doesn't matter. These are people that maybe weren't even liked by the Jewish people at that time. You know, are there people in your life that you would just--let even the Holy Spirit right now kind of look into areas of your life and to people that you know--are there some people who maybe they're different than you, and you think, "I don't want to be a witness to them," but the Holy Spirit wants to use you in the way that you love, in the way that you listen, in the way that you would care, and even sometimes God gives you opportunity to be able to witness to them. And it goes on to say, "and the end of the earth"; those would be people that are geographically far and also, they're just culturally different than you.

So, I was thinking, as the Holy Spirit has made us influencers, there is one thing I can think of that we cannot do in heaven that we can do here. Do you know what that would be? It is our ability to share Christ with someone that does not know Him. I can't do that in heaven. Someday, I'm going to breathe my last, absent from the body to be present at home

with the Lord. And I'm not going to find a single unbeliever in the presence of the Lord. But boy, I can now, all around me. I want to share, if I could, a story or two about that. And, you know, I'm kind of known for my walks that I go on in the morning and I have a smaller walk that's a little three-mile walk and a bigger walk that causes me to get up a little bit earlier. And I try and have the five-mile walk over by 9:00 so I can get to work and do what the Lord's put before me then. And I remember when I moved to Los Angeles, I didn't really want to live in Los Angeles. It was not a place that I had ever thought about living. And I think if I ever thought about it, I wouldn't have wanted to live there. It would not have been high in my choices if somebody said, "Do you want to live in downtown L.A.?" And when I moved there, I felt like I was a little fish in an awfully big pond. You know, there are 30 million people in the area. And I thought, how do you get to know and find community? And so, I remember, to be honest with you, I didn't have a clue. And yet, I know that the Lord wants to use me as a witness, but I was wanting community, I was wanting some friends and get to know, have a few neighbors and that sort of thing. So I begin to go out for a walk every day. This is several years ago, and I still walk regularly, but I began kind of in the shorter area and began to venture out. And there's a particular donut shop that is close to where I live, probably about two or three blocks away. And I go to that donut shop every morning, and whoever is walking with me, I take him to the donut shop and we often get some donuts and

green tea or something. Maybe we'll sit there and talk for a few minutes. And I got to know the owner of that donut shop. Beautiful people! And they were very, very kind and they were kind to me. And I noticed that when I would sit there in that donut shop for a few minutes, instead of being in a rush and actually looking at people that come in; I don't mean staring at them or, you know, something weird like that. I just mean noticing people. And now, I was warned before I moved to L.A.: "When you're out walking, don't look at people and don't talk to them." Well, that's not me. I'm going to look at people and I'm going to talk to people. Now, that doesn't mean I'm going to talk their ear off. I want to be sensitive to them, and you need to be, too. But I notice that people began to say hi back, and then I would notice that after a while they'd even stop. And they wanted to talk and they wanted to tell me about their life. But I want to tell you about one in particular, and her name is Laura, and she's somebody that we really love. And Laura came from a Buddhist background, and they were at the time practicing Taoism. And yet, she was very kind and very respectful of me. Well, she's the owner of the donut shop. And so I went in there one day and I ask people how they are. And, you know, believe or not, if you're interested and they can tell that you actually care to listen, people will give you a short rendition of what's going on in their life. And sometimes if you'll listen, they're facing some stuff that is causing concerns in them, maybe even anxiety or depression or whatever. And this is a lot of people, this

isn't just every once in a while, but if we listen and if we're kind to people, I think people can tell when you care. I think people can also tell when we don't care, but they can tell when we care. So, I asked Laura how she was doing one day and she said, "Oh, I'm a little concerned over business." I said, "Tell me about it." She said, "Well, the donuts, the business is way down." And she said, "It's down everywhere." She said she knows other donut shop owners and the business was just not doing well anywhere. And I said, "Laura, I know a God who's able to lift your situation above what is normal and He's able to bless you even in the middle of this downturn that you're experiencing." And I said, "Now, listen, He loves you and He loves me. I know Him, and He wants you to know Him. Can I pray for you? And let's just give God opportunity to bless your business. How would you like that?" She said, "I'd like that." So, I prayed with her, and she thanked me as soon I was done. And then I left and back the next morning to get another donut. Anyway, when I walked in, she kind of shrieked and I said, "What's going on?" And she said, "You cannot believe it! I told you how the donut business was down. I sold every donut by midday yesterday. I knew every time there were more and more and more people walking in, I knew it was because you prayed." So, I said, "What you really know is that God heard our cry, didn't He?" And I said, "Listen, I know He does, and He wants to hear from you. He likes hearing from me, but He wants to hear from you, too. He doesn't have stepkids." And so, I taught her to pray. And a short time later she gave her heart to the

Lord and just abandoned herself in love with the Lord.

Let me tell you something I think is kind of funny. It was a little embarrassing, a little bit awkward for me. Maybe you need to think about what you would have done in that same situation. The story I'm going to recall to you was just a number of weeks ago. And I was in the donut shop, and I was standing at the counter. I had waited in line there, you know, different customers that are there, a lot of them regulars in the morning. And, you know, I'm waiting my turn to get my green tea and my old-fashioned buttermilk donut. It's glazed or chocolate-dipped. They're really, really good! Anyway, so I'm there, and I get up to the counter to order and she has a look in her eye that tells me that she's not doing too well. So, I asked her, "Laura, are you okay?" And she knew when I ask, I mean it. And by the way, people will know if you mean it. It doesn't matter if they're a stranger or they're someone you see casually in the shopping mall or whatever. The stores that you frequent, people can tell if you care. And listen, we've been in empowered. We're carrying the presence of the Lord wherever we go. So, I said, "How are you doing?" And she said, "Robby, I have had pain in my legs. It's really been bad. I called to make an appointment with my doctor. I have an appointment this afternoon. I just don't feel good because of that. It's really taken something out of me." Now, the store was filled. If I were to tell you what they all looked like, there were people of different

age groups and people of different hair color and all sorts of things. That means multiple hair colors. Hey, it's L.A., alright? And people of various genders and I'm sure from different backgrounds and different beliefs of the Lord, different political backgrounds. It doesn't matter. You know, Jesus has empowered us. He's empowered you to be an influencer. He's also empowered me. So anyway, I sensed a prompting. You know, how do you know this is the Lord? Well, I've spent years listening to Him and figuring that out. But He speaks, He has a voice. And I sensed Him say, "I want you to pray with everyone in this store right now." Now, I got to tell you, I'm a little bit of an introvert, even though some people would maybe dispute that. But I'm not the guy that likes to get the crowd going on something. And I turned and I saw all these people. But very quickly, I mean, we're talking like this is going to be the fastest prayer in the entire world. I turned very quickly, and I said, "Hey, you guys, Laura is not doing the best today. She's got some pain in her legs. Would you all pray with me? Let's pray for her right now." I didn't wait for a yes or a no. I just turned and begin to pray for her. And again, it was not a long prayer, but I want to tell you, the Lord knows when we're trying to connect with His heart and trying to see Him do a work in a situation. And again, we're empowered by the Holy Spirit. And honestly, I would guess that the times when I'm praying in the community, which is fairly often, I bet nine out of ten times I see an instantaneous miracle happen there. It's so much fun! I see it way more than we even see it when we're all just

gathered in a church place or something. But we're empowered. You are empowered by the Holy Spirit. I'm just a normal guy serving an extraordinary God. So don't be discounting your ability to do the same. So anyway, I prayed. Just a quick prayer. "Jesus, we pray to You right now. We ask you to bring healing to Laura, to her legs, and make her well in Jesus' name. And it was that fast. How long did that take, 5, 7 seconds? I no more said amen, and I look up (I'd closed my eyes during that time) and by the way, people were just out of courtesy standing there. I could tell that some of them were wanting to engage in prayer. Listen, He put a hunger on their heart. People are not as turned off to Christ as you would think they are. They have a search for God going on in their heart. Anyway, I now more said amen and Laura lifts her hands as high as she could, and she said, "Oh my, oh my! I said, "What?" She said, "All of the pain left while all of you prayed for me. Thank you and thank You, Jesus!"

Wow! We are empowered influencers, so I want you to think about something. Do you have a way of connecting in your community? And again, that community is your family, it's your neighborhood, apartment complex, etc., where you live. It's where you go to school. It's where you work. Is there an availing where you would even slow down; some of you need to maybe make a decision and slow down a little bit and pay attention to the people around you. Is there a place where people know that you care? How would they know that you care? Is there a way that, and by the way, not on

your boss's time, but maybe during a break or when you are all gathering at work or you're all getting off. Asking people appropriately, "Hey, you doing okay?" You know, and just caring enough to listen. You know, sometimes you can say, "Listen, I'm going to be praying for you over the next day or so, is there something certain I can pray about?" You know, but just caring for the people around you. And then when that opportunity does arise, because it's not every day, but maybe it's way more frequent than you would realize. And when that opportunity arises, you just feel free to introduce the Lord right into that situation. It can be as simple as saying, "Can we pray together over this or that?" Or letting them know that Jesus loves them. So, remember, you're an empowered influencer. This isn't something we put on or get hyped about. Maybe it's even right now, why don't you pray with me that the Holy Spirit empowers you?

Lord, we come to You right now with great love. We remove every obstacle between us, and You that we've ever allowed to hinder our relationship with You. And, Lord, as we come, we declare we want to walk with You today. We want you to walk into our shoes, so to speak, in every situation; that You, Lord, would ordain our path. But, Lord, we need to be empowered. Come, Holy Spirit, and fill us afresh, making us aware of Your presence, and through reading Your Word, Lord, and getting into that Word and beginning to discern when You're speaking to us, that You would make opportunities, and that we would see them, and

we thank You in Jesus' name, amen. God bless you, and enjoy your journey and your walk!